

Dr. Christopher Thiele
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Intro to Public Speaking & Argumentation

Syllabus

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to public speaking (speech) and argumentation (debate). By the end of the course, students should feel comfortable making well structured public speeches, efficiently using Google Scholar for MLA cited research, and developing logically consistent and persuasive arguments. The classroom will include multidisciplinary discussions about U.S. government, international relations, school policies, court cases and legal definitions, economics, philosophy, modern communication techniques, and performing arts. While there are a few traditional quizzed lectures based on the topics listed below, the class is largely hands on and participatory, so most skills learned will be through the many diverse and structured projects. Each project will have very detailed written and oral instructions, with a step by step guide to help the student execute the skill taught, written and oral examples, and a grading rubric. While the skills learned in the class are essential to any student who is interested in competing at an extracurricular speech/debate tournament, the main emphasis is not on preparing students to compete at upcoming tournaments but rather on life-long skills relating to a student's public speaking, research, organization, and argumentation abilities.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- **Textbook** - There is no textbook for the course. Instead this course will use evidence used in competitive debate or crafted by the students themselves, consisting of electronic excerpts from various sources.
- **Laptop** - Competitive debate is nearly 100% paperless, so we will be using a laptop nearly every day. Students should bring their own laptop daily, or if unavailable, be prepared to check out a loaner through the school as per school policy.
- **Google Suite** - Students should familiarize themselves with accessing classroom resources hosted electronically. Students should be familiar with writing papers in Google Docs. If the student struggles with either, please proactively schedule instruction with the Tech Help Department. They are always happy to help.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS

- **Outside Video Lectures** - Many outside textbooks and video series exist. Most of them are antiquated, unhelpful, and sometimes counterproductive. A few good ones exist to supplement instruction provided in the class. I recommend [‘Go Fight Win!’](#) produced by Challie Chappell.

Other great more advanced lectures that I largely (but not universally) recommend are found on the National Debate Coaches Association's [Open Video Project](#).

- **Collection of Famous Articles about Debate Theory.** A selection of primary sources exist for those interested in a more historical approach to understanding debate. They can be found on the class folder of the classroom Google Drive.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The best way to contact me is by email: cthiele@quarrylane.org. For non-emergency situations during summer school, I will try my best to respond within one business day.

GRADES

This is an elective course. Therefore, there will not be any mandatory homework or study-at-home assessments. All work is designed to be completed during class, however, some students who did not complete the assignment to a satisfactory level may be asked to finish their work at home. Any grades will generally be either quizzes, in class assessments of speeches/debates, and competitive speaking and research games. Within each category, no single grade will be weighted more than any others so students are expected to stay engaged throughout the semester. The following category weights will be used:

Speech: 40%

Debate: 40%

Judging: 20%

TOPICS DISCUSSED

1. **Event Types** - *We will discuss an overview of what modern competitive speech & debate looks like, briefly describing and comparing the various different speech (oratory, humorous, dramatic, & duo interp, extemporaneous speaking, etc) and debate events (public forum, Lincoln Douglas, policy, congressional) offered at Quarry Lane.*
2. **Research Strategies** - *We will discuss advanced research techniques. We will explore database selection, advanced Boolean search terms, identifying relevant articles, and screening sources for quality.*
3. **Resolution & Sides** - *We will discuss the semester-long topic, including student driven brainstorming of potential mechanisms to fulfill that resolution and potential advantages/disadvantages to each mechanism.*
4. **Case Construction** - *We will discuss how students should construct their cases, establish clear organization, provide evidence, and impact their arguments to best persuade a judge that their position is correct. Students will also learn how to write blocks, in which they both predict and efficiently address opponent cases and objections to their case.*
5. **Argument: the Toulmin Method** - *We will unpack what makes an argument persuasive using the 'Argument = Claim + Warrant + Data' Model originally developed by British philosopher Stephen Toulmin.*

6. **Offense / Defense** - *We will discuss the distinction between claiming something is net-good (or net-bad), versus simply “not good” (or “not bad”), and how to calculate magnitude under an expected value method of impact calculus.*
7. **Logical Fallacies** - *We will discuss common logical fallacies, including contradictions, ad hominem statements, anecdotal appeals, conjunctive fallacies, circular reasoning, correlation/causation, conflating part/whole, argument by analogy, historical ignorance, moving the goalpost, is/ought, cherry-picking, appeal to authority, straw person, slippery slope, etc.*

PROJECTS COMPLETED

1. **Four**¹ *research papers (approximately ten pages total in work product) involving a semester long topic on school uniform policy designed to teach students how to research, craft their own written arguments, and logically think out responses to their opponent’s arguments and objections, using MLA citations and full quotes.*
2. **Three** *approximately 15-20 minute in-class debates on this semester long topic where students debate other students in a 1 v 1 debate format.*
3. **Twenty-Seven** *15-20 minute sessions where students will practice taking notes, forming argumentative questions, and judging other peer students debate this semester long topic.*
4. **Six** *2-7 minute extemporaneous researched speeches on issues of government and school policy, current events, science, or other similar topics.*
5. **Three** *written mini- debates involving two students being assigned conflicting pieces of evidence, and having to defend their assigned evidence against their opponent’s.*
6. **Three** *2-3 minute in-class memorized dramatic and humorous oratory speeches.*
7. **Two** *2-3 minute impromptu speech in which students practice giving an informative speech with little to no preparation.*
8. **Five** *ungraded stress free game days involving competitive speaking and research games. A student favorite!*

SKILLS LEARNED

1. **Evidence** - *Students will learn what constitutes evidence. A basic discussion on the value of highlighting evidence will be had, in relation to maximizing ideas understood per minute by the judge. Students will practice researching and compiling evidence into an appropriate and readable format to use in their in-class debates.*
2. **Research-** *Students will learn internet ‘best practices’, including database selection (e.g. Google Scholar), search terms (Boolean, phrase, concept, and locational searching, using Google search operators), method v. conclusion driven evaluation, large content processing, etc.*
3. **Organization** - *Students will learn how to organize complex files consistent of many, well developed arguments on a potential topic. Students will create document schemas and practice quickly navigating their own extensive work product in timed debates.*

¹ All numbers are approximations. Classes will adapt based on class learning pace, size, and other factors.

4. **Note Taking** - *Students will learn how to best take notes when an opponent is speaking, using modern debate practices. Students will practice summarizing rather than transcribing opponent speeches, improving both organization and argumentative clarity.*
5. **Writing Extensions** - *Students will learn a standardized model for argument extension (quickly summarizing a previous piece of quoted evidence in their own words). While largely rehashing the Toulmin method, special emphasis will be given on impacting (i.e, explaining why their argument “matters”) and standardizing this argument extension.*
6. **Evidence Comparison** - *Students will learn how to write extensions that involve explicit comparisons between conflicting evidence. Students will learn to quickly process and choose between claims supported by competing evidence, and how to express their comparisons concisely.*
7. **Cross-Examination** - *Students will learn to prepare and ask argumentative, instead of simply informative, questions.*
8. **Rebuttals** - *Students will learn how to strategically narrow their final argument to best summarize it in a short amount of time in a “closing” speech. Issues of overview writing, time management, strategic recapping, and impact calculus will be discussed.*
9. **Speech Compilation** - *Students will learn how to efficiently pull select excerpts from multiple sources of compiled evidence to craft a single speech.*
10. **Presentation** - *Students will practice clearly articulating speeches, covering such concepts as voice modulation, breathing, body positioning/movement, rhythm, and pace. Students will also practice ‘tongue twisters’ to practice enunciation, as well as learn the basic ‘diamond pattern’ movement techniques.*
11. **Basic Memorization** - *Students will practice memorizing short dramatic or humorous speeches, including mimicking body motions, speech patterns, and other speaking styles on select pieces.*
12. **Judge Adaptation** - *Students will learn about predicting, reading, and adapting to their particular judge.*