

**CAS 315 - Debate and Civic Life**  
**Fall 2016, MW, 4:00pm – 5:15pm, 169 Willard**

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Instructor: J. Kurr  
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Office: 229 Sparks  
Office Hours: MW, 1:00pm–3:00pm

**Course Description:**

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Debate has been a vital part of democratic engagement in the United States since the founding of the country. This course explores the role debate has played in our nation's history, focusing primarily on debate practices in the 20th and 21st century. This course provides historical background on debate in politics and in civic life, examining both public and competitive debate practices. Course material will expose students to theories and practices of debate including the history of important debate moments in the United States, analysis of contemporary political debates, and practical debate techniques inside the classroom and in a public setting.

**Course Material:**

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Robert B. Huber and Alfred C. Snider, *Influencing Through Argument* (New York: International Debate Education Association, 2005). ISBN 978-1932716078 (Required)

Howard Fineman, *The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates That Define and Inspire Our Country* (New York: Random House, 2009). ISBN 978-0812976359 (Required)

Alan Schroeder, *Presidential Debates: Risky Business on the Campaign Trail* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). ISBN 978-0231170574 (Recommended)

Additional readings on Canvas

**Course Objectives:**

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Students will explore the role debate plays in our society in three facets.

- Historical: Students will learn the role that debate has played in political and civic culture in the United States since the early twentieth century. They will explore a variety of case studies focused on different themes including foreign policy, the economy, gender, race, religion, and the environment.
- Theoretical: Students will learn the nuances of argumentative theory and debate theory. Students will leave the class with the capacity to interrogate and judge the argumentative and debate practices of politicians, media personalities, and local town hall forms.
- Practical: Students will plan and host, with the aid of the instructor, a public debate on campus at the end of the semester. This event will help crystallize the theoretical and historical knowledge the students learn into a project centered on civic engagement in the State College community.

## **Course Assignments:**

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### **Public Debate Case and Debating (25%)**

The class will put on a public debate. In preparation, students will hold practice debates on the topic in class and will have to write short cases (4-5 pages) which they present during the debate. This will be graded on the case, the in class debate, and helping organize the event.

### **Argumentative Artifact Presentation (25%)**

For one of the “themed” weeks, you will present an “argumentative artifact,” which can be anything that makes an argument related to the week’s theme. These artifacts can vary in form and may include speeches, movies, music, political cartoons, photographs, protests, etc. You will write a short essay (4-5 pages) analyzing how the artifact makes an argument and lead class discussion over that artifact.

### **Argumentative Artifact Response (10%)**

You will write a short response (2 pages) offering you commentary on whether you agree or disagree with your fellow classmate’s presentation about their artifact.

### **Presidential Debate Response (20%)**

You will watch and evaluate the arguments of one of the three presidential debates. This response (4 pages) could involve praise or criticism of the candidates’ arguments. Or you could focus on a particular topic over which they argued.

### **Campus Event Evaluation (10%)**

After attending a public event on campus (e.g. seeing a speaker, a public debate, a deliberation, etc.), you will compose a short response (2 pages) where you summarize the event and how it contributed (or did not contribute) to the debate over the event’s general topic.

### **Participation (10%)**

Since the class is oriented around debate, students will be expected to hone their own debating skills during in class deliberation on discussions about the presidential debates and various historical and contemporary issues.

## **Grade Disputes (24/7 rule):**

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Should you earn a grade that makes you unhappy or confused, I ask that you take 24 hours after I return the assignment to think about the grade and determine if you believe it was fair. After that time, please come to office hours or arrange an appointment with me to discuss your grade. Please come prepared with a specific proposal regarding the grade you believe to be appropriate based on what was turned in. Your proposal should be typed and include a compelling argument outlining the reasons why you believe the grade change is appropriate. Additionally, **all grade disputes must be handled within seven days after the initial assignment was returned.**

**Grading:**

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The grading in this course is based on a 1000-point system and will be available on Canvas. If you ever have a question about your grade, please let me know as soon as possible.

The quality of your work in this class is very important. You **earn grades in this class**. Please note that work that meets the basic assignment requirements given in class is C-level (70-79) work. D-level (60-69) and F-level (0-59) work fails to meet these basic requirements. You can expect to earn grades in the B-level range (80-89) by **going beyond the assignment requirements in terms of research, presentation, analysis, and preparation**. You can earn grades in the A-level range (90-100) by completing **exceptional work**. Nothing less earns grades in this range. Assignments should be presented or written very well, explained thoughtfully, focused, and demonstrate clear and advanced critical thinking/analysis.

Final course grades will be determined as follows:

Name	Percentage	Point Value
Public Debate	30%	300 points
Artifact Presentation	20%	200 points
Artifact Response	10%	100 points
Presidential Debate	20%	200 points
Campus Event	10%	100 points
Participation	10%	100 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

The grading scale is:

A	93 to 100	Excellent or Superior Achievement
A-	90 to 92.9	Excellent, but with some room for improvement
B+	87 to 89.9	Very Good
B	83 to 86.9	Good
B-	80 to 82.9	Not quite as good
C+	77 to 79.9	Somewhat above average
C	70 to 76.9	Satisfactory competence
D	60 to 69.9	Minimally competent, but still passing
F	59.9 and below	Unsatisfactory/Failing

### **Academic Integrity:**

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Dishonesty of any kind is unacceptable. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: plagiarism, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Academic dishonesty will result in academic sanctions and may result in automatic failure of the course. For more information on this policy, please see the following web sites: <http://handbook.psu.edu/content/academic-integrity> and <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20>.

I reserve the right to use turnitin.com to submit speech outlines and homework assignments.

### **Attendance, Lateness, Leaving Early:**

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The Penn State *Student Handbook* claims "class attendance is important for the benefit of the student." This position likely does not strike you as profound. Far better and more beneficial than mere attendance, however, is attunement to and engagement with as many facets of the course as you can muster.

Excessive absences will be reflected in your participation grade.

No late homework will be accepted. It is not possible to make up the debates, as that would require rearranging other students, who will already be working on their topic.

### **Resources:**

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Learning Accommodations: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. All students with disabilities documented by the Student Disability Resources (SDR) will have their needs met in an appropriate manner. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, students should contact the University Park office at 814-863-1807, visit their office in 116 Boucle, or use the online contact form at <http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/forms/contact-ods-form> to participate in an intake interview and provide documentation. Privacy will be maintained regarding all accommodations. Additional information is available online at: <http://www.equity.psu.edu/sdr/>.

Mental Health: Should you find yourself in a situation where you are experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, etc., please do not hesitate to contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to make an appointment (814-863-0395). Additional resources are available online at: <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>.

Extended Absences: If ever you face an extreme emergency that will require you to miss an extended amount of class, please call Student & Family Services (814-863-2020). This hotline is available 24 hours a day, and it will notify your professors/instructors of your emergency. Please note: this service does *not* excuse you from classes; it only notifies teachers.

Me: I am happy to serve as a resource for you both inside and outside of class during office hours or via e-mail.

## Classroom Climate:

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We will discuss and hear about topics that are hotly debated, very personal, and, often times, outside of your comfort zone. I encourage you to use the concepts discussed in class to think about your experiences and position in the world. Many of our beliefs may be challenged this semester, and this process has enormous potential and usefulness. I expect you to treat your classmates with respect and care. This course offers an excellent opportunity for you to sharpen your communication abilities in terms of dealing with and debating sensitive issues in a respectful manner.

I am a member of the Penn State Safe Zone Ally Network, and I am available to listen and support you in a safe and confidential manner. As a Safe Zone Ally, I can help you connect with resources on campus to address problems you may face that interfere with your academic and social success on campus as it relates to issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. My goal is to help you be successful and to maintain a safe and equitable campus.



For more information visit the Penn State LGBTQA Student Resource Center in 101 Boucke Building or at: <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/lgbtqa>

**I take the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of students very seriously, and any blatant disregard for this policy will be dealt with harshly.**

## Syllabus Changes:

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You should be aware that this syllabus is a living document. I have attempted to plot the road ahead as carefully and thoroughly as possible, but in any given semester, the exigencies of the moment may require that changes be made to the syllabus. As your instructor, I reserve the right to make alterations to this syllabus as necessary. It is your responsibility to pay attention to email and class announcements of syllabus changes, as well as check your email every day for other class announcements.

## CAS 315 - DEBATE AND CIVIC LIFE

### Course Schedule:

#	Date	Day	Lecture Content and Assignments
1	8/22	M	Course Introduction and Intro to Argument
2	8/24	W	What is Argument & Proposition Styles (Ch 1-2, <i>Influencing</i> )
3	8/29	M	Role of Definition in Debate (Ch 3, <i>Influencing</i> )
4	8/31	W	Role of Evidence in Debate (Ch 5, <i>Influencing</i> )
5	9/5	M	<b>Labor Day – NO CLASS</b>
6	9/7	W	Role of Narrative in Debate
7	9/12	M	Types of Reasoning in Debate Part 1 (Ch 6-7, <i>Influencing</i> )
8	9/14	W	Types of Reasoning in Debate Part 2 (Ch 9, <i>Influencing</i> )
9	9/19	M	Debates over value v. Debates over policy
10	9/21	W	Debate and the Public Sphere
11	9/26	M	Economy – LBJ’s War on Poverty and Obama’s Stimulus
12	9/28	W	Economy – Argumentative Artifact Discussion
13	10/3	M	Foreign Policy – Cold War and Patriot Act
14	10/4	W	Foreign Policy - Argumentative Artifact Discussion
15	10/10	M	Religion – School Prayer and Religious Freedom
16	10/12	W	Religion – Argumentative Artifact Discussion
17	10/17	M	Environment - Three Mile Island and Fracking
18	10/19	W	Environment - Argumentative Artifact Discussion
19	10/24	M	Gender – Suffrage and Reproductive Rights
20	10/26	W	Gender – Artifact Discussion
21	10/31	M	Race – Civil Rights and Police Brutality
22	11/2	W	Race – Argumentative Artifact Discussion
23	11/7	M	Public Debate Topic Discussion
24	11/9	W	Public Debate Topic – Policies and Policies
25	11/14	M	Collaboration and Community Expertise
26	11/16	W	Research and Case workshop
	11/21	M	<b>Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASS</b>
	11/23	W	<b>Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASS</b>
27	11/28	M	Public Debate Prep #1
28	11/30	W	Public Debate Prep #2
29	12/5	M	Public Debate Prep #3
30	12/7	W	Public Debate Prep #4

### Due Dates

Argumentative Artifact Response – Friday of your assigned week  
 Presidential Debate Paper – October 28  
 Argumentative Artifact Paper – November 11  
 Campus Event Evaluation – November 17  
 Public Debate Paper – December 9