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## COMX 242.01: Argumentation

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# COMM 242: Argumentation

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## Catalog Description:

Development of argumentation skills and critical judgment in decision-making and debate. Includes criticism, construction, presentation, and refutation of spoken and written arguments.

## Course Materials:

Ziegelmüller, G. W., & Kay, J. (1997). *Argumentation inquiry and advocacy* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).  
Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Dr. Suess books

Additional readings from the Summer and Fall 1996 issues of *Argumentation and Advocacy*

## Course Objectives:

1. The student will understand the need and process of effective argumentative skills in a variety of settings (visual, narrative, and formal).
2. The student will understand the process of debate, including research, preparation, and evaluation of debates.
3. The student will use research and analysis skill in the preparation of a formal paper that critically evaluates debates and argumentation.
4. The student will be offered opportunities to practice critical thinking skills through the process of debating and evaluating arguments.

## Course Prerequisites:

If you have not satisfactorily completed all course and grade prerequisites, you may be administratively disenrolled on or before the first day of class.

## Course Assignments:

1. Daily Activities (100 points) Several daily assignments that accompany readings and in-class work such as critiquing other debates and reaction writing will be included throughout the course.
2. Case Writing (100 points). The student will write a case on the topic within the class resolution. The case will be written and then turned in for evaluation and returned for modification before the defense. Cases must be typed in the explained format.
3. Debates (250 points each). The students will complete 2 larger debates. These will be in the policy team format using cases written by the team members with evidence provided by the instructor along with individually obtained research.
4. Evaluations of debates (150 total) Students will be required to write evaluations for each debate we do in class.

5. Political advertisement evaluation (50 pts). You will watch and evaluate the claims made in political ads from this election season. You will test them for fallacies, the validity of arguments, and the “truth” of arguments and write an analysis of the ads.
6. Tests (2 exams each worth 50 points each). Each test will be taken to assess outcomes on the material given to the point of the test. Each will cover separate parts of the course. No comprehensive final will be given.

**Grading:**

Your final grade will be calculated on a plus/minus scale based on the following breakdown:

A 100-90%

B 89-80%

C 79-70%

D 69-60%

E/F Below 60%

It is my philosophy that for grades to be meaningful a C should be average and high grades must be reserved for exceptional work. Cs (not Bs or As) will be given for work that is acceptable and of average college level quality. The grade of C, therefore, **does not indicate any shortcoming** and **may** be the most common grade given. This means that you have met the basic requirements of the speech/assignment, but there is more that could be done to make the speech/assignment better. For example, if a paper requires you to write 8 pages and use 10 different sources, that does not mean that you would receive an A for that work, only that you have met the basic requirements. This should not be read to mean that you would only get a C in the class. Grading will be done as follows:

**C:** Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect. This score **does not indicate any shortcoming**. All the work was done adequately and completely, and the work showed basic understanding and mastery of the course material.

**B:** Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Not only were all the basic expectations met, it exceeded minimum expected quality levels. This work probably showed one or more of the following characteristics: excellent understanding of the class material, excellent application of theory to practice, unusual thoroughness in thought and preparation.

**A:** Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. This work is superior in every respect, and represents the highest level of achievement. Its quality is so good that it would be unreasonable to ask a college student to improve upon it.

**D:** Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it does not fully meet course requirements. While there was merit to what was done, there were also deficiencies that meant the work did not fully meet the minimal expectations.

**E/F:** Represents performance that fails to meet the course requirements and is unworthy of credit. This work shows serious deficiencies in regard to the expectations for the assignment.

**GPA requirement:**

The college of Communication and Information Sciences requires that all students enrolled in upper division courses (300/400) have a 2.0 GPA overall. Students who do not have the 2.0 GPA may be administratively disenrolled on or before the first day of class.

**Incomplete:**

An “I” is reserved for special circumstances (unforeseen or unexpected circumstances beyond the student’s control.) that prevent a student from completing prescribed course work during a semester. An “I” will not be given because a student is failing, negligent or not meeting requirements. Work missed must be made up within an agreed upon time between the student and the instructor. An “I” will revert to an “F” when missed work is not made up during the time-period specified.

**Make-up Examinations and assignments:**

There are no make up without prior approval. No make-up tests will be given unless the absence was unavoidable or otherwise justified, the student and instructor will coordinate for a make-up examination to be taken as soon as possible. A properly documented medical reason for missing an assignment is an example of a legitimate reason for a make up. Airline tickets for a vacation or going home early do not constitute a legitimate reason for a make up exam and no make up will be offered.

**Academic Honesty:**

Each student must fulfill his or her academic obligation by an honest, independent effort. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students who engage in academic dishonesty will be penalized. You will receive a zero for that assignment. Next the student will be informed of the charge(s) against them and the actions described in the due process and students rights section

Any of these acts are plagiarism; each is sufficient ground to fail the assignment and begin disciplinary action. **This list is not exhaustive**; it is merely intended to clarify a few common misunderstandings of what plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty is:

1. The use of a speech, paper, or outline written by someone else;
  2. Any time you use 5 or more consecutive words from a source without putting it in quotation marks and citing the source, whether or not the source is copyrighted;
  3. Copying material from the internet without putting it in quotation marks and/or citing it.
  4. Using notes in any from on your exams or quizzes unless otherwise instructed.
- Remember, when in doubt error on the side of caution or ask your instructor.

**Students with Disabilities:**

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

**Grievances (Complaints):**

There is a specific process for raising grievances that is defined in the Student Conduct Code. Following this process is necessary for insuring that the rights of all parties to a grievance are respected. In a nutshell, the process simply directs you to address concerns with your instructor first and then proceed up the university hierarchy.

**Classroom Conduct:**

In order for the class to function properly, all students should follow the following:  
*Respect your instructor and your colleagues.* This encompasses all of the following items. It is absolutely necessary for a positive educational experience. Whether it is arriving in class promptly,

behaving ethically toward your instructor and classmates, or contributing to a positive classroom climate, please act respectfully.

The Code of Student Conduct requires that students behave in a manner that is conducive to a teaching/learning environment. Students who engage in behavior that is disruptive or obstructive to the teaching/learning environment will be subject to disciplinary sanctions as outlined by the Code of Student Conduct. Disruptive/obstructive behavior is described as but not limited to the following examples: physical abuse, verbal abuse, threats, stalking, intimidation harassment, hazing, possession of controlled substances, possession of alcoholic beverages. Other things that should not be in the classroom are as follows: pets; guns or other weapons; explosives; alcoholic beverages; tobacco; illegal drug/controlled substances.

*Attend all class sessions and arrive on time.* The in class assignments that make up 10% of your grade com from actavities each day. You can only earn these points by arriving in class on time and attending for the entire session. If you arrive late, leave early, or skip class, you may miss these opportunities. Good attendance is a predictor of academic success. This is especially true of a math course as it is in a communication course, where the skills learned tomorrow require mastery of the skills we learn today. I do understand that some things come up that are unavoidable, but you need to keep me informed to these problems. There is very little I can do after the fact, so let me know in advance or as soon as possible if you are missing or have missed class. However, no in class assignments (critiques, quizzes, etc.) cannot be made up despite the legitimacy of the absence.

Late work will receive 1 letter grade deduction per late day. Remember I will require some form of documentation if work is to accepted late. Those with qualifying documents will not be accessed the late penalty, for the arranged make up time, but failure to perform on that day will incur the deduction described above. Absolutely no late work will be accepted after the final exam period. Remember that no in class assignments can be made up no matter the reason.

In addition to the above, students who do not attend the first 2 meetings of a T/R course or the first 3 meetings of M/W/F courses may be administratively disenrolled.

*Refrain from using media that are unrelated to the class.* This includes but is not limited to cellphones, messaging devices, music players, and the *Kaimin*. Any device that can make noise should be turned completely off for the entire class period. Not only do these items disrupt class but whoever is speaking will find it exceedingly rude.

Student Consent and Instructor Elasticity:

The instructor stipulates that a student's receipt of this syllabus shall act as a contract between the instructor and the student. Receipt of this syllabus presupposes that a student has read and understands the policies contained herein. The instructor reserves the right to amend course assignments, assignment weights, readings and non-administrative items contained in this syllabus.

## August

- 28—Syllabus & Toulmin
- 30—Foundations of Argument: Chapter 1

## September

- 4—Basic terms: Chapter 2
- 6—Basic terms: Chapter 3
- 11—Data Chapter 4 & 5
- 13—Inductive and Deductive: Chapter 6 & 7
- 18—Bad Arguments: Chapter 8
- 20—Types of claims: Chapter 9 & 10
- 25—Forms of Argument: Chapter 12
- 27—Exam 1 over Chapters 1-10

## October

- 2—Applied Argumentation—Debate: Chapter 15
- 4—Constructing Arguments: Chapter 11, 18, & 19
- 9—Constructing Arguments: Chapter 11, 18, & 19
- 11—Argument the verb: Chapter 16
- 16—Asking questions: Chapter 17
- 18—Case presentations**
- 23—Work Day for Debate #1
- 25—Debate #1
- 30—Debate #1

## November

- 1—Debate #1
- 6—Election Day so go Vote! No class
- 8—Political ad evaluation due
- 13—Narrative Argument: Chapter 13 & Dr. Seuss
- 15—Narrative Argument: Chapter 13 & Dr. Seuss
- 20—Visual Argument: *Argument & Advocacy* articles
- 22—Thanksgiving, no class
- 27—Visual Argument: *Argument & Advocacy* articles
- 29—Debate #2

## December

- 4—Debate #2
- 6—Debate #2
- 10—Final Exam from 10:10-12:10 Chapters 11-19 & *Argument & Advocacy*