COMM 245 – Argumentation and Debate
Western Kentucky University – Fall 2008

Instructor: Chris Joffrion    Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 – 3:30
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Course Description:
This course in argumentation and debate is designed to provide a foundational understanding in argumentation theory and methods of application in academic debate. This is accomplished through a series of reading, writing, speaking and listening based assignments. Specifically students will learn effective research skills to be used in the completion of written essays and in-class debates.

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:
- Research, evaluate and incorporate supporting materials and evidence into their arguments.
- Recognize and avoid common argumentation fallacies.
- Transform their own feelings on controversial subjects into effective and persuasive arguments.
- Present arguments appropriately and effectively in an actually academic debate environment.

Required Material:

Attendance:
We learn to communicate through practice and by watching other communicate. Therefore, your attendance is expected at each and every class meeting. If you do not intent to attend class, then you should drop this course now. The penalties for excessive absences are outlined below.

Each student is permitted two (2) unexcused absences during the course. A student’s final semester grade will be reduced by 10 points for each unexcused absences exceeding two.

Not only are students expected to be in class each day, but they are also expected to be on time. Students who arrive late to class may not be allowed to make up work completed prior to their arrival that day. Excessive tardiness may result in the same point deduction as unexcused
absences. If you come to class after the roll has been taken, it is your responsibility to notify me after class that you were present.

Debates, homework, and in-class assignments CANNOT be made up unless your absence is officially excused which means you must provide proper documentation. You must present written documentation in advance of any absence for a university sponsored event and the day you return to class for any other absence or the absence cannot be excused. The due date of make up work will be set by the instructor and must be turned in/completed in a timely manner.

**Excused Absences are defined as:**

1. Illness of student or serious illness of a family member (requires documentation by a medical professional)
2. Death of a family member (requires documentation such as an obituary or funeral program)
3. University-sponsored events such as trips sponsored by an academic unit, another University class, or participation in an intercollegiate academic or athletic event (requires advanced written notification. Failure to inform the professor in writing prior to the trip will result in the absence being unexcused).
4. Major religious holidays.

**Academic Offenses – Plagiarism and Cheating:**
Western Kentucky University and the Department of Communication are committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on an exam, or purchasing papers, speeches, or other assignments will immediately receive a failing grade on the assignment and potentially in the course, and will be reported for disciplinary action. Falsified medical excuses and presenting another student’s work as your own fall within the guidelines of this academic integrity policy. It is recommended that you familiarize yourself with the information on plagiarism and cheating found in the student handbook.

**If you need help:**
If you have questions or concerns or find certain materials or assignments difficult please contact me by e-mail or come by during my office hours. If you are unable to come during my scheduled times, call me to arrange an appointment. If you have a special need that may require assistance or accommodation, please let me know as soon as possible. You need to provide documentation; then, we’ll work to make reasonable accommodation. Students with Disabilities who require accommodations must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, Garrett Conference Center Room 101. The OFSDS phone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD.

**Grades:**
Final grades in this course will be based on the following assignments and grading scale.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Position Paper (4 @ 50)</td>
<td>200pts</td>
<td>$A = 800 – 716$</td>
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Exam (1 @ 100)   100pts  \[ B = 715 – 636 \]
In-Class Debates (3 @ 100)  300pts  \[ C = 635 – 556 \]
Debate Observations  75pts  \[ D = 555 – 476 \]
Ballots (3 @ 25)  75pts  \[ F = 475 – 0 \]
Class Participation  50pts

Total  800 pts

Assignments:

Position Paper (50 points each) – This assignment is designed to assist students in the practice of research and argument formation. In each paper you will first identify a controversial issue relevant to the local, state, national, or international community. Once the issue has been identified, you will present at least two legitimate arguments for both sides frequently put forth in the debate over this issue. Finally, you should take a side in the debate and defend the merits of that position. Each position paper should utilize at least 5 credible source citations and not exceed four pages in length.

Exam (100 points) – One comprehensive examination will be given in this class. The exam will be given after the lecture phase of the class is complete but prior to the start of the in-class debates. The format of the exam will be discussed as the date of the exam approaches.

In-Class Debates (100 points each) – Over the course of this semester you will participate in three parliamentary style in-class debates. Parliamentary debate is a team activity; therefore, you will work with a partner for these in-class debates. Unlike traditional parliamentary debate, the topic and sides will be announced the class period PRIOR to the debate so that you have ample time to prepare for the debate. Topics for debating will be pulled from current events, and the time limits for the in-class debate will be:

- Prime Minister Constructive 6 minutes
- Leader of Opposition Constructive 6 minutes
- Member of Government Constructive 6 minutes
- Member of Opposition Constructive 6 minutes
- Leader of Opposition Rebuttal 4 minutes
- Prime Minister Rebuttal 4 minutes

Debate Observations (75 points) – Over the course of this semester you will have three opportunities to observe both academic and presidential debates at events here on campus. As part of your final grade for this course you are expected to attend at least one of these events. In addition to attending one of these events, you are also required to write a two page essay about the debate you observed. Your first opportunity to watch a debate will be the WKU Fall Fiesta debate tournament held on September 26th and 27th. If you are unable to attend the WKU Fall Fiesta, your second opportunity will on October 7th as WKU sponsors a Debate Watch activity to coincide with a televised presidential debate. Your last opportunity to attend a debate related event here on campus will take place as the WKU Debate Team plays host to the British National Champions. The date of this last event has yet to be determined. More details on each event and on the essay that should follow will be provided as the events approach.
Ballots (25 points each) – In addition to debating in two in-class debates, you will also participate as a judge in two additional in-class debates. As a judge for the round you will be expected to pay close attention to the debate, take notes on the arguments that are made by each debate, and complete a positive and informative ballot. In order to ensure that students attend class even when they are not scheduled to debate; the judges for a given debate will not be announced until the day of the debate. If you are absent on a day you are called on to judge, then you will receive an automatic zero for the assignment unless the absence is excused.

Class Participation (50 points) – You will have the opportunity to earn up to 50 points through in-class activities, quizzes, and assignments. These assignments will be dispersed throughout the semester, and in order to receive these points you must be present in class and complete the assignments.

### COMM 245: Argumentation and Debate

#### Tentative Daily Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;August 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tuesday: Course Introduction  &lt;br&gt;Thursday: Introduction to Debate – Applied and Academic Debate</td>
<td>Chapters 1 and 2</td>
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<td><strong>Weeks 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; and 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tuesday: Framing the Debate  &lt;br&gt;Thursday: Analyzing and Evaluating the Topic</td>
<td>Chapter 3  &lt;br&gt;Chapter 4</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tuesday: Researching for the Debate  &lt;br&gt;Thursday: Evaluating Evidence</td>
<td>Chapter 5  &lt;br&gt;Chapters 6 and 7</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tuesday: Argument Structure and Formation  &lt;br&gt;Thursday: Types of Reasoning and Fallacies</td>
<td>Chapter 8  &lt;br&gt;Chapters 9 and 10</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 23&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; and 25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tuesday: Audience Analysis  &lt;br&gt;Verbal Delivery  &lt;br&gt;Thursday: Nonverbal Delivery  &lt;br&gt;Delivery Styles</td>
<td>Chapter 15  &lt;br&gt;Chapter 16</td>
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<td><strong>Week 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;September 30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and October 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tuesday: Building a Debate Case  &lt;br&gt;Being Affirmative  &lt;br&gt;Thursday: Being Negative</td>
<td>Chapters 11 and 12  &lt;br&gt;Chapter 13</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>October 7\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: Refutation</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>October 14\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: Common Arguments in Parliamentary Debate</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>October 21\textsuperscript{st} and 23\textsuperscript{rd}</td>
<td>Tuesday: Judging and Evaluating a Debate</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>October 28\textsuperscript{th} and 30\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: EXAM</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>November 4\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: In-Class Debate (Round 1)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>November 11\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: In-Class Debates (Round 1)</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>November 18\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: In-Class Debates (Round 2)</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>November 25\textsuperscript{th} and 27\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: In-Class Debates (Round 3)</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>December 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Tuesday: In-Class Debates (Round 3)</td>
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<td>FINALS WEEK</td>
<td>December 8\textsuperscript{th} – 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>POSITION PAPER #3 DUE – Thursday</td>
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