

# Debate and Argumentation

## Course Syllabus

**Instructor:** John Shen

**Course Description:**

This seminar focuses on debating from an evidence-based perspective. In each class, we will look at a different case while discussing some aspect of argumentation or logic. We will explore argument structure, speaking style, and the process of critiquing and evaluating evidence. Because this is an evidence focused seminar, there will be intensive reading on each of the topics we cover. In the end, students will have a grasp of not only general methods of argumentation, but also the ability to advocate for both sides of controversial issues. In this seminar, we will use climate change as the primary topic for our debate, though students will have an opportunity to present a final debate on a secondary major issue (TBA).

**Course Objectives:**

1. To successfully apply the three modes of persuasion – ethos, logos, and pathos
2. To understand the structure of logic and break down arguments into chains of contentions
3. To gain confidence speaking both in speech format and in cross examination format
4. To understand criteria for evaluating evidence from both academic and non-academic sources
5. To gain subject specific knowledge on climate change

**Course Expectations:**

- Students are expected to have done the readings before class. Formulating questions regarding the readings will greatly help students learn the material.
- All students are expected to contribute to class discussions.
- Students should feel free to ask any and all questions regarding the material. Asking questions is greatly encouraged!

**Course Schedule:**

*Read before class:*

- *Logos Pathos Ethos Kairos*

- *IPCC Report*

### **Day 1: Overview, Structure of an Argument**

Objective: Students will learn about the fundamental modes of persuasion: emotion, logic, and authority. After a brief discussion of the structure of a good argument, students will have the opportunity to practice executing their own arguments.

- Debate in History
- Introductions & Ice Breaker
  - Point of View
- Debate videos
- Lecture: Background on adaptation

#### Homework:

- *Singer reading – anthropogenic warming*
- *Ferrera reading*
- *Comparison: Singer vs. IPCC*

### **Day 2: Evidence and Qualifications**

Objective: Students will practice identifying the most important parts of evidence, weak links, and evaluating the qualifications/bias of authors.

- Pre-debate discussion of background knowledge/reading from Day 1
- Thesis writing practice
- In class reading and debate

#### Homework:

- *Koutavas reading – CO2 agriculture*
- *Reading – Algal Biofuels*

### **Day 3: Presentation, Ethos, Cross examination**

Objective: One of the most difficult parts of debate is asking and fielding questions that are pertinent to the specific debate. Students will learn about techniques for speaking in front of an audience, and practice challenging their opponents in a cross-examination format.

- Lecture: *Ethos*

- Mini-cross examinations

Homework:

- *Proliferation reading: Tepper,*
- *Intellectual Property: Boldrin*

**Day 4: Impact Turns, Link Turns**

Objective: Students will think on the spot and craft responses to novel arguments about global issues – nuclear proliferation, intellectual property, and terrorism.

- Group discussion – terms and subject specific readings
- Lecture: Frontloading your argument
- Mini impact turn debates

Homework:

- *Readings for final debate topic (TBA)*

**Day 5: Preparation for Final Debate**

Objective: In the last class, students will apply the skills they have learned from the past week to prepare for a debate on a new topic (TBA). The final presentation will be a debate, in the cross examination format.

- Group discussion – topic specific background review
- Thesis Writing
- Lecture: Impact analysis beyond timeframe, magnitude, probability
- Argument brainstorming

Homework:

- *Finish preparing for the debate*