

Mayville State University

COMM 314 Argumentation and Debate (30610)

Fall 2025

3 Credit Hours

Course and Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Mr. Bob Sylskar

Contact Information:

Office: CB 119

Email: robert.sylskar@mayvillestate.edu

Work phone: (701) 430-9024. You will be able to reach me at this number more often than my office phone but use it only to call or text me when an email response will not be timely enough.

Hours of Availability:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 10 a.m.-10:50 p.m., 1-1:150 p.m., 3-4 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday: 1-4 p.m.

Also available for meetings on other days and times by appointment.

Zoom Link: [Zoom Meeting ID](#)

Instructional Mode: On-campus face-to-face

Course Dates: August 26 (First class meeting – December 15 (Final Exam), 2025

Time Zone: All times indicated throughout this syllabus reflect Central Time (CT).

Meeting Times and/or Location: 10-11:15 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays in CB 101(Choir Room).

Final Exam Time and Location: 10 a.m. Monday December 15 in CB 101 (Choir Room)

Zoom or Teams Link: [Zoom Meeting ID](#)

Course Materials and Technologies

Required

[MSU Technology Requirements](#) (Important: review and comply with the requirements at this link)

- No text is required for this course. All required materials are located in the course content of Blackboard. These include PowerPoints, Study Guides, Knowledge Checks, videos, etc.
- In compliance with the “MSU Technology Requirements” at the link above, students must have their own laptops with PowerPoint, Word, and other appropriate software installed. Students will use their laptops during each class to view the course content in Blackboard. They will use Word to compose and submit various assignments.
- Students may use laptops for presentations.
- Students must check Outlook, the campus email system, daily for any messages, announcements.

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Use of Artificial Intelligence in this Course

We will use AI Overviews to supplement in-class discussions, brainstorming, and other in-class activities. Use of AI tools outside of class will be left to your discretion, but with the following stipulation: all work submitted in this course must be your own. Contributions from anyone or anything else- including AI sources, must be properly quoted and cited every time they are used. Failure to do so constitutes an academic integrity violation, and I will follow the institution's policy to the letter in those instances.

Course Description

This course focuses on investigation of the structure, types, and tests of arguments with practical application in preparing and presenting debates. Students will study topical issues, examining the various positions of possible advocacy, develop arguments for and against, and learn to present those arguments in a public speaking format.

Pre-/Co-requisites: No Pre-/Co-requisites are required.

Course Objectives

1. Students will use critical thinking to make well-reasoned decisions, distinguish fact from judgment, belief from knowledge, and to develop skills in elementary inductive and deductive processes, including an understanding of the formal and informal fallacies of language and thought.
2. Students will examine the values of academic debate through discussion and practice.
3. Students will develop a set of ethical guidelines for debate.
4. Students will state controversies appropriate for debate using established guidelines.
5. Students will analyze controversies through definition, exploration of stock and non-stock issues.
6. Students will use all appropriate research resources and skills to explore controversies.
7. Students will demonstrate appropriate use of evidence and reasoning through class debates.
8. Students will develop and present cases in support of both sides of a controversy using guidelines learned in class.
9. Students will practice debate in several different formats.

Standards Alignment (English Education Program Approval Standards—ND ESPB)

- 05020.2.1 Candidates can compose a range of formal and informal texts taking into consideration the interrelationships among form, audience, context, and purpose; candidates understand that writing is a recursive process; candidates can use contemporary technologies and/or digital media to compose multimodal discourse.
- 05020.2.2 Candidates know the conventions of English language as they relate to various rhetorical situations (grammar, usage, and mechanics); they understand the concept of dialect and are familiar with relevant grammar systems (e.g., descriptive and prescriptive); they understand principles of language acquisition; they recognize the influence of English language history on ELA content; and they understand the impact of language on society.
- 05020.3.2 Candidates design a range of authentic assessments (e.g., formal and informal, formative and summative) of reading and literature that demonstrate an understanding of how learners develop and that address interpretive, critical, and evaluative abilities in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and presenting.
- 05020.3.5: Candidates plan instruction that incorporates knowledge of language—structure, history, and conventions—to facilitate students' comprehension and interpretation of print and non-print texts.
- 05020.4.4: Candidates design instruction that incorporates students' home and community languages to enable skillful control over their rhetorical choices and language practices for a variety of audiences and purposes

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- 05020.5.2 Candidates use knowledge of theories and research to plan instruction responsive to students' local, national and international histories, individual identities (e.g, race, ethnicity, gender expression, age, appearance, ability, spiritual belief, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and community environment), and languages/dialects as they affect students' opportunities to learn in ELA.
- 05020.6.1 Candidates model literate and ethical practices in ELA teaching, and engage in/reflect on a variety of experiences related to ELA.
- 05020.6.2 Candidates engage in and reflect on a variety of experiences related to ELA that demonstrate understanding of and readiness for leadership, collaboration, ongoing professional development, and community engagement.

Course Expectations

Instructor/Student Communication

- Students are accountable for all academic communications sent to their Mayville State University email address. Students are accountable for all academic communications sent to their Mayville State University email address.
- As such, you must check your campus email daily. I prefer that you contact me through the campus email address I posted above. I will respond to your email within 24 hours during the week, and within 48-72 hours during the weekend.
- If you have an emergency or need immediate response from me, please text me at my cell phone number, provided above: (701) 430-9024. I expect everyone to use this method of contact discretely and judiciously.

Assignments and Assessments

- Read all assignments prior to class, including chapters as noted, research articles, etc.
- Assignments will be given via the Detailed Schedule OR in class. Submit all assignments in Blackboard on designated due dates.

Evaluation and Grading

Grading Policies

Expect written assignments to be graded and returned by the next class period. Grades for in-class debates and some other activities may be returned by the end of the same class.

Your final grade will be determined by the sum of points for all written work, speeches, debates, tests, and classroom and Moodle discussion participation. Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

Attendance/Participation Policies

Your understanding of the material depends on your attendance for class. Therefore, it is essential that you be mentally and physically present for each class period. In order to get the most out of each class session, it is paramount that you *plan ahead* and make sure you *read before coming to class*. Your absences must be documented in some way.

Grading Scale

100-90% = **A** 89-80% = **B** 79-70% = **C** 69-60% = **D** Below 60% = **F**

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Breakdown of Grades

The following table is a close representation, though may not end up being 100% accurate of all assignments and point totals that will make up your final grade. For instance, one or more low-point assignments may be added or subtracted by necessity throughout the semester:

ASSIGNMENT	PTS POSSIBLE	% OF GRADE	PTS EARNED
TOPIC 1 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 1	40		
KC for "What is Argumentation?" Video	20		
KC for "Introduction to Rhetoric" Video	30		
KC for "5 Canons of Rhetoric" Video	10		
KC for the Rhetorical Appeals in "Kill/Mockingbird"	8		
KC for "Inherit the Wind"	2		
KC for How to Argue: Crash Course Philosophy #2	5		
KC for How to Argue: Crash Course Philosophy #3	5		
TOPIC 2 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 2	20		
KC for "Toulmin Method" Video	5		
KC for "The Toulmin Model of Argumentation" Video	5		
KC for "The Toulmin Method--THUNK" Video	5		
KC for "Toulmin Model of Argument" Klien Video	5		
Reasoning Identification Quiz	10		
TOPIC 3 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 3: Recognizing Fallacious Arguments	30		
KC for "Analyzing Trump" Video	20		
Logical Fallacies Presentation Assignment	10		
KC for 1 st "Logical Fallacies" Video	10		
KC for 2nd "Logical Fallacies" Video	5		
KC: Fallacy Identification Exercise	20		
KC: Evaluating Online Info: Logical Fallacies Soc Med.	10		
TOPIC 4 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 4: Using and Testing Evidence	20		
Analyzing Supporting Evidence Quiz	10		
KC for Crash Course Navigating Digital Info #6	10		
Types and Tests of Evidence Quiz	20		
TOPIC 5 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 5: Analyzing Propositions	40		
Identifying Types of Propositions Quiz	10		
Stating Debate Propositions Quiz	10		
TOPIC 6 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 6: Constructing a Convincing Case	34		

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TOPIC 7 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 7: Constructing Cases on Value Propositions	5		
TOPIC 8 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC 8: Constructing Cases on Policy Propositions	16		
KC for Aff. Case Construction Video and Transcript	20		
TOPIC 9 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC for Topic 9: Presenting a Convincing Case	25		
TOPIC 10 ASSIGNMENTS			
KC for How to Flow	20		
KC for Cross Examination	20		
KC for Rebuttal	20		
Midterm Exam	100		
Value Debate	100		
Value Debate	100		
Policy Debate	100		
Policy Debate	100		
	100		
Final Exam	100		
Total Points		100%	0

Specific assignments and percentage of grade will be provided later

Enrollment Verification

On-Campus Course Statement

The U.S. Department of Education requires instructors to conduct an activity which will validate student enrollment in this course. Class attendance will be used to verify enrollment in on-campus courses. If you do not attend, your enrollment in this course will be at risk.

Important Student Information

In the Help & Resources for Students section of the Blackboard Institution Page, you can view and download the Important Student Information document for the current academic year. It includes information about:

- ✓ Land Acknowledgement Statement
- ✓ Academic Grievance Concerns and Instructor English Proficiency
- ✓ NetTutor - Online Tutoring Program
- ✓ Starfish - Student Success System
- ✓ Students with Documented Disabilities
- ✓ Student Learning Outcomes / Essential Learning Outcomes
- ✓ Academic Honesty
- ✓ Emergency Notification
- ✓ Continuity of Academic Instruction for a Pandemic or Emergency

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- ✓ Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)
- ✓ Diversity Statement (Title IX)

Course Timeline/Schedule

You will find a timeline/detailed schedule in your Blackboard Course shell. Locate it near the top, under my picture and right under the Syllabus. It is titled: " 2025, Fall MWF Daily Schedule." It includes the day-by-day and week-by-week timeline, all the assignments and due dates, plus the point value of each assignment. Course Timeline and Schedule are subject to change as deemed necessary by the instructor."

As part of Mayville State's effort to demonstrate continuous improvement in achieving student learning outcomes, this course will address the following SLOs:

- Enter SLO and description here.
- Enter SLO and description here.

The following SLOs/Professional Standards will be mastered in this course:

SLOs/Professional Standards	Mastery Assignment

Instructional Strategies (Required for Teacher Education and Nursing program courses. Otherwise, optional.)

[Delete] Instructions: Enter a list of instructional strategies that will be used in the course. **Examples** include active learning, advanced organizers, brainstorming, character analysis, concept mapping, discussion forums, exams, feedback, flipped classroom, position papers, presentations, reflective writing, etc.

Add text here.

Course Materials and Technologies

[Delete] Instructions: When referencing materials, we recommend that you use and model the formatting and writing Style (APA, MLA) you require your students to use (and do so correctly).

[Delete] Example #1. Breakdown of Grades:

Total points possible = 500

- 5 Exams = 50 points each for a total of 250 points: 50% of final grade
- Research paper = 100 points: 20% of final grade
- Presentation = 100 points: 20% of final grade
- 10 Discussion Forum posts & responses = 5 points each = 50 points total: 10% of final grade

[Delete] Example #2. Breakdown of Grades

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Activity	No. of Occurrences	Points Possible	Percent of Total Grade
Exams	5	250	50%
Research Paper	1	100	20%
Presentations	1	100	20%
Discussion Forum posts & responses	10	50	10%
Total Points Possible		500	