

Teaching Portfolio

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Description

This portfolio offers evidence of teaching effectiveness. I include my teaching philosophy, courses taught, quantitative evaluation scores, qualitative student comments, a brief reflection on student comments, and two sample syllabi: a proposed future course, Platformed Politics and Networked Publics; and a course I have taught, Argumentation. These materials highlight my efforts to cultivate student growth by creating a comfortable and engaging learning environment. My experiences, detailed in these documents, have prepared me for successful instruction in my future position.

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Teaching Philosophy

I believe educators must train students to engage both passionately and *compassionately*. When I train my students to make arguments about the world, I instead emphasize recognition of and respect for others, never forgetting that argumentation is a human practice. Persuasion is embodied; arguments reach real, live people. I ask students to converse, collaborate, and debate in “good faith.” They should help each other, offering charitable readings of others’ thoughts and works, combined with constructive critiques to improve their arguments and advocacy. My role is to facilitate cooperative learning, offering my expertise and experiences in collaboration with my students. To that end, I cultivate a comfortable and interactive environment, helping students think and advocate critically.

I take a discussion-based approach to teaching, suggesting to students on the first day that their shared experiences are just as valuable as my expertise. When I want to teach a concept, I ask students to reflect on their own experiences and knowledge, so we can draw the concept through lived experience and practical examples. For instance, in teaching argumentation, I ask students to apply theories of argumentation to an argumentative exchange they’ve seen on a social networking site. Students reflect on exchanges they’ve had with their relatives on Facebook or interactions with peers on Twitter. Not only do students better grasp the material, but they better connect with each other and with me when we filter course content through our positionality.

In the spirit of a humanist, I humanize: my classroom is a space for collaboration, not just in discussion but in assignments and activities. The world demands collaboration with people, technologies, nonhuman animals, and materials. I ask students to work with others so they can learn more together. I often have various sorts of group activities, but I don’t frame the activities as preparation for the professional world or for when they “have real jobs.” Group research, presentations, and debates are useful for professional development, but more importantly, they expose students to different perspectives that can challenge and change their own perspectives.

As Andrea Lunsford and John Ruskiewicz have quipped with the title of their textbook, *everything’s an argument*. Arguments are based in writing, speech, audiovisual media, and networked assemblages, reflecting the multimodal nature of advocacy our complex environments. I train students to identify, critique, and construct these varied arguments with respect, compassion, and hope. I assign multimodal projects and activities in both online and face-to-face courses: I experimented with a Pinterest project in class; I assigned a video in place of an in-person speech; I encourage students to live-Tweet particular activities in class; and I advocate that students keep up with each other outside of class via GroupMe or other chat apps. Political engagement happens in all of these spaces, from Barack Obama’s YouTube chats to Alex Jones’s Pinterest page. I want my students to recognize that arguments are everywhere, and that they themselves craft arguments everywhere they dwell.

As a former participant and coach in competitive speech and debate, I continue to affirm the potential for (com)passionate advocacy to better our shared socio-political environments. We need to dwell together, share together, and argue together. As a graduate of a liberal arts college and an alumnus of a tremendous humanities graduate program, I understand the power of education to foster not just technical skills but civic capacities, helping students learn together rather than apart. My classroom is a civic space; my role is to train ethical citizens and effective advocates.

Courses Taught

Instructor of record, unless otherwise noted:

Spring 2019

CAS 100A: Effective Speech (2 sections)

Fall 2018

CAS 215: Argumentation

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

Summer 2018

CAS 100C: Message Analysis (World Campus, 2 sections)

Summer 2017

CAS 100B: Group Communication

CAS 100B: Group Communication (World Campus)

Fall 2016

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

CAS 395: Forensic Practicum

Summer 2016

CAS 100C: Message Analysis (World Campus)

Spring 2016

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

CAS 395: Forensic Practicum

Summer 2015

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

Spring 2015

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

CAS 395: Forensic Practicum

Fall 2014

CAS 175: Persuasion and Propaganda (TA, 2 discussion sections)

Summer 2014

CAS 100B: Group Communication

Spring 2014

CAS 100A: Effective Speech (2 sections)

Fall 2013

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

Summer 2013

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

Note: all courses taught at Penn State University.

Course Descriptions

CAS 100A: Effective Speech

Penn State's basic public speaking course. Emphasis on civic engagement and effective individual speaking skills.

CAS 100B: Group Communication

Alternative format of Penn State's basic public speaking course. Emphasis on deliberation and group communication.

CAS 100C: Message Analysis

Alternative format of Penn State's basic public speaking course. Emphasis on message analysis and rhetorical criticism.

CAS 175: Persuasion and Propaganda

This course focuses on the differences and similarities between persuasion and propaganda, taught historically from the early 20th century to present.

CAS 215: Argumentation

This course teaches concepts in argumentation and asks students to practice through debate. I have included a sample syllabus in this document.

CAS 395: Forensic Practicum

Course tied to participation in Penn State's Speech & Debate Society; includes travel and performance requirements for course credit.

Teaching Evaluations

Quantitative Information

21 Sections total, average of **5.97/7.0** for “Overall Quality of Instructor” on Student Rating of Teacher Effectiveness (SRTE)

CAS 100A: Effective Speech – Instructor of Record (9 sections)

Course develops effective skills in public speaking. Students form, deliver, and evaluate speeches on civically engaging topics.

Avg. Instructor Evaluation: 5.79/7.0 Avg. Course Evaluation: 5.22/7.0

CAS 100B: Group Communication – Instructor of Record (3 sections total, 1 online)

Course develops group communication skills through deliberative models of communication and interpersonal communication theories.

Avg. Instructor Evaluation: 5.85/7.0 Avg. Course Evaluation: 5.2/7.0

CAS 100C: Message Analysis – Instructor of Record (3 online sections)

Course develops skills in public speaking through the emphasis of critique, similar to a basic rhetorical criticism course.

Avg. Instructor Evaluation: 6.79/7.0 Avg. Course Evaluation: 6.38/7.0

CAS 175: Persuasion and Propaganda – Teaching Assistant (2 sections)

Course teaches the historical development of propaganda in the 20th and 21st centuries. Mass lecture taught by J. Michael Hogan, with discussion sections taught by teaching assistants.

Avg. Instructor Evaluation: 5.49/7.0 Avg. Course Evaluation: 5.51/7.0

CAS 215: Argumentation (1 section)

Course teaches principles and theories of argumentation, culminating in a debate showcasing student skills.

Avg. Instructor Evaluation: 5.86 Avg. Course Evaluation: 5.36

CAS 395: Forensic Practicum – Instructor of Record (3 sections)

Course provides assessment mechanisms for students participating in speech and debate, including attendance at practices and public debate functions.

Avg. Instructor Evaluation: 6.5/7.0 Avg. Course Evaluation: 6.5/7.0

Overall Avg. Course Evaluation: 5.51/7.0 Overall Avg. Instructor Evaluation: 5.97/7.0

Qualitative Comments

All comments are reproduced without editing for spelling and grammar. Punctuation, including missing spaces, has been minimally edited. Copies of evaluations can be provided upon request.

Open-ended question: What helped you learn in this course?

Class discussions & teaching style

“Jeremy made a course I was dreading into something that was one of my most enjoyable courses at Penn State. His passion and enthusiasm is infectious and made every class fun and informative. I cannot stress what a difference Jeremy has made in my own public speaking skills and those of my classmates. His teaching style is nothing short of incredible.”

“Teacher genuinely cares about the progress of the students and teacher treats students as academics with valuable insight which allows for great class discussions.”

“The in class discussions were very helpful because we weren't discussing a lot of matters on if they were fact or fiction or right or wrong. We had a lot of discussions where opinions were respected and points were brought up in order to make the students think for themselves.”

“Jeremy is a fantastic instructor. He always made sure that everyone understood each thing we learned in class and that everyone was comfortable and up to date. He encouraged discussion in the classroom, even if it was things that were outside the classroom. He created a safe space for learning, discussion, and debate.”

“I think the class discussions helped me learn a lot because Jeremy always encouraged us to talk more and put ourselves out there, and that's what this class is for.”

“The very deep and thought provoking deliberations uncovered answers not previously thought of.”

“Engaging in topics relevant today helps students learn more effectively.”

“Jeremy was very good at keeping this class interesting all the time and he really got us to think outside the box when discussing whatever we were learning in class.”

“Jeremy's teaching style is really what helped me learn in this class. His expertise and passion for the course really shines through in his teaching and makes the material easier to understand for the most part.”

“The instructor had a very unique and engaging teaching style.”

“In particular, the Friday group discussions gave an excellent chance to state my opinions and hear from my peers. In particular, the instructor displayed a unique talent for facilitating discussion from otherwise reticent students. In 9 semesters at Penn State, this has been my favorite discussion section.”

“The open ended discussion style of instruction that Jeremy used to teach the information. It never felt like a lecture.”

“The instructor. He just brought so much energy and ideas to the class that one could not help but enjoy learning the material.”

“Mr. Johnson gave good examples and his directions on his assignments were easy to follow and what he expected on each assignment.”

“Jeremy is a great instructor who is very supportive and encouraging of his students.”

“First of all, the instructor has a very good, wide & deep knowledge background. not only in public speaking but also in other fields and topics. In addition, he is very energetic, fun, clear and informative in teaching. after all, he managed to make this speech class a very enjoyable + useful learning experience.”

“Great teacher. Made me want to come to class. Enthusiasm. 10/10, would take again.”

Helpful feedback

“Even though Jeremy has a lot of experience in speaking, he is still humble and does not expect everyone to be good in speaking after once or twice of practice. Instead, he is always willing to share his experience with us and offer guidance and encouragement when we need it. I dreaded this class initially and even though I did not do as well as I wished I would, the journey has been an enriching one with such a superb teacher as Jeremy.”

“Jeremy's feedback from individual assignments really helped me hone in on what I was doing right and wrong in my speeches.”

“Jeremy Johnson has always made office hours and encouraged us to come in for help. I have taken advantage of this and as a result have come out with a good grade in the class. He is willing to help if you spend the time and put effort in to improve.”

“Incredible teacher, great person, willing to sit down and help his students.”

“The thing that helped me improve my public speaking skills most was Jeremy's detailed feedback on our grading rubrics for each of our major speeches. I made sure to read over these tips and I think it is what has helped me learn the most about public speaking.”

“Mr. Johnson encouraged us to reach out on anything and always gave constructive feedback.”

“When I swayed from the objectives, Jeremy gently guided me back onto the path. That was extremely helpful and surprisingly, motivating as well.”

“Jeremy was extremely helpful during this course. It was challenging, especially with some of the terminology, but he was always available to answer questions.”

“The immediate feedback, both positive and negative, helps me as well. I also liked the feedback on speech outlines from both the professor and other students, I found comments really helpful.”

Comfortable environment

“The professor actually cares about each students well being, making the students want to come to class and engage in discussion. Views students as people with a life outside of school like everyone else.”

“Jeremy is very experienced and skilled in what this course is meant to teach. I think just listening to his experiences and knowledge on it all is what helped the most. I also think his encouragement of participation from the class from the very start lead to a comfortable learning environment. This was important for learning in this class, because if I was intimidated or nervous I would not have achieved as much because those feelings get in the way. Jeremy kept a comfortable, causal environment which was great.”

“It really helped that Jeremy puts a huge emphasis on being respectful towards each other specially when we are doing the speeches. Not a lot of people enjoy speaking in public or in front of people so that kind of environment made it easier and less scary to speak.”

“His enthusiasm helped the class be motivated all of the time and created an environment of respect and learning.”

“Jeremy created a relaxed, open environment for us”

“Jeremy made the class a very comfortable environment for all students. Although some students may disagree with topics or subject, he has made a large effort to review, answer questions, and assist in any way. This class has surpassed all my expectations on how I could have taken this class with any other instructor by being very interactive and making it more of a teach the teacher experience vice learning by text or PowerPoint.”

“Creates an excellent classroom environment and gives his students confidence.”

“Jeremy made the class a comfortable place to discuss whatever opinion you might have. Also I was always entertained and never wanted to not be paying attention.”

“He also made the class fun with the impromptu speeches. It made all of us alot more comfortable giving speeches”

“The relaxed environment Jeremy provided.”

Open-ended question: What changes would improve your learning?

Clarity for exams & exam material

“I wish more of our discussion topics related to the exams.”

“Maybe a little more information about what to expect going into the exam. He kinda gives a moderate sized list of what you should know, but he doesn't emphasize anything in particular or say what is more important.”

“I think that the instructor was kinda all over the place with his notes on the board, but I understood what was just saying. I just wish his notes were a little more organized.”

“More distinct instructions for things like papers and presentations.”

“Be more concrete about what is exam material and what is just a good practice for speeches”

“One thing I felt could be improved about the class was the note taking aspect. Since most notes were the result of student replies, it was difficult to know if you had a ‘good’ definition for something, or if all of the aspects of a topic were covered. In the end, this did not matter too much on the exams, but it did make it slightly harder to make day to day notes for future reference.”

“Better notes in class”

“I better study guide for the Midterm and Final.”

“Since this is a class in which many students already have a working knowledge of the subject matter, the tests of arbitrary vocabulary and simple ideas are kind of insulting, and a waste of time. I would have preferred to give more speeches and actually become a more effective communicator than relearn what pathos logos and ethos are for the 5th time in my academic career. I understand a certain amount of theory is necessary to create a good argument, but the amount of time wasted on things that I already knew bored and frustrated me and my classmates.”

“Used a lot of class interpretation for definitions of terms or examples. I understand that he was trying to be nice, but I felt that it resulted in definitions that could have been more specific.”

“More clarity of what will be on quizzes and more review material.”

Textbook usage

“Boring textbook material could be cut down- how much text book material is actually relevant to SPEAKING. English and rhetoric go hand in hand, however it got boring at times. Lost attention.”

“I found the book readings to be slightly unnecessary. The things that I am taking away from this course are the skills that I learned from Jeremy's lectures and from actually giving the speeches. I believe that the skills learned in class greatly outweigh the theoretical information in the text book.”

“textbook is absolutely pointless and a waste of money.”

“I found the book readings to be slightly unnecessary.”

“Personally I feel that I shouldn't be graded from what I can read in a text book for a public speaking class. I took the class to become more comfortable speaking in front of others(which I now do), but having to take a test on something that I could have read online for free seemed counterintuitive.”

“While this is a summer class and it was obviously more condensed than a regular semester long class, I think the amount of reading assigned in the textbook was a little too much. At one point, we had to read two chapters in one night which totaled to 140 some pages with 240 terms. Not exactly realistic even during a semester course. Maybe restructuring the syllabus or selecting important pages would be more beneficial.”

“ditch the book”

“There is a big disconnect between the discussions and the book”

“more strict with readings; clarity with occasional pieces of learning”

“There were so many concepts and terms in the textbook, I did not know what to focus on.”

Clarity in assignment expectations

“Seeing the speech rubrics before we give them; some directions were unclear as to what you were looking for.”

“mention clearly what's the most important thing in speech grading.”

“a better knowledge of what the instructor expects”

“I would like a little more instruction on the motivational speeches. I think our class was confused about what to do.”

“Having more specific instructions for speeches and assignments would be good - It would be nice if the speeches would be more like those that we will give in the future wherever we end up working. So, e.g., if you are a science major, it would be nice to have practice giving technical speeches”

“I think it could be better if students had more time to prepare their speeches and talk to Jeremy about the speech before they had to present it. It sometimes felt like he just talked about what the speech was and then you were presenting it right after that.”

“A much clearer and spelled out grading rubric for our speeches.”

“Some of the dates and instructions are a little unclear. If they were clearly written out it would help to improve my learning.”

“some of the assignment description of criteria were not clear. make rubrics to so that we can better understand how to submit things.”

“Clearer definitions and more speech examples”

“More clarity in our lectures.”

Instructor Reflection

Surveying my previous teaching evaluations, the above themes and comments were most representative—they were the most frequent topics, and I agree with the students about my strengths and weaknesses as a whole. In quantitative measures and in the nature of comments provided on my evaluations, it seems clear that the overwhelming majority of my students find my classes helpful and my instruction sound. Still, I take seriously the critiques students provide, so I want to provide a brief narrative of my growth as an instructor.

I believe my most important strength as an instructor is adaptation. All of my students have only seen me in one semester, except for the speech and debate students who I have taught for the past few years. My typical student does not realize how much I change my classes, and I do so based directly on their feedback. Here are a few areas I have worked to improve based on student assessment:

More opportunities to speak

In my early public speaking classes, I received a handful of comments asking me to reduce the amount of testable content and increase the amount of speaking time. I agreed with those students, and in the subsequent semesters I began to offer more impromptu speeches and more in-class discussions. Now, on average, my public speaking students give ten speeches of varying length over the semester. In other classes, I will continue to get students participating by speaking. For example, in my Argumentation course, I have students debate and give brief oral responses to the readings.

Better motivation practices

In the first two classes I taught (Summer 2013 and Fall 2013), I received feedback that I seemed a bit condescending with my advice and grading. The quantitative scores I received for increasing student motivation were concerning. In response, I worked to provide more positive motivation for my students. Though my feedback remains direct, I try to offer more positive feedback, and I seek out struggling students to help them improve their grades.

Openness to viewpoints

In my early classes, I received three or four comments about students who felt silenced because they disagreed with my perspective. Admittedly, I broach controversial political topics in class, and I do not choose to hide my views. That seemed to intimidate some students. One student described me as a “repulsive liberal,” and while I think their characterizations of me were rather unfair, I still took the feedback seriously. No student should feel excluded. In response, I have worked to be clear, even on the first day of class, that I welcome all respectful disagreement and debate in class discussions—and that the students’ perspectives are as valuable and weighty as

my own. My most recent classes have complimented my openness to different perspectives and have provided high ranks on that quantitative measure on our teaching evaluations.

Textbooks & exam materials

In some of my early public speaking courses, I received feedback that there was too much reading material. On future syllabi, I narrowed down to a few pages in each chapter that each student needed to read thoroughly, while I asked them to skim the rest of the chapter. In my most recent classes, I received repeated feedback that the course textbook was problematic and that I should help students better prepare for their exams. Regarding the book, this is a departmental constraint in public speaking, as I am required to use a certain textbook; yet, my adaptation to that requirement has been inadequate. I have already made strides in better incorporating textbook materials into class discussions, especially in my argumentation course, where I was able to choose the text. I aim to use the textbook to anchor class discussions, creating open-ended exams that ask students to apply course material. I have found success in that approach thus far, and will continue with it in my future position.

Summary

I believe the best teachers are the best learners. I work to learn from my students' feedback so that I can provide better instruction in the future. I am delighted that students have appreciated my courses and the adjustments I have already made. My future students will be better off thanks to my former students and my peers. I look forward to a long career of successful teaching and learning.

Sample Syllabus

Platformed Politics and Networked Publics

Course Description

This course considers the impacts of technological platforms (eg. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) on rhetoric and political discourse. Drawing from theories of what is “public,” the course asks students to reflect on the changes brought by graphical user interfaces, algorithmic arrangement, and cross-platform circulation. Students will develop familiarity with a variety of platforms, will engage scholarly literature, and will create their own multimedia projects or critical analyses.

Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify a variety of methods for understanding the political dynamics of networked platforms.
2. Students will develop substantive critiques of networked platforms, offering specific attention to race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and other intersectional concerns.
3. Students will be able to trace the historical, ideological, and material conditions that give rise to networked platforms and their designs.
4. Students will be able to offer constructive suggestions for improving networked spaces, on institutional, corporate, and personal levels.

Course Texts*

David Eggers, *The Circle*, Vintage, 2013

Safiya Noble and Brendesha Tynes, *The Intersectional Internet*, 2016

Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble*, Penguin Books, 2011

Zizi Papacharissi, *A Private Sphere*, Polity, 2013

Damien Smith Pfister, *Networked Media, Networked Rhetorics*, Penn State Press, 2014

Cass Sunstein, *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*, Princeton University Press, 2017

Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*, Yale University Press, 2017

Siva Vaidyanathan, *The Googlization of Everything*, University of California Press, 2012

Sara Wachter-Boettcher, *Technically Wrong*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2017

*I will provide supplemental readings via the course management system. Most of these books are available for \$10-20. Please contact me if the above texts are a significant financial burden for you.

Course Assignments

Written assignments should be delivered in Microsoft Word or PDF format, double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font and standard 1” margins.

Written assignments are due via the course management system at noon on the date indicated on the course schedule.

Reflection Papers (20%), Variable Dates:

Twice throughout the semester, you will be asked to write an approximately three-page paper responding to the readings from one day of class. You will sign up for two class periods. You

will turn in the paper normally, but you will also read it out loud and provide three questions to prompt class discussion. These papers should be provocative and insightful, and should not simply summarize the material.

Topic Proposal, Due September 13:

Though this assignment is not formally graded, it is mandatory and must be completed before you can begin your platform study and critical essay/project. This will be a one-page assignment that asks you to identify and rank two platforms you would be interested in studying. I would like you to write a few sentences as to why each platform interests you.

Platform Study (25%), Due October 9:

You will provide an approximately ten-page analysis of the history and impacts of a platform of your choice. Your analysis should cover the platform's development, its philosophical and ethical dynamics, its political ramifications (if any), and any significant controversies. Your essay can briefly nod to implications for networked publics, political discourse, and rhetorical theory, but you should be careful not to overlap material with your critical project or essay. More information will be provided in an expanded assignment description.

Critical Essay/Project (25%), Due December 6:

You will build from your platform study to offer critical analysis of your platform. The default format for this assignment is a ten-page essay exploring your platform's impacts on networked publics, political discourse, and rhetorical theory. Your assignment should engage scholarly literature from class as well as other literature you find.

As an alternative, you can create a multimedia project, combining, for example, a YouTube video with an annotated bibliography. Your multimedia project should be creative, cohesive, and insightful. **You must consult with me first if you wish to create a multimedia project.**

Exams & Participation

Quizzes (20%):

At approximately the mid-way point of the semester and on the penultimate day of class, you will take two quizzes. These quizzes will follow an essay format, asking you to reflect on course readings and discussions as you consider a rhetorical text I will provide on the exam day.

Class Participation (10%):

This is a discussion-based class, so your participation is necessary. I will not lecture, but will rather ask for your thoughts as we work through the course material together. You should be active and courteous, contributing to a healthy and insightful classroom environment.

This is an intensive upper-level course. You will be expected to read approximately 100-150 pages per week. Part of class participation is having familiarity with the reading and being able to discuss with the class. I am not expecting that you have read every single word of every single article, but I expect you to understand each article's main arguments and to engage each article critically.

Attendance:

You are expected to attend each class. You may miss up to two days without penalty. Beyond two absences, for each absence, I will deduct 2% from your overall grade. If you need to miss class, please let me know in advance. You will be expected to get notes and catch up on work in a timely fashion.

Grading

This course will use a 1000-point system for tracking your grades. This should make it easy for you to track your own grade and to identify any discrepancies. Each assignment percentage above corresponds to a point value; for example, the reflection papers, worth 20% of your grade combined, are each worth 100 points.

Access, Disabilities, and Health

If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about physical access, please notify me as soon as possible. A disability can be defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” This includes a variety of invisible disabilities, including chronic physical and/or mental illness.

Many students face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients’ cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

[Resources here]

I will work with you to make sure you can succeed in this class, and welcome you to use any necessary university resources to make your success possible. Please let me know if I can help.

Academic Integrity

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 information from the university handbook.

Classroom Climate

In this course, we will be discussing a variety of topics, some of which are highly debated, very personal, and sometimes outside of your comfort zone. I encourage you to stretch your comfort zone and to use the concepts discussed in class to think about your experiences and position in the world. Many of our beliefs (including mine) may be challenged this semester. This process has enormous potential and usefulness. However, I expect you to treat your classmates with respect and care.

While you may disagree with each other or with me (in fact, I welcome debate), I expect that you value your classmates’ opinions and ideas in class. At no point this semester should any student feel silenced or muted. I take the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of students very seriously, and will work to create an inclusive, safe, and challenging classroom environment.

Electronic Devices Policy

As someone deeply invested in technology, I understand that many of us are connected constantly via cell phones, tablets, laptops, etc. However, during this class, I ask that you do not use electronic devices for purposes outside the parameters of the class. I encourage students to use laptops and tablets to take notes, to look up information relevant to our discussions, and to

generally supplement the classroom experience using technology. If I find your technology use to be disruptive (eg. if you are doing something you should not be doing, or if your technology is distracting your classmates), I will ask you to turn it off or sit in the very back of the classroom. I reserve the right to dock points from your participation grade if you are not using technology appropriately.

If you ever need to leave on your cell phone or electronic device, you must communicate that with me prior to class. I understand that emergencies arise and that some communications (eg. job calls) are vital. I will be flexible with such occasions if and only if you tell me first.

Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Topic & Readings</u> *Indicates readings will be posted on the course management site
8/23	R	Course introduction Discuss syllabus and course expectations What is a platform, and what is a public?
8/28	T	Arguing for Publics Selections from John Dewey and Walter Lippmann* <i>Sign-ups for Reflection Paper Days</i>
8/30	R	The Power of Search Vaidhyanathan, Introduction & Chapter 1
9/4	T	Knowledge and Publics in Google Vaidhyanathan, Chapter 4 & Chapter 5
9/6	R	Blogs and Public Deliberation Pfister, Chapter 1 & Chapter 2
9/11	T	Publics and Counter-Publics G. Thomas Goodnight, "Public Discourse"* Robert Asen, "Critical Engagement through Public Sphere Scholarship"* Karma Chavez, "Counter-Public Enclaves"*
9/13	R	The Networked Public Tufekci, Chapter 1 & Chapter 2 <i>Due: Platform Topic Proposal</i>
9/18	T	The Networked Public, Part II danah boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics"* Papacharissi, Chapter 5

9/20	R	Polarization Sunstein, Chapter 3 & Chapter 8
9/25	T	Polarization Part II Emma Grey Ellis, Red Pilled Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro, “Is the Internet Causing Political Polarization?”
9/27	R	The Networked Self Excerpts from Turkle’s <i>The Second Self</i> and <i>Alone Together</i> * Kafai, Fields, and Cook, “Your Second Selves”*
10/2	T	Social Interaction and the Self Sunstein, Chapter 1 & Chapter 5
10/4	R	Privacy and Publicity Papacharissi, Chapter 2 & Chapter 3
10/9	T	Civility and Responsibility Thomas Benson, “Rhetoric, Civility, and Community”* Jillian York, Google’s Anti-Bullying AI Mistakes Civility for Decency <u>Due: Platform Study</u>
10/11	R	Collaboration and Democracy Amber Davisson, “Google Maps as a Site of Rhetorical Invention in the 2008 Presidential Election”* Rowan Conway, The Next Wave of Digital Democracy?
10/16	T	<u>Quiz #1</u>
10/18	R	Silicon Valley & Technological Utopianism Wachter-Boettcher, Chapter 9 Eggers, Book I
10/23	T	Silicon Valley & Technological Utopianism, Part II Eggers, Book II and Book III
10/25	R	Platformed Racism Ariadna Matamoros-Fernández, “Platformed Racism”* Selections from Noble’s <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> * Noble and Tynes, Chapter 2
10/30	T	Interface Politics Selfe and Selfe, “The Politics of the Interface”*

		Michelle Kendrick, “Invisibility, Race, and the Interface” Noble and Tynes, Chapter 12
11/1	R	Cyber-sexism and Femininity Jessica Brophy, “Developing a Corporeal Cyberfeminism” Wachter-Boettcher, Chapter 4
11/6	T	Gaming, Publics, and Politics Chris O’Brien, “Twitch Plays Politics” Shira Chess, “I Am What I Play and I Play What I Am” Noble and Tynes, Chapter 7
11/8	R	Gamergate Adrienne Massanari, “Gamergate and the Fapping” Caitlin Dewey, The Only Guide to Gamergate You Will Ever Need to Read
11/13	T	Networked Algorithms Ted Striphas, “Algorithmic Culture” Franklin Foer, “Facebook’s War on Free Will”
11/15	R	Algorithmic Bias and Personalization Leigh Alexander, Is an Algorithm Any Less Racist than a Human? Ryan Holmes, The Problem Isn’t Fake News, It’s Bad Algorithms Engin Bozdog, “Bias in Algorithmic Filtering and Personalization”
11/20	T	Hashtags and Activism Jennifer Reinwald, “Hashtags and Attention through the Tetrad” Tufekci, Chapter 5
11/22	R	Thanksgiving Day – No Class
11/27	T	Filter Bubbles Pariser, Introduction & Chapter 1
11/29	R	Filter Bubbles, Part II Pariser, Chapter 4 & Chapter 5
12/4	T	Information and Democracy Larry Diamond, “Liberation Technology” Brenda Dervin, “Information <--> Democracy”
12/6	R	The Future of Democratic Engagement Papacharissi, Chapter 1 Tufekci, Epilogue <u>Due: Critical Essay/Project</u>

12/11	T	Quiz #2 Course Wrap-up

Sample Syllabus: Argumentation

Course Description

This course explores the foundations of argumentation and some of its applications in contemporary society. The course will develop competencies in argumentation, logic, reasoning, and persuasion through both critical analysis and practical implementation.

Course Objectives

1. Students will understand the crucial role argumentation plays in public and private discourse.
2. Students will become skilled advocates by researching, gathering, and organizing supporting material to craft argumentative discourse.
3. Students will be able to effectively utilize the physical and digital resources of Penn State's library system.
4. Students will be able to leverage their knowledge for effective critique of contemporary public discourse.

Course Texts

James A. Herrick, *Argumentation: Understanding and Shaping Arguments*. 5th edition. Strata Publishing, 2015.

Course Assignments

Written assignments should be delivered in Microsoft Word or PDF format, double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font and standard 1" margins.

Written assignments are due via Canvas before the start of class on the date indicated on the course schedule. Failure to submit your assignment on time will result in a deduction of up to 10% per day the assignment is late. I am happy to be flexible if extenuating circumstances arise, but only if you contact me in advance of the due date.

Below are brief descriptions of each assignment; more details will be provided in class.

Annotated bibliography

Using Penn State's library resources, you will find and annotate at least ten scholarly sources related to the debate topic for the course. These sources will serve as a foundation for your later research.

Debate position paper

In this 5-6 page paper (excluding bibliography), you will construct and provide evidence for arguments that will support the case you will make in the oral debate. These papers will be reviewed by a peer prior to final submission.

Oral debate

Students will be paired up to participate in two-on-two debates. Each student will debate once. This debate will require extensive research and work outside of class.

Written materials for debates

You will be required to submit all briefs, constructive cases, negative blocks, and evidence that you used in preparing for the oral debate, regardless of whether you used the material in the debate itself.

Networked argumentation analysis

In this 2-3 page paper, you will observe and analyze a debate or argumentative exchange on a networking platform (Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, etc.) using techniques and concepts learned in class.

Debate critiques

You will be required to complete a peer review of two teams debating on different days. Each critique will be worth 20 points. In this critique, you will focus on your peers' use of evidence, argumentative strategies, and responsiveness to their opponents.

Exams & Participation*Exams*

This course will have four exams. While all exams can be considered comprehensive, each of the first three exams will have a different focus. The final exam will comprehensively test student learning through the semester.

Attendance

You are expected to attend each class. You may miss up to two days without penalty. Beyond two absences, for each absence, I will deduct 2% from your overall grade. If you need to miss class, please let me know in advance. You will be expected to get notes and catch up on work in a timely fashion.

Impromptu speeches

On most class days, I will select a few students to give impromptu speeches with the goal of developing in-the-moment oral argumentation skills.

Grading

This course will use a 1000-point system for tracking your grades. This should make it easy for you to track your own grade and to identify any discrepancies. Each assignment percentage above corresponds to a point value; for example, each exam, worth 10% of your grade, is valued at 100 points.

Assignment	Points
<i>Oral presentations</i>	200
Debate	200
<i>Written assignments</i>	270
Debate position paper	120
Written materials for debates	50
Networked argumentation analysis	50
Annotated bibliography	50
<i>Exams</i>	400
Exam 1	100

Exam 2	100
Exam 3	100
Final exam	100
<i>Participation/attendance</i>	<i>130</i>
Presence, discussion, and impromptu speeches	90
Debate critiques	40
Total	1000

Access, Disabilities, and Health

If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about physical access, please notify me as soon as possible. A disability can be defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” This includes a variety of invisible disabilities, including chronic physical and/or mental illness.

Many students face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients’ cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

[Resources here]

I will work with you to make sure you can succeed in this class, and welcome you to use any necessary university resources to make your success possible. Please let me know if I can help.

Academic Integrity

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 information from the university handbook: [url here]

Classroom Climate

In this course, we will be discussing a variety of topics, some of which are highly debated, very personal, and sometimes outside of your comfort zone. I encourage you to stretch your comfort zone and to use the concepts discussed in class to think about your experiences and position in the world. Many of our beliefs (including mine) may be challenged this semester. This process has enormous potential and usefulness. However, I expect you to treat your classmates with respect and care.

While you may strongly disagree with each other or with me, I expect that you value your classmates’ opinions and ideas in class. At no point this semester should any student feel

silenced or muted. I take the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of students very seriously, and will work to create an inclusive, safe, and challenging classroom environment.

Electronic Devices Policy

As someone deeply invested in technology, I understand that many of us are connected constantly via cell phones, tablets, laptops, etc. However, during this class, I ask that you do not use electronic devices for purposes outside the parameters of the class. I encourage students to use laptops and tablets to take notes, to look up information relevant to our discussions, and to generally supplement the classroom experience using technology. If I find your technology use to be disruptive (eg. if you are doing something you should not be doing, or if your technology is distracting your classmates), I will ask you to turn it off or sit in the very back of the classroom. I reserve the right to dock points from your participation grade if you are not using technology appropriately.

If you ever need to leave on your cell phone or electronic device, you must communicate that with me prior to class. I understand that emergencies arise and that some communications (eg. job calls) are vital. I will be flexible with such occasions if and only if you tell me first.

Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Topic & Readings</u> Read indicated materials <u>prior</u> to class *Indicates readings will be posted on Canvas
8/21	T	Course introduction; argumentative claims and evidence Discuss: Syllabus and course expectations; What is an argument? What is critical thinking?
8/23	R	Components of an argument; types of propositions Read and analyze assigned editorials Read: Chapter 1, Chapter 2 Do: Exercises B, C, D (Ch. 2)
8/28	T	Topic selection; stock issues; research basics Read: Appendix A Assign: Annotated bibliography
8/30	R	Standardizing and diagramming arguments Read: Chapter 3 Do: Exercises A & B
9/4	T	Argumentative analysis Do: Exercise C

		Read: Chapter 4, Chapter 5
9/6	R	Argumentative ethics; reasonability and rationality Group work: Identifying issues Read: Chapter 5 and “What Does an Argument Culture Look Like?”* Assign: Position paper
9/11	T	Exam 1 Covers chapters 1-5 Read: Chapter 6, Chapter 7 Class time for bibliography research
9/13	R	Criteria, support, and types of evidence Read: Chapter 8, Chapter 9 Due: Annotated bibliography
9/18	T	Analogies and examples; causal reasoning Read: Chapter 15 Do: Exercises A, B, C
9/20	R	Enthymematic inference, narrative, and metonymy Read: Chapter 14 Assign: Networked argumentation observation
9/25	T	Missing premises; formal fallacies; networked argumentation Read: Chapter 13
9/27	R	Networked argumentation Read: Paliewicz and McHendry*; Lewinski*
10/2	T	Rendering arguments into logical form; testing for validity Do: Exercise B, Ch. 11 Due: Networked argumentation observation
10/4	R	Informal fallacies Read: https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com
10/9	T	Exam 2 Emphasizes chapters 4-9 Activity: Position paper peer work
10/11	R	View sample debate; do peer review

		Read: Chapter 10 Peer review time for position paper
10/16	T	Categorical syllogisms Read: Chapter 11 Due: Position paper
10/18	R	Deductive reasoning Read: Chapter 12
10/23	T	Formal debating; constructive speeches Assign: Argumentative briefs, case, disadvantage
10/25	R	Rebuttals, cross examination
10/30	T	Exam 3 Emphasizes chapters 10-14
11/1	R	Conference time
11/6	T	Debate 1
11/8	R	No class held: instructor conference
11/13	T	Debate 2
11/15	R	Debate 3
11/27	T	Debate 4
11/29	R	Debate 5
12/4	T	Debate 6
12/6	R	Final exam review; course wrap-up