

COMM 380
FORENSICS LABORATORY
FALL 2013

Instructor – Gordon Stables

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Involvement on the debate squad includes work with Dr. Stables, the USC Director of Debate & Forensics, as well the USC debate staff.

COURSE RATIONALE

This course offers students the opportunity to take part in the wide range of programs and research projects of the Trojan Debate Squad. This course provides students an opportunity to apply communication and media theory and skills toward the production of argumentation in a diverse range media and social networking environments. The course will focus on strengthening critical thinking skills, improving logical reasoning, increasing involvement in divergent communities, and cultivating effective advocacy skills. The overall goal of this course is to provide students with the foundational skills to be effective critics and producers of argument within an increasingly participatory media culture. Students may select from three different tracks .

TRACK ONE: COMMUNITY DEBATE OUTREACH

Students will work in partnership with the USC Neighborhood Debate League (USC-NDL) and the Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League (LAMDL) to support high school debate programs and events in the city of Los Angeles. This track will provide students with an introduction to argument within a competitive academic setting to foster critical thinking and argument skills, while also providing opportunities to put skills in marketing, journalism, and public relations into practice. Working as critics of argument, students will evaluate and critique high school students' performances at 3 high school debate competitions throughout the semester. Students working on track three will also assist with the development of online media to support and market the USC-NDL and LAMDL, including (but not limited to) press releases, newsletters and promotional videos, and assist with event and program planning. The goal of this project is to provide students with an opportunity to attain valuable exposure to the critical thinking and reasoning affiliated with academic debate, while also providing students with an opportunity to practice career skills in a rewarding outreach setting.

Note: Participation in track 3 will require attendance at debate tournaments taking place at area high schools during one weekend each month..

Track Two: Intercollegiate Policy Debate Competition

Students will take part in USC's nationally competitive intercollegiate policy debate program. Students will research and prepare to debate students from other universities using the annual

intercollegiate (NDT/CEDA) policy debate topic. This track is research-intensive as students are expected to produce and contribute to the production of the season-long research product. Students who compete will be prepared to compete at average of five competitions per semester.

TRACK THREE: DIGITAL DEBATE

Students will collaborate to develop, market, and compete in a series of competitive debates taking place online via new media and social networks. Students will work to help develop, utilize and assess, platforms for conducting debates, marketing events, and creating greater engagement with the USC campus community and the broader public. A substantial part of work on this track will also involve leveraging social media technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. Students working on intercollegiate digital debate initiatives will participate as testers, organizers, and/or competitors. Work on the Intercollegiate Competitive Digital Debate track contributes to the Annenberg Digital Debate Initiative (ADDI)—a research project of USC’s Trojan Debate Squad that identifies innovative ways to leverage Internet technologies and new media to foster richer public discourse and greater public engagement with arguments relating to contemporary social issues. Additional opportunities to work with the Digital Debate Initiative include helping to develop and implement a set of debate events using cutting edge Cisco web conferencing solutions, as well as testing potential models and methodologies for holding a “hybrid” debate event that blends online interactivity with more traditional face-to-face debate settings.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As this course is largely an experiential learning opportunity and because students may register for between 1 and 4 credits, requirements are tiered based on the individual track and the number of credits Students can expect to participate in at least one research project for each of the credits for which they are registered. While requirements will vary based on the number of credits for which a student is registered, the following requirements are expected of all students:

Weekly research and project journal (30% of course grade): Students participating in COM 380 will keep a journal of their progress and reflections upon research conducted in the course. The specific format of the journal will vary between each track. For example, students participating in research track 4 (Mediated Argument Criticism) will complete weekly articles for blog publication in lieu of weekly research journal contributions. Students in track 1 will have weekly research assignments.

Final research and project evaluation (20% of course grade): At the conclusion of the course, all students will complete a evaluation project essay that examines their participation in their research track for the duration of the semester and that critically assesses the success of their research project in relationship to its goals. This paper will draw upon weekly journal entries and progress reports to identify areas for improvement and innovation for a future iteration of the research project, and suggest logical points of departure for continued research in similar areas.

Applied Learning Opportunities (50% of course grade): As this course is largely an opportunity to engage in hands-on research in areas of argumentation, deliberation, digital communication and community outreach, student participation in debate events and programming and attendance at weekly meetings is vital to attaining a passing grade. Applied learning opportunities will differ for each research track and are described in each of the track descriptions listed above. As an example, students participating in a community outreach track will be expected to attend a minimum of three high school debate tournaments in the LA Metro area throughout the semester, while students participating in the intercollegiate digital debate track will participate in a two week long debate competition hosted online and several pilot debates throughout the semester. Specific requirements of completion for applied learning outcomes will be negotiated with each student dependent upon the number of credits for which he/she is registered, and the research track he/she has elected to pursue.

Assigned Readings: Each track will make readings available that provide the theoretical foundations for Trojan Debate Squad research.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Students are allotted two unexcused absences for weekly meetings in this course. **Please be advised that students MUST be present for events related to their research tracks, such as debate competitions or exhibitions that may take place outside the regular meeting time, including weekends.** Absences due to university activities (conferences, competitions, etc.) must be discussed with the instructor before the relevant class period and proof of activity must be submitted in writing. Arrangements concerning absences are entirely at the instructor's discretion.

Academic Integrity: The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the academic integrity code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor. The University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies; should you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies will not be accepted as an excuse. You should be familiar with the following resources:

- "Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism" addresses issues of paraphrasing, quotations and citations in written assignments, drawing heavily upon materials used in the university's Writing Program (by Student Judicial Affairs) <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf>
- "Understanding and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty" addresses more general issues of academic integrity, including guidelines for adhering to standards concerning examinations and unauthorized collaboration (by Student Judicial Affairs) <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tio.pdf>

- The "2013-2014 SCampus" (student handbook) contains the university's Student Conduct Code and other student-related policies. <http://www.usc.edu/scampus>
- The USC Libraries' Tutorial on Academic Integrity provides a broad overview of academic integrity policies and requirements, as well as a primer on how to cite the works of others in written assignments.
<http://usccollege.na4.acrobat.com/academicintegrity>

Professional Conduct: As a student in this course you will likely interact with local community members, high school students, and/or representatives from other colleges and universities in interpersonal and computer mediated settings. In addition to the University's standards of academic integrity, all members of this course are expected to act in a professional and respectful manner that best exemplifies the integrity and reputation of the USC community. For more details on standards of conduct, please consult the attached copy of the Trojan Debate Squad's policies of conduct.

Late & Unfinished Work – Students must complete all assignments in order to earn a grade in the course. Any material turned in late will be reduced one letter grade per calendar day late. Each speaking assignment must be given on the day assigned. No makeup sessions will be available.

Grievance Procedure - Occasionally, students are dissatisfied with some dimension of a course. In such cases, students should first provide a written argument in support of their position to the instructor and request a meeting with the instructor. All grade appeals on specific assignments must be made within one week of the return of the assignment.

Special Assistance - Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and can be reached at (213) 740-0776.