

## Argumentation and Advocacy

COMM322 (201510R)

Fall 2015

T/R – 12:30-1:50 p.m. ANN 309

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Office Hours: Thursdays 11:00-12:00 or by appointment, ASC G6

“Only reason can convince us of those three fundamental truths without a recognition of which there can be no effective liberty: that what we believe is not necessarily true, that what we like is not necessarily good, and that all questions are open.” – Clive Bell

### I. Course Description & Objectives

Every day we are inundated by conflicting arguments in social media, online news sites, television, and radio, in magazines and books, on bumper stickers and billboards. The sources of these arguments constantly compete for our attention and our assent. How do we decide who is correct, what is reasonable, and what ideas or perspectives deserve our time, energy, and money?

This is a course about the communicative nature of reasoning. The purpose of this course, first and foremost, is to improve your capacity for reasoning so that you will be equipped to audit the myriad contradictory messages that saturate modern society as competent critical consumers of argument. Second, the course is designed to teach you how to construct convincing arguments of your own while effectively refuting your interlocutors. Third, the course fits into the larger curriculum at the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism by giving you a set of methodological tools with which you will be able to unpack and critique complex humanistic political and cultural texts, evaluate the sufficiency and relevance of social scientific evidence, and craft creative and well-reasoned advocacy campaigns in a variety of communicative contexts. You will also gain familiarity and competence with the technical conceptual vocabulary of argumentation and rhetorical studies, enabling you to pursue more advanced scholarly work in these fields.

Specifically, this class will introduce you to the basic theories and practices of argumentation and natural language reasoning. You will be exposed to a wide range of theories and concepts from the fields of rhetoric, applied epistemology, and informal logic, and be asked to apply these approaches to real world deliberative situations. This course will situate argument at the center of lived

social experience. We will explore how argument shapes the political, ethical, and cultural lifeworlds that we inhabit and communicate within.

We shall examine a wide range of argument formations, from formal logical proofs to informal argumentation 'in the wild.' For every different kind of argument, and for every unique context, we will identify and practice employing appropriate reasoning schemes through which good arguments can be constructed and distinguished from bad arguments. Equipped with these schemes, in each case you will be able to determine:

- what counts as a good reason for a claim;
- when claims are relevant to an argument and when they are not;
- which conclusions reasonably follow from different kinds of evidence;
- the difference between sufficient and insufficient evidence;
- the expectations that attend different contexts and different audiences.

We will accomplish this not by memorizing principles or rules, but instead by repeatedly applying our reasoning schemes in practice. Other topics in the course include the ethics of advocacy, the types and tests of evidence, standards for evaluating non-discursive arguments, and preparing a case and adapting it to an audience.

## II. Materials

### Required:

Leo A. Groarke & Christopher W. Tindale. (2013). *Good Reasoning Matters! A Constructive Approach to Critical Thinking*. (5Th edition). Oxford University Press. (Marked as 'G&T'). The textbook website is also a source of very useful supplementary material, including study guides and answers to starred exercises:

[http://www.oupcanada.com/higher\\_education/companion/philosophy/9780195445756/student\\_resources.html](http://www.oupcanada.com/higher_education/companion/philosophy/9780195445756/student_resources.html)

Readings from the G&T text will available through the Blackboard course site. Additional readings will also be posted to Blackboard. These readings consist of academic journal articles and chapters scanned from the supplemental books below.

### Recommended:

A current style manual such as the Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition, 2010), the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition, 2009), or the

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition, 2009).

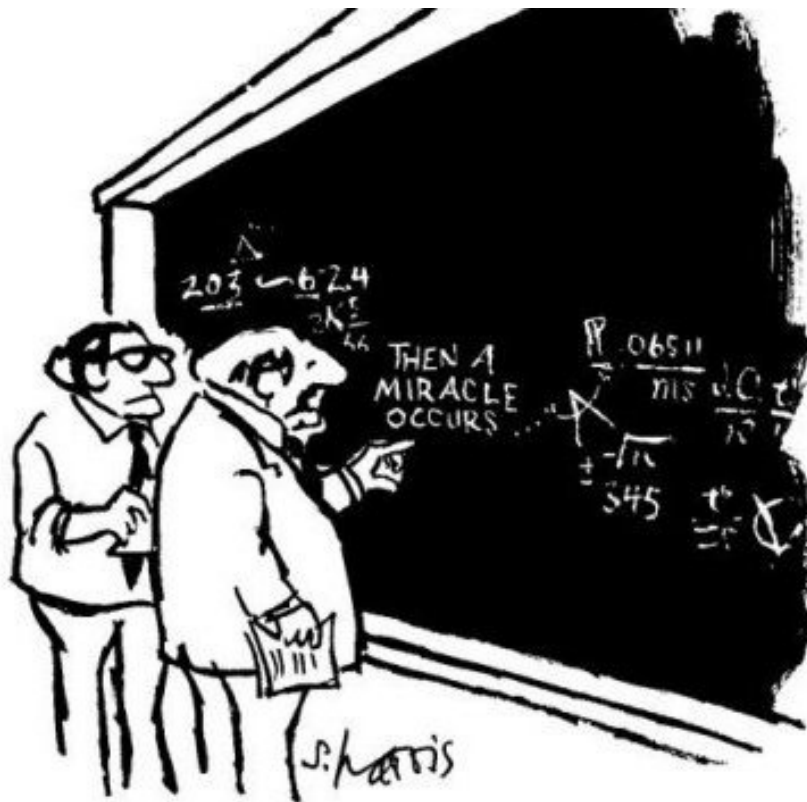
Supplementary:

James A. Herrick. (2011). *Argumentation: Understanding and Shaping Arguments*. (4th edition). Strata.

Thomas A. Hollihan & Kevin T. Baaske. (2004). *Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Process of Human Decision Making*. (2nd edition). Waveland Press. (Marked as 'H&B')

Burton F. Porter. (2002). *The Voice of Reason: Fundamentals of Critical Thinking*. Oxford University Press.

Richard D. Rieke, Malcolm O. Sillars, & Tarla Rai Peterson. (2012). *Argumentation and Critical Decision Making*. (8th edition). Pearson Education. (Marked as 'RSP').



"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

### III.

#### Schedule

This schedule represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to address pedagogical issues and respond to specific student needs and interests. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

August 25<sup>th</sup>

Course Introduction

“Public Discourse” Goodnight

August 27<sup>th</sup>

What is Argument?

Making Room for Argument (Chapter 1 G&T)

The Elements of Arguments (Herrick)

September 1<sup>st</sup>

The Conditions of Constructive Argumentation

Ethical Advocacy (Herrick)

Reasonable Arguments, Reasonable People (Herrick)

Arguers as Lovers (Brockriede)

September 3<sup>rd</sup>

Interpersonal Argument I

Argumentation in Interpersonal Relationships (H&B)

September 8<sup>th</sup>

Interpersonal Argument II

To Argue or Not to Argue (Benoit & Benoit)

September 10<sup>th</sup>

Interpersonal Argument III

Interpersonal Argument: Conflict & Reason Giving (Trapp)

September 15<sup>th</sup>

Interpersonal Argument IV  
Argument in Interpersonal Relationships (Trapp)

September 17<sup>th</sup>

Argument Evaluation I – Identifying Bias  
Bias: Reading Between the Lines (G&T)  
Arguments: Weak and Strong (G&T)

September 22<sup>nd</sup>

Argument Evaluation II – Refutation  
Refutation (RSP)

September 24<sup>th</sup>

Argument Evaluation III – Analyzing Arguments  
Tools for Analyzing Arguments (Herrick)

September 29<sup>th</sup>

Argument Evaluation IV – Diagramming Arguments  
Argument Diagrams (G&T)

October 1<sup>st</sup>

The Toulmin Model  
The Toulmin Model (Herrick)  
Toulmin's Model of Argumentation (Van Eemeren)

**1<sup>st</sup> Version of Research Case Due**

October 6<sup>th</sup>

Fallacies  
Common Mistakes in Thinking (Porter)

October 8<sup>th</sup>

Visual Argumentation I  
Toward a Theory of Visual Argument (Birdsell & Groarke)

October 13<sup>th</sup>

Visual Argumentation II

Representative forms and the visual ideograph: The Iwo Jima image in editorial cartoons (Edwards & Winkler)

**Interpersonal Argument Autoethnography Due**

October 15<sup>th</sup>

Academic Debate I

Academic Debate & Overview (H&B)

October 20<sup>th</sup>

Academic Debate II

Academic Debate Additional Insights (H&B)

October 22<sup>nd</sup>

Implicit Arguments

Hidden Argument Components (G&T)

October 27<sup>th</sup>

Narrative Reasoning

Analogies, Examples and Narratives (Herrick)

October 29<sup>th</sup>

Evidence and Facts

Weighing Evidence (G&T)

November 3<sup>rd</sup>

Science and Causation

More Empirical Schemes and the Reasons of Science (G&T)

November 5<sup>th</sup>

Rhetoric of Science

Rhetoric of Economics (McCloskey)

November 10<sup>th</sup>

Principles and Credibility  
Schemes of Value (G&T)

November 12<sup>th</sup>

Social Argumentation: Politics, Advertising & Law I  
Discourse Communities (Porter)

November 17<sup>th</sup>

Social Argumentation: Politics, Advertising & Law II  
Argumentation in Politics: Campaigns and Debates, Argumentation & The Law  
(H&B)

November 19<sup>th</sup>

Religious Argumentation  
Argumentation in Religion (RSP)

November 24<sup>th</sup>

Business Argumentation  
Argumentation in Business (RSP)

November 26<sup>th</sup> – Thanksgiving No Class

December 1<sup>st</sup>

Demo Debate I

December 3<sup>rd</sup>

Demo Debate II

**Debate Case Final Version Due**

IV. Assignments

Full descriptions of the instructions and parameters of each assignment will be provided in class and will also be available on the Blackboard site under the 'Assignments' tab. All assignments must be the original work of the student and

cannot have been used previously or concurrently in any other course. All assignments must be attempted and turned in to pass the course.

### 1) Participation (15%)

This course is designed to provide students with a new methodology to approach public argument. The success of this process depends on the willingness of students to read before class and be ready to discuss the readings and each others' interpretations and ideas. Students should expect a substantial amount of daily reading for each class period (approximately 30 pages per class; sometimes more or less depending on difficulty and other factors). Students who attend class without being ready to participate will receive a lower class participation grade.

### 2) Interpersonal Argumentation Autoethnography Project (20%)

The objectives of this assignment are to give students an opportunity (1) to discuss and reflect upon the argumentative interactions in their daily lives, (2) to see in these interactions the principles and concepts of argumentation in practice, (3) to evaluate these interactions and practices (both their own and others'), that is, to think about how things might have gone better, and (4) over time, to improve student's skills at participating in these interactions effectively and managing disagreement productively. To accomplish this, you will act as participant-observers in a group. You will maintain a record of your argumentative interactions with the other members of the group over the first several months of the term. This record should be both descriptive and prescriptive, both past and future-oriented. That is, you should describe what transpired in each interaction, analyze the interaction by applying concepts and principles from the course in order to understand it, and evaluate the interaction, suggesting ways to improve future interactions as appropriate. Ultimately, your goal is to improve the quality of argumentative interaction, particularly your own. Therefore, you will want to put your insights into practice in subsequent interactions so that, over time, you can discover what works and what doesn't.

The graded assignment is a written report of your experiences. In its final form, this should include (a) an "Introduction," consisting primarily of your description of your working group of interlocutors; (b) each entry, containing your analysis and reflections, in chronological order, identified by date; and (c) a "Conclusions" section that reflects on your experience as a whole.

What have you discovered about how others argue? About how you argue? About which practices seem more and less productive? Do you feel that you have grown and improved as an arguer? Why or why not? Note: Although you are keeping a "journal," your writing should not be casual, as if you were merely jotting down



thoughts in a diary. Rather, it should conform to the standards for college level research papers (see below). Your project will be judged according to the following criteria: 1. Your thoroughness and diligence in keeping the journal; 2. Your understanding and application of theories and principles of effective argumentation; 3. Your insight in diagnosing argumentative interactions; 4. The sophistication and appropriateness of your self-reported efforts to improve; and 5. The quality and correctness of your writing. The project is worth 20% of your grade in the course. It is due on the final day of class (Due October 13<sup>th</sup>).

### 3) Debate Case (15%+15% for a total 30%)

During the course of the semester you will, in collaboration with two of your colleagues, develop a “case” on the debate topic for the year. This case will consist of a collection of individual arguments or “cards” that quote your research on the topic, your brief interpretation of that research and what it means as well as a specific citation. In class each team will choose whether they will write a case on the negative or affirmative side, but half have to be on each side. The case will be handed in – and graded – twice. The first time it will be due is October 1<sup>st</sup> while the second version will be due the final day of class (December 3<sup>rd</sup>). The grade for both versions will be shared amongst all three members of the group.

Throughout the semester we will discuss your progress and work and what kind of research you need and how to transform them into “cards.” Moreover, as I assess the first version I will provide you advice on how to develop your case and fill holes, but you are free to ask me for help throughout the semester. However, your team will do the actual research, though the librarians on campus can offer ample assistance as you look for relevant material. The case will be evaluated based on its comprehensiveness, creativity and quality of scholarship cited.

### 4) Pick an Argument (10%)

For this assignment, you will choose an argument you have heard on TV, read in a newspaper, seen in a movie, heard in a poem or a song, was told by a friend or family member, saw in an advertisement – the possibilities are really endless. You should choose an argument which is interesting in some way -compelling, awful, deceptive, creative or emotional – an explain to the class what made you choose the argument, why it resonated with you – positively or negatively.

For your presentation, which should be no more than 6-8 minutes in length, you can use audiovisual media, the whiteboard or just the podium. During your presentation you should 1) describe (fairly) the argument you’ve chosen 2) why you’ve chosen it 3) how this argument connects to class material 4) what can be learned from this argument and how it functions (or not) in society and 5) evaluate

the argument. After your presentation, your colleagues will ask you questions about your presentation.

During the first week of class you will choose a day to present your argument (no more than 2 presentations per class)

#### 5) Debates (25%)

In stead of a final, you schedule – on your own time during finals week(or before) – a series of debates. Each student will be partnered with one other student and will debate on both the negative and affirmative side of our topic. In addition, you will serve as a judge (along with other students) on a panel evaluating debate rounds involving other teams. At the last day of class, you will receive every research team’s arguments and can use them for the debate. Your grade will be based solely on the notes (or “flow”) you take from the debate, the thoughtfulness and fairness of your decision as judge (you will write down how and why you picked which team won – your “reason for decision”) and a three page reaction paper documenting your experience. You will submit all these materials to me electronically (notes taken on physical paper can be photographed/scanned and emailed). No part of your 25% grade is based on your win or loss, but only your understanding and reaction to it. Extra credit will be awarded to the best teams based on their win/loss record

#### V. Standards for Written Work

“A speech has two parts. You must state your case, and you must prove it” – [Aristotle, Rhetoric III.13]

Clear and cogent reasoning (and nothing else) – Every written assignment must offer an argument. It cannot consist in the mere report of your (or someone else's) opinions. You must support your claims with adequate reasoning. Thus, you cannot simply write: “My view is that P.” Instead, you must write something like “My view is that P. I believe this because...” or “I find that the following considerations... provide a convincing argument for P.”

You may (and should) use a variety of different argumentative strategies to support your thesis. You may appeal to a definition or principle; provide examples (or counter-examples), analogies, or narratives which help to explain your thesis or make your claims more plausible; contrast the strengths and weaknesses of two conflicting positions; discuss the consequences that a claim would have if it were true; show that an opposing view is in some way self-contradictory; provide, analyze, or undermine evidence (statistical, testimonial, documentary, etc.) in

support of a claim and argue for its sufficiency or insufficiency; explain why an argument that looks reasonable on its face in fact depends on fallacious reasoning, etc. No matter which of these aims you set for yourself, you have to explicitly present reasons for your claims. Students often underestimate the amount of support they must provide for claims that they believe are clearly justified. It is very easy to overestimate the strength of your own position; after all, you already accept it. You should assume that your audience is critical of your position (but is open-minded and reasonable), and then treat your paper as an attempt to persuade such an audience. Hence, don't start with assumptions that your opponents are sure to reject. If you are to have any chance of persuading people, you have to start from common first principles that everyone agrees with.

When arguing against a position, you should heed the principle of charity, which requires that you consider its strongest possible form. In other words, you should always give your interlocutors the benefit of the doubt. This will help you avoid attributing irrationality or incoherence to a position that is actually (or could be interpreted to be) rational and coherent. Beyond ensuring that your counter-arguments are sufficient to undermine the position you oppose, this methodological rule will help you formulate your arguments in a way that optimizes the potential for consensus.

Given that this is a course on argumentation, it is essential that your reasoning be sound and your arguments be properly supported. Deductive arguments are valid only if you show in a finite number of steps that your premises entail your conclusion according to the logical rules of inference. Anyone who understands the argument must accept the conclusion if they accept the premises. For inductive arguments, used in situations where knowledge is imperfect or incomplete and absolute certainty is not possible, there is a more tentative link between the premises and the conclusion; these arguments are valid if your reasoning establishes that the conclusion is at least as likely as the minimum level of probability appropriate to the context (generally, an argument is inductively valid if the premises imply that the conclusion is more likely than not to be true, but in a criminal trial, for example, the conclusion that the defendant is guilty must be shown to be likely beyond a reasonable doubt).

Structure – Your arguments should be organized logically and clearly. A clear thesis should be evident early on the first page to preview the fundamental elements of the essay. This section should also preview the organizational structure of the project. Each section should reflect an organizing principle that utilizes previews, summaries, and transitions. You shouldn't be trying to build suspense in these essays. Do not begin with vague generalizations; immediately get to your point. Do not include any unnecessary sentences or words. Good essays also should include a quality conclusion that draws together the basic

details. Simply finishing your last point doesn't accomplish this task.

It may help the organization of your paper to give the reader a 'map' of the paper in your first or second paragraph. For example: "In this paper I will argue that.... First, I will explain.... Next, I will set out.... Then I will show the weakness of... Finally, I will give my reasons for supporting..."

Writing Style – You need to both be concise and explain yourself fully. These simultaneous demands are in tension with one another but are not mutually exclusive. Being concise means not rambling or otherwise straying beyond the specific issue or problem at hand. A paper that contains one or two extensively supported arguments is preferable to one with five or six under-developed ones. Explaining yourself fully means that every point you make should be developed and integrated into your larger argument. It also means you should say exactly what you mean. For example, suppose you write "Abortion is the same thing as murder." Is that exactly what you mean? When SEAL Team 6 murdered Osama Bin Laden (supposing that 'murdered' is the appropriate verb here), was that the same thing as aborting Osama Bin Laden? Or do you mean that abortion is a form of murder, or is morally equivalent to murder?

If you can, show your draft to your friends or to other students in the class, and get their comments and advice. Do your friends understand your main point? Are parts of your draft unclear or confusing to them? Another strategy is to read your draft out loud, which will help you identify grammatical errors, awkwardly worded sentences, holes in your reasoning, and unnecessary digressions.

That said, while your written work should sound good when read out loud, it should not resemble the way you talk in casual conversation. Even in our visual and oral culture, the ability to make a professional argument in writing is an essential skill, especially in an argumentation course. When your language begins to resemble the spoken word, it loses its authority and it distracts from your contentions. These writing assignments are intentionally short to provide you with time to edit and revise your work.

On that note: aim to make your papers less than or equal to the assigned maximum word limit. Longer papers are typically too ambitious, or repetitious, or full of digressions. Your grade will suffer if your paper has these defects. So it's important to ask yourself: What are the most important things you have to say? What can be left out?

Junior level college writing should be free of:

- o (Thinking out loud comments in parenthesis)
- o Misspelled words or words that are poorly spell-checked and come back as different words. There is a huge credibility problem for your writing when these

errors appear.

- o Conversational or sarcastic tones. This is a formal essay and it should be treated as such. President Obama is the appropriate way to first refer to him, regardless of your views.

- o Opening sentences that fail to get to the point, e.g., “Down through the ages, mankind has pondered the problem of...” There's no need to warm up to your topic.

Minor issues: Do not awkwardly go out of your way to avoid the first person: it is perfectly acceptable, indeed preferable, to refer to yourself, e.g., “I shall first argue...,” “I contend that...,” “I've just explained why...,” “Now I'm going to consider an argument that...,” etc. This is not an invitation to adopt an informal tone, but rather a call for clear and straightforward writing without pretense.

It is okay to end a sentence with a preposition or to split an infinitive if doing otherwise would be awkward.

Use of qualified sources – In cases where you need or want to make an authoritative claim, you should utilize a well-qualified source. Suggestions involve experts in the field, scholarly journals, and other professional sources, including our texts. The easiest google results, especially including Wikipedia, should be treated as starting points for research and not references. When essay topics refer to specific concepts covered in the readings, it is important that these essays display a competent grasp of the material.

Evidence should be carefully analyzed before usage. Materials cited as proof of your claims should be timely, relevant, and well scrutinized. Materials should reflect your awareness of the ideological foundations of all evidence (i.e., using materials from Paul Krugman supporting the Democrats is acceptable; however, the use of that material should reflect your awareness that this source is highly partisan).

Formatting - Your written work should utilize common font and margin settings (such as Times New Roman 12 point fonts and 1 inch margins), and consistently follow style manual (Chicago, MLA, or APA are the preferred options). In some cases students still need to familiarize themselves with a manual. Common errors include a lack of alphabetical listing of citations, incomplete citation information (i.e., you need authors in all cases), and failure to include appropriate URLs (or conversely the inclusion of unnecessary URLs, e.g., for the database in which an electronic journal article was found).

Bibliography & Citations - Citations must be provided for all researched information. Any use of additional material, even as background, must be cited

within the body of the paper and then again in a works cited or bibliography. The format for these citations should consistently reflect a style manual.

### Grading Scale

Final course grades are assigned on the following scale:

94-100 % = A	80-83 % = B-	67-69 % = D+
90-93 % = A-	77-79 % = C+	64-66 % = D
87-89 % = B+	74-76 % = C	60-63 % = D-
84-86 % = B	70-73 % = C-	59 % and below = F

### VI. Course Policies

**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/student-conduct/plag.html>

\* "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" (the student handbook) contains the university's Student Conduct Code and other student-related policies: <http://scampus.usc.edu/>

\*The USC Code of Ethics:

[https://about.usc.edu/files/2011/07/USC\\_Code\\_of\\_Ethics\\_2004.pdf](https://about.usc.edu/files/2011/07/USC_Code_of_Ethics_2004.pdf)

**Draconian/Luddite Technology Policy** – A considerable and burgeoning body of research suggests that students using laptops in the classroom detracts from learning, participation, thoughtfulness and focus. My anecdotal experience aligns with this research. As a result, we will have a no laptop or device policy in the classroom (exceptions may be made for certain exercises – in such cases I will let you know ahead of time). Taking notes will do just fine in this class, and should you miss material, your colleagues and I can surely help – there is not in-class final, midterm or any other test for which you will need notes in a time-sensitive

situation. Exceptions based on documented disabilities should be discussed with the professor on an individual basis.

Attendance – Because of the practical nature of argumentation, your attendance is crucial, as most classes will involve some sort of exercise or active discussion in addition to the lecture. Accordingly, I will take attendance regularly. Any unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade, as will regularly missing portions of class. 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.

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.

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. Late homework assignments will not be accepted.

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.

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students – All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. I will often send out materials via blackboard's email tool, which will go to your USC e-mail account.