

**Session:** Spring 2021, Mon/Wed 10:00am–11:50am  
**Section:** 20514R  
**Location:** ONLINE

**Instructor:** Michael J. Wissot, MBA, MIM  
**Office:** ASC 333

**Office Hours:** appointment only (online)

**Contact Info:** [mwissot@usc.edu](mailto:mwissot@usc.edu) / 805-490-2460 mobile

### I. Course Description

This class will be an intensive examination of the theories and practices of argumentation. Students will be exposed to a wide range of argumentation theory and vocabulary, and they will be asked to apply these approaches to public argument and advocacy. The class will also cover a variety of contemporary topics, tied particularly to domestic and foreign policy. *All students will be evaluated using a Letter Grade scale. Lectures vary between PPT slides and discussions of reading material. Students must take notes (handwritten or typed). Audio/video recordings of lectures are not permitted.*

### II. Student Learning Outcomes

This course will aim to achieve the following goals: **1)** Analyze theories of argumentation and demonstrate practical applications; **2)** Enhance critical thinking skills by anticipating, advancing and refuting arguments; **3)** Develop viable strategies in constructing and presenting oral and written arguments; **4)** Refine advocacy skills to support causes of personal importance while working in a diverse world.

We will demonstrate the highest attainable work ethic and discover within us that which is superior to circumstance. We will persevere this semester toward the most rewarding pursuit in higher education – the stimulation of thought, emotion, and soul. It is my duty to prepare you, as future leaders of the Free World, to integrate your communication skills into all fields of endeavor. As individuals and as a collective unit, we will dare to be great.

**Required Preparation:** N/A  
**Recommended Preparation:** COMM 204

### III. Course Attendance

Class will meet each Monday and Wednesday throughout the semester. You must complete ALL course requirements in order to earn a grade in this course. You are responsible for all reading assignments as pop quizzes may be given to determine your preparedness for class. You are required to participate in debates on the dates when you are scheduled. Since your attendance in this course – both as a speaker and listener – is vital, any absences from class will affect your final grade. You are, therefore, required to notify me BEFORE missing class and provide corresponding documentation AFTERWARD. In the event that both of these criteria are satisfied, you will receive “make up” assignments/projects to suffice for time missed from class. Please note that I will record an unexcused absence if you miss any considerable portion of the class period (arriving late, leaving early) without my prior authorization.

#### IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

<b>Jeffersonian-Madisonian Exchange</b>	You will debate, via weekly e-mail correspondence, in support or opposition of various events, trends, policies and initiatives – at the local, state, federal and international levels – that you and your peer deem important.
<b>Debate 1 &amp; 2 &amp; Town Hall Debate</b>	You will participate in traditional academic debates, taking the side of either the Affirmative or Negative, to demonstrate your ability to apply course material; you will develop compelling arguments and relevant evidence as you square off against your worthy adversaries during Constructive Speeches, Cross Examination and Rebuttals.
<b>Analysis 1 &amp; 2</b>	You will analyze the debate tactics of a recent Democratic Presidential Primary Debate and Republican President Primary Debate, respectively, to demonstrate your analytical assessment of argumentation and advocacy on a national scale. You and several peers will each be assigned to cover one particular candidate, and you will focus heavily on the overall effectiveness (verbal/nonverbal) of your assigned candidate.
<b>Op-Ed Article</b>	You will write and edit an editorial article (500+ words) in support of a particular policy, candidate, cause or organization, and then submit it to at least <i>two publications</i> (that you deem suitable, based on editorial content). You will also seek mentorship/feedback from at least one faculty member on ways to improve your article.
<b>Term Paper</b>	You will write a comprehensive analysis on a contemporary leader of your choosing, consisting of two parts: 1) an executive summary of the advocacy and ideology of your leader; 2) an analysis of at least four rhetorical acts from your leader. You will watch these rhetorical acts via video, analyzing the language and arguments of your leaders, as well as suggest how they correlate to your leader's overall advocacy. MLA style research/formatting required.

## V. Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation / Attendance	30	5%
Jeffersonian-Madisonian Exchange	30	5%
Debate #1	30	5%
Debate #2	40	6.67%
Analysis #1	20	3.33%
Analysis #2	20	3.33%
Op-Ed Article	50	8.33%
Town Hall Debate	75	12.5%
Term Paper	75	12.5%
Midterm Exam	100	16.67%
Final Exam	130	21.67%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100%</b>

### b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

**c. Grading Standards**

A Level Grades	Demonstrates superior work performance and organizational skills, as well as mastery of subject matter and/or project requirements, including, but not limited to exceeding expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.
B Level Grades	Demonstrates commendable work performance and organizational skills, as well as a clear understanding of subject matter and/or project requirements, including, but not limited to reasonably meeting expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.
C Level Grades	Demonstrates basic level of work performance and organizational skills, as well as a basic understanding of subject matter and/or project requirements, including, but not limited to marginally meeting expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.
D Level Grades or Below	Demonstrates insufficient work performance and organizational skills, as well as an insufficient understanding of subject matter and/or project requirements; including a deficiency in fulfilling expectations in written/verbal communication, research methodologies, knowledge of material and practical application.

**d. Grading Timeline**

I make myself available to review any work, except exams and term papers, if student sends me a complete rough draft at least one week prior to the due date (or delivery date). Most projects are graded within one to two weeks of the assignment being completed by all students (note: debates/speeches/presentations are not always delivered on the same date). I offer extensive feedback in my evaluation forms for debates, speeches and business presentations.

**VI. Assignment Rubrics**

Assignment rubrics are discussed in class

**VII. Assignment Submission Policy**

All assignments are posted on Blackboard with detailed instructions and due dates. Students are expected to complete all assignments on time. Late work, if accepted, may be penalized. Typically, late submissions will result in 10% grade deduction per day late. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with me of any late assignment may result in the student receiving a grade of F for that late assignment. Assignments must be submitted via e-mail with Word or PDF attachments (not Google Drive, not Blackboard, not MAM).

## VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Hollihan, Thomas A. and Baaske, Kevin T. *Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Process of Human Decision Making*. 3rd Ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2005.

Additional materials are available via e-mail and/or the university's Blackboard course site

## IX. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

## X. Add/Drop Dates

### Spring Semester 2021 (15 weeks: 1/18/21 – 4/30/21)

<b>Friday, February 5:</b>	Last day to register and add classes
<b>Friday, February 5:</b>	Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund
<b>Friday, March 5:</b>	Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript
<b>Friday, April 30:</b>	Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade
<b>Friday, April 30:</b>	Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W"

### XI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*Subject to change, based on progress of the class, news events, activities, guest speaker availability, etc.*

	Daily Topics/Activities Covered in Class	Assigned Readings (Hollihan 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed)	Assign Dates / Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b> <b>January 18</b>	MLK Holiday – NO CLASS		
<b>January 20</b>	Overview of Course		
<b>Week 2</b> <b>January 25</b>	Overview & Intro to Argumentation Argument as Public Discourse	Chapters 1 & 2	
<b>January 27</b>	Language & Framing Arguments Language in Presidential Debates	Chapter 4	Assign JM Exchange
<b>Week 3</b> <b>February 1</b>	Audience Analysis & Fields Theory Identity Politics / Demographics	Chapter 3 Denton, Chapter 5	
<b>February 3</b>	Argumentation & Critical Thinking	Chapter 5	
<b>Week 4</b> <b>February 8</b>	Arguments, Grounds & Evidence	Chapters 6 & 7	Assign Debate #1
<b>February 10</b>	Building & Refuting Arguments	Chapters 8 & 9	
<b>Week 5</b> <b>February 15</b>	President's Day – NO CLASS		
<b>February 17</b>	Activity – TBD		Assign Op-Ed
<b>Week 6</b> <b>February 22</b>	Debate #1		All Debate Materials DUE
<b>February 24</b>	Debate #1  Review for Midterm Examination		All Debate Materials DUE  Assign Analysis #1 (Democratic Debate)
<b>Week 7</b> <b>March 1</b>	Midterm Exam (on Chapters 1–9 in Hollihan, plus all lectures/readings		
<b>March 3</b>	Intro to Academic Debate / Formats	Chapters 10 & 11	Assign Debate #2

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<b>Week 8</b> <b>March 8</b>	Analysis #1: Democratic Presidential Primary Debate		Written Analysis DUE
<b>March 10</b>	Political Debates: Techniques Dominating The Dialogue	Morris, Chapter 43 Morris, Chapter 34	Assign Analysis #2 (Republican Debate)
<b>Week 9</b> <b>March 15</b>	Debate #2		All Debate Materials DUE
<b>March 17</b>	Debate #2		All Debate Materials DUE
<b>Week 10</b> <b>March 22</b>	Argumentation in Political Campaigns	Chapter 12	Assign Term Paper
<b>March 24</b>	Review Sample Op-Eds		Bring Samples to Class
<b>Week 11</b> <b>March 29</b>	Analysis #2: Republican Presidential Primary Debate		Written Analysis DUE
<b>March 31</b>	Absolute Advantage: Sacred Rhetoric	Marietta article	Assign Town Hall Debate
<b>Week 12</b> <b>April 5</b>	Argumentation in Business / CSR	Chapter 14	Op-Ed DUE
<b>April 7</b>	Wellness Day – NO CLASS		
<b>Week 13</b> <b>April 12</b>	Activity – TBD		Term Paper DUE
<b>April 14</b>	Town Hall Debate		All Materials DUE
<b>Week 14</b> <b>April 19</b>	Town Hall Debate		All Debate Materials DUE
<b>April 21</b>	Town Hall Debate		All Debate Materials DUE
<b>Week 15</b> <b>April 26</b>	Crisis Communication Simulation		JM Exchange DUE
<b>April 28</b>	Review for Final Exam		

<b>Exam Week</b> <b>May 10</b> <b>8:00 am –</b> <b>10:30am</b>	Final Exam (on Chapters 10–11 & 14 in Hollihan, plus all second-half lectures/readings AND selected topics covered in first half)		
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## **XII. Additional Class Policies and Procedures**

### **a. Technology**

Using laptops and/or mobile device to access the Internet and/or e-mail during class time to partake in non-class-related activity is not permitted. **Any violation of this policy may result in the loss of all participation points for the entire semester, as well as other measures under university policy.**

### **b. Late Submissions**

Late submissions on assignments will result in a 10% grade deduction for every day late.

### **c. Student Conduct**

Class behavior will be predicated on an environment of mutual respect. Any level of disruptive or threatening student behavior is unacceptable. We are here to learn from each other in a non-threatening environment. You are encouraged to formulate and share opinions with due discretion, as well as be comfortable in practicing communication techniques and debating ideas in a safe environment. However, any behavior that is deemed disrespectful by the instructor will affect your participation points.

### **d. Lecture Slides & Notes**

Lecture slides are not posted, so students are encouraged to attend all classes and take thorough notes. Students may request a review of prior material, which often occurs periodically throughout the semester.

## **XIII. Communication**

Please e-mail, text or call me with any questions or concerns about anything related to the class and/or career planning, especially if you are unable to meet during my office hours. I typically respond fastest via e-mail (within 24-48 hours), and I'm interested in helping you with anything on your mind.

## **XIV. Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### **a. Academic Integrity & Conduct**

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code as detailed in the SCampus guide. 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. If you have any doubts about what is and is not an academic integrity violation, please check with me immediately. 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.

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

## **b. Support Systems**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. Please know that I care deeply about your mental health, and I want to make sure that you are receiving the full support of the university. Please let me know if you are struggling with any mental health issues. We all need support.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 / Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplcity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplcity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity /Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

[uscsa.usc.edu](http://uscsa.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

[annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources](http://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources)

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

*Breaking Bread Program*

[undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/](http://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/)

Please note that I am always open to meeting separately with my students through USC's Breaking Bread Program, which is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal academic setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally "breaking bread" over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! The meal can take place outside of the normal academic setting. The venue can be a restaurant or eatery, on or off-campus.

**XV. About Your Professor: [Michael Wissot](#)**

Michael Wissot has transformed political and corporate communication platforms in every major sector, serving as the choice expert for many Fortune 500 executives and top elected officials seeking strategic counsel. His expertise includes message development, crisis communication, market research, labor disputes, press conferences, political debates, speechwriting, branding and advertising. He has provided counsel for Coca-Cola, Kroger, Safeway, Pfizer, Miller Brewing, FOX Sports, Comcast, Thomson Reuters, News Corporation, Ameriquest Mortgage, Paramount Pictures, Universal, 20th Century FOX, MPAA, Wynn Las Vegas, MGM Mirage, Starwood Hotels, University of Phoenix, Los Angeles Dodgers, Milwaukee Brewers, San Francisco Giants, Baltimore Orioles, Arizona Diamondbacks, and National Football League. He has managed communication initiatives for Senator John McCain, President George W. Bush, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor Luis Fortuño, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and other world leaders. He has served as a political analyst on national television and radio. He co-authored a popular business book, "The 10 People Who Suck: A Positive Prescription for Improving Communication in the Workplace." He has taught at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism since 2010 after serving seven years as an adjunct professor at Pepperdine University.