

Spring 2023 – MW – 2:00-3:20

Section: 20511

Location: ANN 211

Instructor: Dr. Randall Lake

Office: ASC 206C

Office Hours: 11:30-12:30 M and by appointment

Contact Info: rlake@usc.edu; (213) 740-3946; Zoom information available on Blackboard

Course Description

Basic argumentation theory including analysis, research and evidence, case construction, refutation; discursive and visual argument; diverse fields of advocacy including law, politics, organizations, interpersonal relations.

This course examines one of the most important—and misunderstood—forms of human communication. Argumentation is a process of communicative interaction that we have with others; arguments are something we *have*. Many people may dislike conflict and find the process of arguing to be unpleasant. This reaction is understandable. Certainly, some of the arguments in which we participate personally or witness in society and politics are combative, even nasty. People sometimes disagree for the sake of disagreeing (contrarianism) or argue out of hostility (verbal aggression) or with the intent of deceiving or misleading in order to gain some advantage (bad faith). However, opposition is unavoidable; some contexts, such as the law, even are structured intentionally to be adversarial. Further, although it is important to know when *not* to argue, declining to argue in situations that call for it is a form of self-silencing: One loses one's voice. This course emphasizes that disagreement need not be disagreeable and teaches the values and skills of arguing respectfully, productively, and effectively.

Arguments also are kinds of messages that we create and consume; arguments in this sense are products that we *make*. Arguments make knowledge claims about the world in which we live—"COVID 19 vaccines are safe and effective"—that we test against competing arguments—"COVID 19 vaccines contain microchips that will facilitate social control"—in order to reach decisions: "I should/should not be vaccinated." Sound arguments offer good reasons for their claims and produce better, more informed decisions. This course also examines the components of arguments and the tests by which their soundness can be assessed, which imparts the values and skills of critical thinking and informed decision-making.

These skills are equally valuable among family and friends, on the job, and as a citizen of the community. Thus, this course covers the process and products of advocacy in the private sphere of personal relations, in diverse specialized fields of activity, and in public controversies. Assignments provide opportunities for students to practice and reflect on their own advocacy.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Define** argumentation as a field of study and a human communication process
- **Identify** the types and components of an argument and their functions
- **Analyze** arguments in a variety of contexts and fields
- **Assess** the completeness and soundness of arguments
- **Critique** arguments and develop responses/refutations
- **Create** original arguments in both written and oral forms

- **Develop** public speaking and research skills
- **Understand** the importance of argumentation in a democratic society

Recommended Preparation: Moderate public speaking experience (e.g., COMM 204); familiarity with current events and the U.S. political system; foundations of academic research

Course Notes

The course website at blackboard.usc.edu is an official place for posting information relevant to the class (such as announcements, assignments, and grades), for making available materials—both required and supplementary—other than your textbook (such as other readings, audio and video clips, and links to relevant websites), and for holding post-class discussion (such as exploring ideas further, asking questions that you weren't able to ask during class, and seeking further explanation/clarification than was provided in class). You should consult this website regularly and should be as familiar with its content and services as you would be for material distributed or discussed during class. Taking advantage of its discussion feature is a way for those who are reluctant to speak up in class to boost their participation grades. Because the university does not unequivocally recognize material placed on this website to be the intellectual property of its creator, copies of lecture notes, etc., will not be made available here.

Policies and Procedures

a. Additional Policies

Format: This class emphasizes collaborative learning, in which we jointly ask questions of the material and each other and explore possible answers; in short, the class is heavily discussion-oriented. Even lecture—the purpose of which is to amplify, clarify, and supplement the course materials, not to duplicate or regurgitate them—will involve my asking questions of you. I ask questions not to trip you up or “test” you but to find our common basis for discussion in your experience. In addition, lecture may not cover all important aspects of the readings and may cover materials not in them while exams may cover any material assigned. To get the maximum out of class, then, it is important to complete the material assigned and formulate some thoughts and questions in advance. If you don't, you will be less prepared to contribute meaningfully to our conversation that day. Class also is your opportunity to ask about something in the reading that is not being covered explicitly that day. So come prepared to engage the material—to offer comments, ask and answer questions—in conversation with your classmates and me. To facilitate discussion, please bring the materials assigned to every class session.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: I strive to create an affirming, welcoming climate for all students because diversity helps us understand the complexities of the world and the challenges we face together. Diversity encompasses differences in age, color, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, gender, physical or mental ability, religion, socioeconomic background, veteran status, and sexual orientation. However, it is not measured simply by statistics but by an environment in which mutual learning is cultivated and a community of care fostered. If at any point you feel that I am not living up to this promise, please let me know immediately. I am here to listen and learn.

I am happy to work with students who require accommodations in class. If you are one of these students, please reach out to the Office of Student Accessibility Services (osas.usc.edu) so that I can work with them to address your situation effectively and appropriately.

I also recognize that learning styles differ. Should you need materials to be presented in a different way, please let me know.

I wish to acknowledge that my campus and city are located on historical Tovaangar, the land of the indigenous communities of the Los Angeles Basin. I gratefully acknowledge the Native peoples who have stewarded this sacred land throughout the generations and continue to steward it today. I strive to honor their traditions, identities, and stories, which are far too often ignored and erased.

Attendance: You should prioritize attending our class—and attending in person—throughout the term. Attendance is necessary (but not sufficient) for participation, which is worth 10% of your course grade (see below). Attendance will be taken in every session and more than two absences for any reason may affect your course grade adversely (as much as 50 points per absence, or one-half of a letter grade, which could even cause you to fail the course). Hybrid or asynchronous modes will be available only in exceptional extenuating circumstances, such as an extended absence due to COVID-19. If you anticipate such a circumstance, please reach out to me ASAP so that alternative arrangements can be considered. Although our time and attention sometimes are required elsewhere, it is your responsibility to catch up on anything you may have missed in class; I expect you to ask a classmate for notes. Arriving late, leaving early, and other activities not conducive to learning—such as turning off a ringing cell phone or leaving the room to answer it—are extremely disruptive, and you may be considered absent that day.

Presence and Technology: Presence is more than attendance. Our class functions best when people are actively engaged and contributing to conversations. When you are in class, *be in class*. The biggest hurdle to being present is the presence of technology, which promotes “[continuous partial attention](#)” by putting at your fingertips text messages, emails, work for a different class, social media, YouTube videos, 50% off sales . . . Even when not being distracted by external stimuli, many students use laptops to transcribe class, copying down word-for-word what is on a slide or a whiteboard. No evidence (that I am aware of) demonstrates that this form of notetaking is effective. Quite the opposite! Studies have shown repeatedly that nonstop engagement with digital technology leads to increased rates of anxiety and depression. Countless studies also have shown that retention of information improves dramatically when notes are taken by hand. In fact, [a July 2018 study in Educational Psychology](#) determined that technology use during class is detrimental to long-term retention (as measured by lower exam scores) not only among users but among *all* class members. *Hence, technology is like second-hand smoke, which is detrimental not only to you but to those around you.*

Accordingly, use this class to take a break from that unending avalanche of stimuli. If you *must* use a laptop, do so ONLY for class-related purposes, such as notetaking. If I suspect that you are using it for unrelated purposes, you may be asked to put it away, leave the classroom, and/or lose laptop privileges for the remainder of the term. I also may choose not to say anything but, please, don’t think I don’t notice. There may be times when a laptop or other internet-capable device will be beneficial, so you are welcome to bring them with you. But turn them off before class and put your cellphones in Do Not Disturb or Airplane mode—not just silent!

Professionalism: I expect students to display professionalism at all times. This includes:

- *Engaging in dialogue from a posture of good faith.* Argumentation is a process of give-and-take. We will discuss and debate a range of issues—some of which will be more sensitive than others. We will disagree. These disagreements will serve us best when we explore them carefully rather than papering them over. However, disagreement need not—and should not—be disagreeable; being a good arguer is not synonymous with being argumentative or quarrelsome. On the contrary, an effective arguer is open-minded, a good listener, respectful of the opinions of others, and able to fashion arguments in a way that others will find reasonable. In contrast, operating from a posture of antagonism (hostility or aggression), contrarianism (disagreement for its own sake), or bad faith (manipulation) can create a toxic, unproductive, and frankly unpleasant experience for all. Playing “devil’s advocate” should be done only to introduce nuance for the purpose of reaching greater understanding. The best policy is always to **T.H.I.N.K.** before you speak by ensuring that your comment is: Thoughtful, Helpful, Interesting, Necessary, Kind.
- *Understanding the importance of and limitations on freedom of speech.* I strongly affirm the importance of free speech. However, your right to freedom of speech is not violated if you disagree with someone, if your beliefs are challenged, or if you disagree with me. Your freedom of speech is violated when you are unduly punished or penalized for expressing your ideas. Relatedly, hate speech or abusive language that is explicitly sexist, racist, gendered, homophobic, ableist, or derogatory will not be tolerated.

Masking:

Our class is a community and, as such, we seek to maintain the health and safety of all members. Masking is optional but welcomed.

Culture of Caring: At the end of the day, although I am your instructor, I also am concerned for your health, safety, and wellbeing. I hope that you will find me approachable. Nonetheless, I am not a trained professional. At the end of this syllabus, you will find an extensive list of USC offices and services designed to help students struggling with mental health challenges and other difficult personal situations. If you are struggling and need help, please reach out to one of these offices and let me know if I can assist in any way.

b. Communication

Email is by far the best way to contact me outside of class and office hours. During weekdays, I normally reply within 24 hours; if you don't hear from me within this timeframe, please send a reminder. However, I typically do not respond to email in the evening. I also may not do so over weekends and holidays, so please allow additional response time (up to 72 hours) on these occasions. Please also practice appropriate "netiquette" when emailing me. Failure to do so is unprofessional and communicates a poor image of you; doing so will serve you well now and in the future.

In turn, you should check our course Blackboard site and your email regularly for messages from me. If anything related to our schedule, assignments, or other aspects of the class changes, I always will post an announcement and send an email (in addition to discussing it in class, of course).

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

To be successful, students should have a command of and access to: Blackboard, USC email, Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat, USC Library Resources (including both internal databases, e.g., Homer, and external databases, e.g., LexisNexis), and various search engines (including Google Scholar).

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Thomas A. Hollihan and Kevin T. Baaske, *Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Process of Human Decision Making*. (4th ed.; Waveland Press, 2022). Available from the USC Bookstore and online retailers such as [Amazon](#).

Other readings and materials as assigned. Available on Blackboard.

Readings and materials are assigned to enhance our understanding of argumentation theory and practice as well as to stimulate class discussion. All readings and materials are required unless indicated otherwise.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Detailed instructions and grading rubrics for every assignment are available on Blackboard.

- **Interpersonal Conflict Analysis:** A reflective paper (4-5 pp.) that applies course materials to an interpersonal conflict that you have experienced.
- **Specialized Field Analysis:** A (4-5 pp.) paper, based on observation, that discusses the argumentation norms of a technical field of the student's choosing, such as law, medicine, or business.
- **Policy Debates:** Two-person team (oral) debates on a substantive proposition of general concern (e.g., "That the Electoral College should be abolished" or "That reproductive rights should be guaranteed by law"; we will *not* debate propositions such as "That Tom Brady is the G.O.A.T."!). Time and class size permitting, each student will debate twice, once on each side of the proposition. Students are graded on their contribution to the overall quality of the debate, not on whether they won or lost.
- **Midterm Exam:** Primarily objective (multiple choice; matching; etc.) and short-answer items.
- **Final Exam:** Primarily medium-answer and essay items.
- **Participation and Activities:** Contributions to the class both in-class and on the Blackboard Discussion Board. Includes in-class and homework activities, e.g., interpersonal argument scales, case studies, reasoning exercises, and debate outlines and research.

Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Interpersonal Conflict Analysis	100	10%
Specialized Field Analysis	100	10%
Policy Debates (2)	200 ea.	40%
Midterm Exam	100	10%
Final Exam	150	15%
Participation and Activities	150	15%
TOTAL	1000	100%

Grading Scale

93.3% to 100%: A	80% to 83.2%: B minus	66.6% to 69.9%: D plus
90% to 93.2%: A minus	76.6% to 79.9%: C plus	63.3% to 66.5%: D
86.6% to 89.9%: B plus	73.3% to 76.5%: C	60% to 63.2%: D minus
83.3% to 86.5%: B	70% to 73.2%: C minus	0% to 59.9%: F

Grading Standards

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. 1000 total points can be earned. Points will be given for each assignment, assuming the grading scale above. Final course grades will be calculated by summing total points earned and converting to a letter grade; conversion may employ the same scale but I reserve the right to employ a different (more generous) curve.

Points are assigned by applying the following criteria to the work being judged. My assumption is that each grade subsumes the requirements for the grade(s) below it, e.g., that B work meets and exceeds the requirements for C work, as follows:

Letter Grade	Description
A	Superior work that demonstrates original insight into the theories and materials presented in class, the application of these theories and materials, and comparisons among these theories and materials; an unusually clear and comprehensive understanding of course materials; and an articulate, polished, and correct communication style. This grade is difficult to achieve; it requires superior study habits and writing skills, and superior performance on all assignments and in attendance and participation.

B	Excellent work that demonstrates a better-than-average comprehension of the course material, as evidenced by greater detail and thoroughness in exposition, and by organized and solid, if flawed, writing or speaking. Even average students often can achieve this grade through hard work, such as utilizing a study group effectively, making a point in class of seeking clarification of difficult ideas or ideas they don't understand, conferring with the instructor during office hours, writing and revising multiple drafts of papers, and so on.
C	Adequate, average work that demonstrates a basic familiarity and understanding of the course materials, as evidenced by an ability to summarize main points correctly, to identify key figures and main ideas from memory on examinations, and to convey understanding in basic, readable prose. This grade should be achievable by any student with decent study habits and good time management skills.
D	Deficient work that demonstrates an inadequate grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by unfamiliarity with, confusion about, or misunderstanding of key ideas, persons, and events on examinations, and hastily and poorly written assignments. This grade is often a sign of inadequate study or application, and also may be a sign of a problem in attendance or participation that contributes to inadequate study.
F	Failing work that demonstrates an unacceptably poor familiarity with or grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by an inability to identify even basic ideas, person, and events on examinations and seriously deficient writing. This grade may indicate an unacceptable lack of participation in the class, such as excessive absences would produce. This grade may be assigned to any work that fails to meet the stated requirements of the assignment, no matter how well done this work otherwise might be. This grade will be assigned to any work that violates the academic integrity standards and policies of the School or University. A grade of "F" in any part of the course should be taken as a sign of a problem in need of remedy.

Grading Timeline, Corrections, and Disputes

Every attempt will be made to grade assignments/exams and post grades within two (2) weeks. Scores for all assignments and exams are updated regularly on Blackboard. You are responsible for notifying me within one (1) week of a posting that you believe is missing or inaccurate.

I believe that grades are earned, not given. For this reason, I do not view grades as an opportunity to negotiate. In addition to providing a detailed rubric or rationale for your grade, I am happy to meet during office hours to explain further. Nonetheless, students occasionally are dissatisfied with the evaluation of their work. Please bring any grade *discrepancies* (e.g., you were not given credit for a correct answer on an examination question) to my attention immediately. In the event of a grade *disagreement* (e.g., you believe that your answer should be counted as correct, or that you deserve a higher grade on an assignment), please: (a) wait at least 24 hours; and (b) submit your rationale to me in writing. I will not consider petitions unless and until this process has been completed. All appeals of grades on specific assignments must be made within one (1) week of the return of that assignment; no changes will be made after this deadline.

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due on the dates specified. I strongly advise that assignments be completed on time; these things tend to snowball and you end up even further behind. Absent prior approval, late work may be penalized as much as one (1) full letter grade for every 24-hour period (including weekends) that it is late. In-class debates (once scheduled) and exams CANNOT be rescheduled or made up.

Assignments must be turned in as specified. Generally speaking, papers will be turned in via Blackboard; exams may be administered via Blackboard or paper; and other assignments will be turned in by hand.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/9/23 – 5/11/23)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20231/calendar/>

Friday, January 27: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, January 27: Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, January 27: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, January 27: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Monday, January 30: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, February 24: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001

Friday, February 24: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, April 7: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

Tentative Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change—and probably will change—based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability. So please approach it with flexibility in mind.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 January 9 January 11	Introductions Intro to Course Argument as Symbolic Activity	H&B Ch 1	
Week 2 January 16 January 18	Foundations NO CLASS Foundations: Narrative	H&B Ch 2; Andersen	MLK Day
Week 3 January 23 January 25	Contexts Argument Spheres Audiences	Goodnight H&B Ch 3	
Week 4 January 30 February 1	Personal Sphere Conflict Conflict (cont.)	Donohue & Kolt Lawyer & Katz; “Dick & Donna”	
Week 5 February 6 February 8	Personal Sphere Interpersonal Arg Gender; Narrative	H&B Ch 16; “Escalation of a Fight” Palczewski; Hollihan & Riley	
Week 6 February 13 February 15	Technical Sphere Law Critical Thinking	H&B Ch 14 H&B Ch 5 (pp.)	Interpersonal Conflict Analysis
Week 7 February 20 February 22	Technical Sphere NO CLASS Legal Narrative	Forensic Argument Simulation	Presidents’ Day
Week 8 February 27 March 1	Technical Sphere Political Campaigns	H&B Ch 13	Midterm Exam

Week 9 March 6 March 8	Public Sphere Critical Thinking Research	H&B Ch 5 (remainder) H&B Ch 8	Specialized Field Analysis
March 13 March 15	NO CLASS NO CLASS		Spring Break Spring Break
Week 10 March 20 March 22	Public Sphere Policy Debate Types of Argument	H&B Ch 11 H&B Ch 6	
Week 11 March 27 March 29	Public Sphere Types of Argument Types of Argument	H&B Ch 6 (cont.) H&B Ch 6 (cont.)	
Week 12 April 3 April 5	Public Sphere Public Narrative Grounds	H&B Ch 7	Reasoning Exercise Affirmative Outlines
Week 13 April 10 April 12	Public Sphere Visual Argument Refutation	H&B Ch 11 H&B Ch 9	Negative Outlines
Week 14 April 17 April 19	Public Sphere Debates #1 Debates #1		
Week 15 April 24 April 26	Public Sphere Debates #2 Debates #2		Research Research
STUDY DAYS Dates: April 29-May 2			
FINAL EXAM May 8			8:00-10:00

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in

outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

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

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

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

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

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

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.