

ARGUMENTATION

Mr. Chisnell, Room 105

E-Mail: MrChiz@comcast.net, www.chisnell.com

Please read this outline carefully. It describes how grades are determined for this course. One copy of this contract must be signed by a parent and returned to me, one copy is to be kept by a parent, and one copy is to be kept by the student.

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE: Argumentation combines the skills of public speaking with intensive study in logic, fallacy, and the strategy and tactics of persuasion in both formal and conversational/social situations. This does not mean a semester of “go for the throat” tactics, but hopefully a deeper understanding of the rhetorical scene and the motives of speaker and audience to solve a problem. In this sense, argumentation might best be thought of as “verbal judo.”

We will focus this semester on four key areas: 1) *ethos* (character), 2) *pathos* (audience), 3) *logos* (logic and words), and 4) rhetorical strategy and tactics. Students should expect a fairly intense course of reading, discussion, exams and, of course, many opportunities for speaking. They will demonstrate integrity and social skills in listening and adapting to their audience and peers. As necessary, students will refine their vocabulary and grammar skills. Finally, the course may make use of the common technologies used in today’s professional presentations including computer-designed presentations and audio enhancement.

MATERIALS:

- A planner or other scheduling method
- Ball point pens with blue or black ink
- Plenty of paper
- Appropriate handouts, notes, and research

ASSIGNMENTS: Formal speaking engagements (alone and in groups) (major grades), quizzes, informal speaking exercises, observation and analysis projects, readings, public performances, other assignments as needed.

GRADING POLICY: Assignments will be divided into grades of varying point values with major speeches obviously worth significantly more points than daily assignments. The total number of assignments, however, will depend on class progress from marking period to marking period.

Quizzes and speaking assignments may always be repeated to improve poor grades, though sometimes the particulars of an assignment may change. Further, many assignment repeats may have to occur outside of class.

Any “zero” on a marking period speech will be averaged into the grade as an “E” and then the final marking period grade will be dropped one full letter grade for each zero on a major speaking assignment.

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL SPEAKING ASSIGNMENT? Students who earn A’s or B’s in their speaking have met all or most of the requirements established for each assignment, including preparation and research, substantial rehearsal, and performance which demonstrates sincere effort and appropriate use of tools and techniques we have studied.

STUDY AND PRACTICE: I cannot begin to emphasize enough the importance of adequate rehearsal for successful public speaking. Poor preparation is *always* noticed by an attentive audience. It will be reflected in your grade.

In addition, the concepts we discuss in class are best handled by practice, pure and simple. It is one thing to know an idea, another to be able to use it when it becomes necessary.

PORTFOLIOS: Students may include drafts of speeches, videotapes, or digital records in their portfolios for future college entrance requirements.

LATE SPEECHES: Generally these are not an option unless a student is legitimately ill with an excused absence.

CONFERENCES: You should always schedule a time outside of class to meet with me about your work. If you ever have questions about your work, come to see me. I am impressed by your honest concern.

BEHAVIOR: Very simple:

- 1) Always be prepared for class;
- 2) Take notes and ask questions;
- 3) Respect and listen to others;
- 4) Work on classwork only; stay focused on the class!
- 5) Act with maturity

Speaking is, for many, a difficult and sensitive challenge. Your mature efforts to work for the comfort of all will impress me. Any undermining of other classmates, however subtle or indirect, will be condemned. I will ensure that the classroom works as it should to accomplish our work.

I will present an outline of expected major speaking assignments after we determine our class needs in the first few days of class. Parents can also keep track of our work on Zangle and the class website: www.chisnell.com

I have read and understand the structure of the Argumentation course.

(Student Signature)

(Parent Signature)