

## The Final Arguments

Goal: To demonstrate your mastery of course goals 1-3: making your own arguments, responding to others' arguments, and using sound sources.

Basic Assignment: Working in a group of your choice, on a policy issue of your choice, organize an argumentative interaction (for example, put on a debate). Afterwards, hand in documentation of what you did, and also peer review another group's presentation.

Details:

1. Group: I recommend that you work in a group of 2-4 people—enough to share responsibilities, but not too many to make it difficult to meet. If you want to work alone, or in a larger group, talk to me. You may stay with the group you've been assigned to already in this class, or join with members of other groups—your choice.

2. Issue: The issue must be a *policy* issue. A good policy issue is one:

- that you personally care about
- that produces actual disagreement in your group
- that is complex enough to allow you to demonstrate your mastery of the course goals
- that is relatively easy to research

3. Your presentation: I will schedule each group for a time slot during the last two weeks of class. Each group will have about 5 minutes of class time per member, plus 5-10 additional minutes. I expect each group member to take a significant role in the argument, ideally both *making* arguments and *responding* to arguments on the other side.

4. Format: You can choose the format for your final arguments. You can organize a public hearing, a debate, a roundtable, or any other method. You can even hold your final argument outside of class, before a "live" audience—in fact, I recommend it! If you want to try something unusual, talk to me in advance, so I can make sure that the format will allow you to demonstrate your mastery of the course goals.

5. Final documentation: No later than the class period after your final arguments, you must hand in to me a "PORTFOLIO" with the following documents:

1. A paper making the arguments you were responsible for, including both your own argument(s) and your response(s) to the argument(s) against you. Note that this is not a *list* of arguments—I want to see you *make arguments well*, using the criteria of the Good Argument checklist. The paper does not need a formal intro or conclusion or any other "fluff." It can contain arguments you didn't have a chance to make at the actual event.
2. A bibliography of all the sources you used for your argument. Use any accepted bibliographic form. If you like, your group can submit a group bibliography, including everyone's sources.
3. Source analyses for any questionable sources you have relied on. Ordinarily, relying on a questionable source will lower your grade. If, however, you show me that you have used good judgment in relying on the source, I will not penalize you if my judgment is different. Again, you may do this as a group if you prefer.
4. Your own self-assessment of your mastery of the course goals. Reflecting on your performance and your written arguments, what went well and what less well? Remember, honesty about your mistakes will never lower your grade; instead, it will show me that you know more than you were able to do.

6. Peer Review. Your final argument group will be assigned to peer review the performance of another group. Before they present their arguments, divide responsibilities within your group so that each of you is peer reviewing one of the presenters. Using the Good Argument Checklist, analyze that person's performance. Feel free to add any comments about the performance of the group as a whole. Send me your detailed critique by email **within 24 hours of the presentation.**

7. Assessment: This is an *individually* graded assignment, although in my experience, a good group will bring everyone's grade up. It is worth 30% of your final grade. I will assess your performance "holistically," attempting to reach a judgment of your mastery of all 3 course skills, based on both your oral and written performance. Please consult the assessment standards we have been developing throughout the semester for *good arguments*, *good responses to others' arguments*, and *good source analysis*.

### TIMETABLE

7M 1 Oct Start considering your GROUP and ISSUE choices. When you've decided, hand in to me a sheet of paper with:  
-the names of all group members  
-a full statement of your policy issue  
-your preliminary idea about how to organize the argument (e.g., a debate, a round-table, a public hearing)

11F 2 Nov **LAST DAY TO SIGN UP FOR FINAL ARGUMENTS.**  
In class, I will poll you about your preferences for when you want to present your final arguments.

12W 7 Nov Final argument schedule announced and peer reviews assigned. Sign ups for pre-debate meetings with me.

13M-W-F Group meeting time and pre-debate meetings with me. **At the meeting, you must give me a complete and detailed outline of the arguments you expect to make.**

### THANKSGIVING BREAK

14M-W-F & Last pre-debate meetings.  
15M-W Final arguments. **Attendance is required subject to a one step grade penalty.**  
At the class meeting after you present, hand in the required portfolio of written materials.  
Email your peer review of your assigned group within 24 hours of the presentation.

15F 7 Dec Final summary and course evaluations. **Attendance required.** Last day to hand in Final Argument portfolios.

Exam week Personal growth report due; My Philosophy paper due; optional final exam.