

## GOALS:

This class promises to make you a skilled arguer when debating issues of public importance. In particular:

1. *Make good arguments.* You will be able to make clear and well-supported arguments which answer in advance the audience's doubts and objections.
2. *Engage others' arguments.* You will be able to understand others' arguments, to assess them, to question them, and to respond to them.
3. *Assess reliable sources.* You will be able to assess the reliability of information sources, especially those you find online.
4. *Organize argument interactions.* You will be able to design interactions in which people can exchange arguments productively.
5. *Express your philosophy.* You will be able to state and defend cogently your own views about the nature and importance (if any) of argument.
6. *Grow as a person.* You will achieve a significant personal goal that you set for yourself.

Why should you want to achieve the first five goals, becoming a skilled arguer? As course goal 5 suggests, that is a question you'll be answering for yourself throughout the semester.

In addition to the first five course goals that everyone will meet, you undoubtedly bring your own personal goals to this class. Maybe you want to improve your speech delivery skills, or improve your group leadership skills. I invite you to discuss your personal goals with me early in the semester, and to select one of them as goal 6, your own goal for personal growth in this class.

Everything you'll be doing in this class will help you achieve at least one of the six course goals. If something doesn't, you should object to doing it. Your final grade will be based on your documented achievement on the course goals (see the section on grading). My advice is to become very familiar with these goals, now, and keep them in mind throughout the semester.

## STARTING POINT:

I presume that you want to do the work necessary to improve your skills as an arguer. I also presume that you care about some of the issues facing the University community, the city of Ames, the state of Iowa, the U.S.A. and the world generally. I do *not* presume that you have any previous knowledge of argumentation or debate, although it's very probable that you've argued *sometime* in your life. However, you should be able to stand up and give a sound speech (i.e., you've taken a public speaking class), and you should be able to write a decent short paper (i.e., you've taken a composition class).

### THREE PRINCIPLES GUIDING US FROM STARTING POINT TO GOALS:

1. *Responsibility*. Fundamentally, your learning is in your own hands—especially in a course like this, where you're learning how to *do* something. It's therefore *your* responsibility to take advantage of the opportunities and freedoms this class will offer: to invest your time wisely, to cooperate with your peers willingly, and to evaluate carefully your strengths and weaknesses.

2. *Accommodation*. It's *my* responsibility to help every student achieve the highest level of learning. Everyone learns differently. Therefore **everything in this course can be changed**—if you ask, in advance, and give me a good reason. Hint: Come to my office hours (223 Ross, Mon 1:10-3:00, Tues 10:00-10:50), and tell me *how it will help you learn*.

I put this principle in every syllabus. But few seem to believe it. Sad! I suggest you put my commitment to the test by asking for something you need, big or small, and see what happens.

3. *Integrity*. This class will work on the honor system. I will presume you are being honest and up front with me. At the same time, I have *zero* tolerance for plagiarism or any other academic dishonesty. All work you (or your group) sign your name to must be your own. If it is not, the assignment will be given a "zero" and you *will* be reported for disciplinary proceedings, as required by University rule. Further, you will be on probation in this course for the rest of the semester; the second incident of plagiarism, however minor, will result in a grade of "F" for the course.

Much plagiarism is accidental. It can be avoided by not doing waiting until the last minute to prepare your work. It can also be avoided by the proper use of quotation marks and citations to show you are using sources. If you need help with this, see the online reading "How Not to Plagiarize" and talk to me immediately!

### PREVIEW OF THE PATH TO COME:

What can you expect? A detailed schedule is included later in this Syllabus; here is a general map of where we'll be going and what we'll be doing.

The first eleven weeks of the class will be focused on achieving the course goals.

- *Mondays*, 10:00-10:50 will be "labs" devoted to *argument practice*. Groups will participate in a variety of activities, and in particular will make arguments on a series of six cases generally related to agricultural and food policies.
- *Mondays*, 11:00-11:50 and *Wednesdays* 10:00-10:50 will be devoted to *argument concepts*. This will give you the background ideas that will help you improve your practice. There will be a mix of my talking, open discussion, and small practice exercises.
- *Fridays*, 10:00-10:50 will be "labs" devoted to *group preparation* for the following practice lab.

During the final month of the course, you will demonstrate your achievement on the course goals. There will be an exam covering the course concepts and skills. Then you will work in a group you select to research, develop and present a debate on a topic of your choice.

During finals week, there will be an optional final exam, and you will hand in a paper on your philosophy of argument, and a report of your achievement on your personal growth goal.

Overall, in line with the general policy for ISU courses, you can expect to spend about nine hours a week on this course, *in and outside* of class. Here are the average hours per week reported by last year's students, *outside* only:

hours	0-1 hours	2-4	5-7	8-10	11-13
% students	0	37%	55%	8%	0

## RESOURCES FOR GETTING FROM STARTING POINT TO GOALS:

What do you need, in order to learn?—I mean, learn anything, whether how to argue, how to be a good parent, how to drive or how to calculate a standard deviation. If you made a list, it might include things like: practice, practice, practice; opportunities to reflect on successes and failures; and lots of advice, feedback and support from other people. These are the resources that will be available in this course to help you learn:

1. *Peer group.* At the end of the first week, you'll be assigned to a permanent peer work group. Most in-class activities will be done as part of this group. NOTE: *I expect that you'll learn more from working with your groupmates than from anything else in this course.* But groups are only as good as the members make them; it is up to you to contribute to making your group work.

One of the hardest parts of group work is arranging a meeting time. At the suggestion of previous students in this class, I asked the Registrar to schedule this class with two hours of "lab" time. This means that your group will have fifty minutes of class time every Friday in which to meet. If you are individually prepared and collectively efficient, I do not think you will have to have regular meetings outside of class. You should be prepared for *occasional* outside meetings, however, especially before major argument practice activities.

Note that your final arguments will also be done as a group, although for this project you are free to break up or re-arrange members. It is very likely that your final project group *will* have to meet outside of class hours.

2. *The instructor.* Who am I? See my personal website ([goodwin.public.iastate.edu](http://goodwin.public.iastate.edu)) for details. It is easiest to reach me via email ([goodwin@iastate.edu](mailto:goodwin@iastate.edu)). I also *strongly* encourage you to come to my office hours (or make an appointment) with any concerns:

**Office Hours**  
**223 Ross Hall, Mon 1:10-3:00, Tues 10:00-10:50**  
**and freely by appointment ([goodwin@iastate.edu](mailto:goodwin@iastate.edu))**

3. *Class time.* Class attendance is only required during the "starred" (\*) days on the syllabus, in the sense that there is no *grade* penalty any other days. But there is this automatic penalty: you'll miss what we do. In particular, it's easy to notice that around mid-semester, some students start missing classes—probably many of their classes, not just this one. Please be warned that much of the "A" level material will be covered during these weeks, so if you are aiming for an "A," don't skip these days. Even a small effort now will have good results later.

4. *Readings.* The textbook (Browne & Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions*, 8th edition) is available at the UBS. All other readings will be available online at the course website. Most of these are very short, and I encourage you *not* to print them out.

5. *Course webpage.* The course webpage includes a lot of information and resources for the course, including many of the required readings: <http://goodwin.public.iastate.edu/spcom322/>  
In case you forget the URL,

6. *Your fellow students, the ISU community, and the rest of your life.* Basically, if you never discuss our debates with someone outside of class, then we've all failed!

## GRADING

First, the big picture:

1. Pop quizzes	15 points
2. Labs	20 points
3. Exam	15 points
4. Final arguments	30 points
5. Philosophy of argument paper	10 points
6. Personal growth report	<u>10 points</u>
TOTAL	100 points

Second, the full details—for those of you who like this sort of thing. Each assignment will also be discussed fully in class, so if looking at fifteen weeks of work all at once makes you feel anxious, then don't. But be sure to skip down to the extra credit and attendance policies at the end.

1. *Pop quizzes* can occur at any time in the course. They will test familiarity with the readings assigned for the day. For example, when the reading is from the textbook *Asking the Right Questions*, I will often borrow questions from the textbook's website (at [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_browne\\_askingquest\\_8](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_browne_askingquest_8)). Quizzes are not "open book," but you may use any notes you have written yourself. They will be graded on a "pass/no pass" (1/0) basis, with a score of C/75% or higher needed to "pass." If there are more than fifteen quizzes, the extra ones will be counted as "extra credit;" if there are less, everyone will be granted the points needed to make the total 15. There will be no "make ups" for missed quizzes. Quiz scores will be recorded in your group's folder.

2. *Lab* grades will be based on your group's performance on the lab exercises. The group's grade will be "2" if the performance was good or excellent, "1" if it was marginal, and "0" if it was inadequate. All group members actively participating will receive the same grade; members not actively participating will receive a "0". For obvious reasons, there are no make-up labs. Note that on major lab exercises, I will give substantial feedback, which should be more significant than the grade itself. Lab scores will be recorded in your group's folder. Note that labs are the *only* group graded assignments in this course; all other grades are based on your individual work.

3. The *exam* is Monday of 12th week. It will be primarily short answer and essay questions, asking you to explain and apply the course concepts. We will discuss on Monday of 7th week the exact kinds of questions you can expect on the exam, and you will have an opportunity to practice each of them. The exam will be "open" one page of handwritten (by you) notes. An optional final exam will be offered during Finals Week; you may re-take any section of the exam and use the second grade to replace the first.

4. The *final arguments* will occur in the last two weeks of the class. We will go over all details of this assignment on Monday of 7th week. As mentioned above, you will work in a group you select (or, with permission, even alone), on a topic of your choice. To help you prepare, your group will meet with me prior to the debate. Your individual final argument grade will be based on your oral performance, on the written arguments and bibliography you turn in afterwards, on your own self-assessment, and on a peer review that you do for another group.

5. Your *philosophy of argument* paper is due any time in the semester, no later than the date of the final exam. During the course we will be discussing a series of important and fundamental questions about argument, for example:

- If so much of our information comes from experts, why don't we let them decide public issues? What do ordinary citizens have to add to public debates?
- Should people appeal to religion when making arguments in public debates?
- Do men and women argue differently?
- Are our televised debate shows "hurting America"? What kind of debates do we need? What can we achieve by arguing, anyhow?

You will select one of these questions (or a question of your own, approved by me) and write a five page response stating and defending your view. If you hand it in before the Thanksgiving break, I'll give you feedback and you will have the opportunity to re-write it.

6. Your *personal growth report* tells me about your achievement on the goal you set yourself at the beginning of the semester. I strongly encourage you to talk with me about this goal, so we can make a specific, manageable plan about what you should do to meet it, and what you need to show me at the end of the course to get a grade for it. This is an assignment that will be *easy* if you pay attention to it for ten minutes a week throughout the semester. But if you try to do it at the last minute, it will very likely take a lot of time and turn out poor.

"*Extra credit*" opportunities are freely available. In fact, in line with the basic policy that *everything in this course can be changed—if you ask, in advance, and give me a good reason*, they are not really "extra" credit at all. They're just specific ways to enrich this course to meet your personal learning needs. Occasionally, I will announce an opportunity, such as a speaker on campus you can attend. But in general, it's up to you to locate or notice something you can do outside of class that helps you achieve the six course goals, and to come to me to reach an agreement about how to get credit for it. For example, one student got "extra credit" for reporting on the arguments she made in a small claims court case against a former roommate. Please understand that you do *not* get credit just for doing *work*. I am not your boss, and do not pay you in "points." Credit is a recognition of *learning*. Notice also that at the very end of the semester, you are much more likely to improve your final grade by putting an hour of work into the final assignments (exam, final arguments, philosophy paper, personal growth report) than by frantic, last-minute attempts at extra credit. So be sure to talk with me *early*.

Finally, note that **class attendance is required during the initial group assignments (Friday of 1st week), during final debates (14th and 15th week) and during the two course evaluation days (Monday of 7th week, Friday of 15th week)**. These dates are starred (\*) on the class schedule. Attending the first two is a courtesy to your fellow students—you owe them a willing group member and a good audience. The last is a courtesy to me—you owe me feedback on my teaching, so I can learn myself how to make it better. **Each failure to attend class during these times will be subject to a one step grade penalty (e.g., B to B-).**

## LAST YEAR'S STUDENT COMMENTS

*One of the lessons of this course is to question what people tell you. So I don't expect you to simply believe everything I say to you in class and in this syllabus. To provide you some additional guidance, at the end of every semester I invite students to say a few words to the next year's students, which I will put in the syllabus exactly as they write them. Here are all the responses from the last time I taught this class, in the order they happened to be in the stack.*

Make sure you have the motivation & determination to work hard. The class is tedious, but fun at the same time. Being able to work in a group is a must, so if you are a loner...get out now!

I like cheesecake. Stick with the class. It's challenging, and sometimes you'll feel beaten down, but you'll come out of it all the better. The class will teach you to kick your friends' collective asses in arguments.

If you need anything, talk to Jean. She's there to help you, and she's good at it! You might love the portfolio system or you might hate it! Either way, talk to Jean about it. [*Note: I eliminated the portfolio system for this year.*]

Keep up with the portfolio throughout the semester.

This is definitely a class that will push you to work hard, but the rewards of what you learn & the improvements made are worth it. Just remember to stay on top of the portfolio.

This class may take some work, but stick it out, you will learn a lot.

Class goals are unrealistic. You'll spend so much time on this one class—if you have a heavy course load—drop this class.

Don't be afraid to talk to Jean she really wants to see you succeed. It didn't seem like a lot of work but a lot of stuff you give Jean will not be considered good on the first try so don't become frustrated.

It's not a hard class. Don't let the other comments scare you. Just do your work early in advance and talk to Dr. Goodwin ahead of time. You will do fine.

This class is challenging, but it is a great learning experience. Jean works with you and class is always interesting.

If you are busy then drop because you have to work with a group the whole semester.

This class will be frustrating. Sometimes it will drive you crazy but it really is beneficial. Don't be afraid to ask questions and be prepared to dedicate a lot of time and energy!

I really enjoyed the class but I was not prepared for how hard it is.

This course is challenging, but rewarding if you put forth the effort. Jean will work with you which is rare for many professors.

Make sure you can work well and depend on at least 1 member of your group.

Jean really means everything she says and is willing to work with you to help you learn the best, so when offered, she WANTS you to take her up.

Please, if you do anything in this course talk to the professor, get to know what she wants to see you do within the course. She may have her set guidelines, however it is only you who knows what the word "good" means. She is your tool to success, utilize her.

It is important not to fall behind, although it is still possible to make up, do yourself a favor and stay on top of things.