

# DEBATE

## Course Syllabus

- “The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”  
- Mark Twain
- “Give me the right word and I will move the world.”  
- Joseph Conrad
- “Good words are worth much and cost little.”  
- George Herbert

### I. DEBATE:

Communication and collaboration are vital 21<sup>st</sup> century skills you will enhance through the practice of debate and argumentation. Our emphasis is on both the technical aspects of debate, in conjunction with the exploration of the tools of effective speaking and presentation. Class work develops from the in-depth analysis of contemporary issues as students enhance their abilities to organize efficiently, to think critically, and to speak extemporaneously. Scholars carry out directed research of 21<sup>st</sup> century problems, innovate, create and exchange ideas, while continuously developing their poise and self-confidence.

### II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- A. Students investigate and utilize various formal speaking and debating styles as they work to develop logical arguments and strategies.
- B. Debaters explore the organization and physical aspects of delivery, gaining experience in the art of effectively communicating and defending ideas.
- C. Scholars present and recognize multiple aspects of oral argumentation, including deductive and inductive reasoning, inference, metaphor, and the defining characteristics of logical fallacies.
- D. To utilize research for debates and speaking activities, while developing an appreciation for issues related to “the ethics of advocacy” and “proper source material attribution.”
- E. Participants explore active listening techniques and utilize these while honing note taking and critical listening skills.

### III. REQUIREMENTS:

#### A. Course Materials-

The text, *Speech - Exploring Communication* may be utilized. A binder/folder for handouts and notes as well as a writing implement will be required. Your folder will contain all in-class assignments, research, handouts, as well as all completed assignments.

#### B. Outside Research Sources-

Debate topics will vary, but research, interviews, and current events will be utilized. Suggestions are made in class, and final choices must receive the approval of the instructor.

### IV. GRADING & EVALUATION:

#### A. Grading Policy-

- A = Prompt completion of assignments, consistent improvement and effort, initiative and concern above reproach. Your participation in class both as an observer/critic and as an active participant, is of vital importance as a means of evaluating your progress.
- B = No more than one zero or incomplete assignment, directions and corrections used and improvements made, consistent effort and initiative above normal.
- C = Less than three incompletes, follows directions, effort at normal level, initiative and concern below expectations.
- D = Three or more unacceptable assignments, inconsistent effort, excessive tardies or absences.
- E = Work and effort at an unacceptable level.

Significant, personalized feedback is conveyed on a regular basis through individual conferencing, written observations, coordinated assessments and classroom displays. Grades will be available and updated at approximately three week intervals on Pinnacle. When an assignment is given, it takes about a week to ensure that everyone has taken, re-worked or made up the task, and from one to five days to accurately reflect and assess it. Only then will I update your effort from the past few weeks. This ensures that your status is indicative of your actual progress - not just a reflection of a single outstanding project or a distressing test. Please see me with questions or concerns.

\*\*\* Each one of you can earn an "A" if you are willing to put forth the effort.

#### B. Make-up/Late work-

When a presentation, project, test, etc. is missed due to an EXCUSED absence, you have one day for each day absent to make up the work. If you fail to take the initiative for make-ups or fail to turn in an assignment, it receives a "0". Remember, it is your responsibility to make arrangements for all make-up work. **Reminder – absences do not change long-term assignment deadlines!**

An UN-EXCUSED absence means an automatic "E." Unexcused absences and tardies, both forms of non-participation, will adversely affect your success. You generally receive 5 points per day for class work and productive participation.

**I DO NOT EXCEPT LATE WORK...**you snooze, you lose! For extenuating circumstances (accepting a Nobel Prize, unexpected time travel), see me. For printer breakdowns, late games, my dog ate it, etc. **PLAN AHEAD!**

C. Midterm/Final Exam - You must receive passing grades to pass the course. This counts as 20% of your final grade.

#### D. Approximation of points received for individual assignments -

Attendance/Participation	1 – 5 (negative potential)
Classroom events/Quizzes	5 - 10
Minor Written Assignments/Presentations/Assessments	10 - 25
Major Papers/Projects/Tests	25 - 60

  

100-98% = A+	89-87 = B+	79-77 = C+	69-67 = D+
97-93 = A	86-83 = B	76-73 = C	66-63 = D
92-90 = A-	82-80 = B-	72-70 = C-	62-60 = D-      59 and below = E

\*\*\*As with any course, it is your responsibility to save all assignments, papers, projects etc., in order to avoid any grade discrepancy disputes later in the term. Keep everything!

#### **V. CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS:**

- \* A Positive Attitude and Productive Participation are essential.
- \* Approx. ½ hour of homework each night is the norm – 2-3 hours a week; plan on it.
- \* *Deserve respect; expect respect.*
- \* Bring all necessary supplies, attend regularly, punctually, and behave responsibly.
- \* **NO gum, unauthorized electronic use, food, beverages, vulgarity, insubordination, harassment, etc. allowed in class. Infractions will negatively impact your grade.**
- \* One trip out of class per semester (restroom, drink, locker, etc.), is available; use it judiciously. If you forget materials, fail to plan ahead, etc., it will affect your grade - see that it doesn't.
- \* Do not pack up or get up until the bell; it does not dismiss you, I do.
- \* **Plagiarism is the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another and representing it as original effort.** Research wisely, paraphrase selectively, and attribute accurately; always cite your source. Start early; make it personal; do your own work!

#### **VI. KEEPING IN TOUCH:**

I am available Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 7:15 – 7:50 a.m. or after school by appt.; my room # is 401 and my email is [dunhamm@gpschools.org](mailto:dunhamm@gpschools.org), which is the best way to reach me. Please engage in your success now. Ask for help when you get stressed, behind, or befuddled. I am not that scary. Please review the information in this syllabus with your parents.

**Welcome - now let's have a great semester!**