

Public Speaking and Debate Honors Syllabus

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Those who can speak well are not all geniuses, charismatics, or extroverted children of the stage. With a little study and practice, anyone—and that means you—can write an effective speech and deliver it with power and grace.

- Jeff Scott Cook, *The Elements of Speechwriting and Public Speaking*

The core of debate is to examine every side of important and controversial issues in an atmosphere of reasoned argument and respectful discourse.

-hopkins-debate.com

Course Description

This course is for students who wish to build and polish their abilities as a critical thinker, effective communicator, and leader. Activities to increase verbal fluency and confidence while exploring topics of interest will be offered. Students will learn techniques for building and delivering successful speeches and for participating in active debates. In addition, pupils will develop the necessary skills to critique, analyze and question speeches and debates presented by others. Activities will include prepared and spontaneous speeches and debates, discussions, and oral interpretation of literature. Research has shown that skills gained in speech and debate yield significant advantages in school and later life by:

- enhancing attentiveness, clarity and stage presence;
- strengthening both oral and written communication through improved expression, modification, and justification of ideas;
- sharpening critical, innovative thinking and problem solving ability;
- increasing academic reading and research skills by giving access to a wide array of information: philosophy, history, public policy, and current events;
- making learning relevant and dynamic through analysis and articulation of multiple perspectives;
- building self confidence, the ability to recognize how others think, and the ability to resolve conflicts; and
- promoting leadership, participation, and achievement.

Course Skills

Speech and debate fosters articulate, well-informed, intellectually curious and empathetic communicators. By the end of the course students should be able to:

- demonstrate proficiency in a variety of speaking and debating formats, both prepared and spontaneous;
- become familiar with various terms and formats used in speaking and debating;
- construct and write notes, outlines, briefs, manuscripts and debate cases;
- research, construct, and deliver logical arguments in both individual and team settings;
- understand and utilize the relationship between assertions, reasoning, and evidence;
- research and cite credible sources to build arguments and rebuttals and include oral citations that reference author's name, qualifications, source material, and date;
- practice effective voice, pacing, and appropriate tone in a variety of speaking and debating situations;
- gain awareness of the significant role of body language, facial expressions, and gestures in conveying messages effectively;

- enhance verbal and non-verbal communication skills in order to foster a sense of trust and rapport with listeners;
- recognize and employ rhetorical strategies and ethos, pathos, logos;
- identify and avoid logical fallacies;
- collaborate with a partner to develop a case strategy and to adapt during a debate;
- listen, follow, and flow the course of a debate;
- deliver effective rebuttals attacking an opponent's claims;
- analyze and critique arguments and speeches for structure, evidence and rhetorical effectiveness;
- listen actively and respond thoughtfully to opposing viewpoints;
- engage with diverse topics, current events, and ethical issues with sensitivity and respect; and
- develop poise, confidence, and adaptability in both prepared and spontaneous situations.

Course Materials

- Laptop for daily use
- Small 3-ring binder or folder
- Legal pad(s) or one-subject notebook (college ruled)
- Pack of index cards (5 x 8)
- Black, red and multiple colored pens
- Highlighters in several colors

Grading

Semester grades are the average of the two quarter grades with an emphasis on improvement. Quarter grades are weighted as follows:

50% = Oral speeches/debates

25% = Speech and debate preparation (notes, outlines manuscripts, briefs, flows, etc.)

25% = Participation (engagement, attentiveness, active listening, peer and self evaluations)

Grading rubrics will be provided for each speech and debate assignment, and these may vary depending upon activity requirements. However, all will contain the components listed below. Note that grades will be based on the teacher's rubric score, not those of student listeners.

Content/Information = Reliable, quality reasoning and evidence is supplied and cited for all points.

Delivery = Effective verbal and non-verbal communication techniques are utilized and improved.

Organization = Required formats are followed and purpose (thesis) and main points clearly identified.

Preparation = Presentation and written materials are on time and evidence of rehearsal is shown.

Cross Examination/Clash = Questioning, responding and addressing opposing arguments is respectful.

Policies and Code of Conduct - Students are expected to

- show moral integrity and treat all staff members and fellow students with respect and understanding;
- help maintain a safe environment for courteous dialogue;
- participate actively and attend regularly both as a speaker and supportive audience member;
- report planned absences as early as possible to help with scheduling of speeches and debates;
- discontinue working and put away laptops when someone is speaking or debating;
- use cell phones or earbuds only with permission of the teacher;
- look at all speakers/debaters and give them your undivided attention;
- remain seated in the classroom when someone is speaking and debating;
- wait until a speaker/debater is finished to ask questions or make comments;
- wait until a speaker/debater has finished to move about or to enter the classroom;
- eliminate taking, whispering, interrupting, grimacing or other distractions when someone is speaking or debating;
- be equally responsive to all speakers/debaters and help classmates grow by giving constructive feedback;
- be prepared to agree/disagree and listen to opposing viewpoints without rushing to judgment;
- keep the focus on a clash of ideas, not personalities;
- be responsible and reliable when working with others;
- maintain and bring a binder or folder of handouts and assignments for daily use; and
- follow the school rule of no food or drink in the classroom, except water.

Units of Study

Unit I - Speech Fundamentals

Topics for Study:

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| -Confidence building | -Delivery methods (verbal/non-verbal) |
| -Anxiety and nervousness | -Questioning strategies |
| -Articulation and fluency | -Speech organization |
| -The communication process | -Self and peer evaluation |

Assignments:

- Informal warm-up activities and speeches
- Interviewing and introductory speech
- Pet peeve speech
- Speech of personal experience

Unit II - Becoming a Public Speaker

Topics for Study:

- Examining famous speeches
- Gathering and synthesizing information
- Speech organization and outlining
- Writing introductions and conclusions
- Constructing arguments
- Transitions and signposting
- Ethos, pathos, logos
- Rhetorical strategies

Assignments:

Commemorative speech
Persuasive speech
Impromptu speaking

Unit III - Debate Fundamentals

Topics for Study:

- Debate terminology
- Debate formats and types
- Gathering information
- Assertion, reasoning, evidence (A.R.E)
- Constructing claims/assertions
- Understanding clash/refutation
- Cross examination/questioning strategies
- Flowing and personal shorthand

Assignments:

Four corners/fishbowl warm-ups
Tennis debate
One-on-one refutation
Spontaneous Argumentation (SPAR)

Unit IV - Becoming a Debater

Topics for Study:

- Topic analysis
- Researching/writing a case
- Preparing cards/briefs
- The Toulmin method
- Logical fallacies
- Preparing for rebuttals
- Speaking from the flow
- Weighing, balance, and turns

Assignments:

Team (policy) debate
Cross examination debate
Lincoln Douglas debate

Unit V - A Look at Oral Interpretation

Topics for Study:

- Selecting theme and planning
- Choosing and cutting material
- Adapting voice and conveying character
- Structuring program with transitions

Assignment:

Program Oral Interpretation

