

COMM 54B: FORENSIC DEBATE

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Fall 2026
Units:	5
Hours:	5 lecture per week (60 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Recommended previous or concurrent enrollment in COMM C1000, C1000H, or 1B; demonstrated proficiency in English by placement via multiple measures OR through an equivalent placement process OR completion of ESLL 125 & ESLL 249; not open to students with credit in COMM 54X.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 1B: Oral Communication & Critical Thinking
Transferable:	CSU
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- Research, evaluate, and incorporate credible evidence in a debate case
- Prepare and deliver a competition-level debate speech including both argumentation and refutation

Description

Training in principles of debate; preparation for extemporaneous speaking and competitive debate. Students will receive instruction in speech delivery, teamwork, case preparation, rebuttal strategy, and proper oral citation of sources. Includes historical study of forensic debate in a variety of formats.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Recognize and distinguish between various forms of debate and forensics events, and construct a proficient event suitable for intercollegiate competition.
2. Research and construct in-depth arguments on a range of current political, economic, legal, and social issues using information competency tools, including logical reasoning, critical deliberation, appropriate support, and effective advocacy.
3. Create a prima facie case and prepare affirmative arguments using credible evidence and structured supporting materials.
4. Engage in effective refutation and rebuttal by analyzing opposing arguments, identifying flaws, and responding with clarity and logic.

5. Adapt public discourse to diverse audiences, formats, and contexts using discipline-appropriate language and rhetorical strategies.
6. Gain understanding of effective delivery techniques, including sustained eye contact, vocal projection, natural facial expression, authentic voice, meaningful gestures, and presence in the moment.
7. Develop and organize debate materials, including a complete case file and a written flow chart for argument tracking and response.
8. Exhibit the ability to write for the ear (oral delivery) as well as for the eye (written formats), ensuring clarity, coherence, and engagement.
9. Deliver a wide range of public discourse formats, such as debates, persuasive speeches, and communication analyses, both in class and in competitive settings.
10. Gain understanding of communicating ethically and professionally with teammates, competitors, coaching staff, and judges.
11. Integrate critique from coaches, peers, and self-assessment to revise and improve both speech content and delivery.
12. Demonstrate intercultural understanding and appreciation through research, presentations, and self-disclosure that explore and respect diverse cultural perspectives.

Course Content

1. Overview of forensics and debate formats
 - a. Introduction to individual and team debate styles used in intercollegiate and community competitions
 - b. Examination of limited preparation, platform, and policy events
2. Application of communication theory and research skills
 - a. Application of communication principles, including audience analysis, rhetorical strategy, and argumentation, to the development of forensics and community presentations
 - b. Use of information competency for researching, analyzing, and writing arguments and speeches
 - c. Practice of advocacy and presentational skills through structured assignments and feedback
3. Creation of a prima facie case
 - a. Understanding the order and responsibilities of affirmative and negative speakers
 - b. Linking the assigned resolution to a clearly defined and supportable case
 - c. Structuring and timing case presentations according to competitive standards
4. Preparation of affirmative arguments
 - a. Conducting research to support argumentative positions
 - b. Applying intercollegiate citation requirements and ethical sourcing practices
5. Effective refutation and rebuttal
 - a. Identifying logical fallacies in opposing arguments
 - b. Practicing refutation and rebuttal techniques to improve response strategies
6. Case file and flow chart development
 - a. Compiling current and classic debate case materials for competition use
 - b. Practicing flowing arguments and creating written flow charts for organizational purposes
7. Intercultural understanding and appreciation
 - a. Conducting cross-cultural and intercultural research for argument development

- b. Analyzing international forensics performances to explore rhetorical diversity
- 8. Ethics, etiquette, and community engagement
 - a. Demonstrating appropriate behavior, ethical communication, and professionalism during tournaments and events

Lab Content

Not applicable.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Classroom with access to audio/visual aids, especially video camera, computer with internet access, projector and viewing screen, monitor and DVD/VCR.
2. When taught as an online/hybrid section: on-going access to computer with email software and capabilities; email address; JavaScript-enabled internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Written outline for debate presentations, demonstrating logical structure and preparation
 Evaluation of debates based on organization of content, clarity of expression, relevance and significance of supporting evidence, effectiveness of transitions, and logical progression of ideas
 Completion of written debate flow charts to track and respond to arguments in a structured and timely manner
 Written self-assessments reflecting on personal growth, skill development, and performance throughout the course
 Active participation in in-class performances, discussions, critiques, and collaborative activities to demonstrate understanding of competitive event formats and foundational communication theory
 Development and submission of a digital portfolio containing all prima facies, debate flows, and post-event evaluations and self-reflections, with input and feedback from peers and the instructor
 Preparation and delivery of at least one coach-approved event suitable for collegiate competition to evaluate the quality of speech construction or debate case development

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Instructor-led lectures introducing the various types of debate formats and the principles of effective argumentation
 Group seminar coaching sessions focused on research, the social relevance of topics, speechwriting, editing, performance, and delivery
 One-on-one coaching to support students in developing competitive events tailored to their individual interests and advocacy goals
 Cooperative learning exercises, such as oral presentations with peer critique and instructor-guided analysis of in-class performances
 Electronic group discussions, facilitated through online platforms, to encourage continued engagement and reflection outside the classroom
 Students may participate, as competitors or observers, in on-campus performances, intramural events, and/or intercollegiate forensics competitions to apply course concepts in real-world settings

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Martenay, Jim. Arguing Using Critical Thinking. 2021.

Rottenberg A., and D. Winchell. Elements of Argument. 2020.

Freeley, Austin J., and David L. Steinberg. Argumentation and Debate. 2013.

Robertson, Eric. Strategic Argumentation In Parliamentary Debate. 2010.

Winebrennan, T.C.. Intercollegiate Forensics, 2nd ed.. 1997.

Wolfson, Jonathan A.. The Great Debate: A Handbook for Policy Debate and Public Forum Debate. 2013.

The Editors of IDEA. The Debatabase Book: A Must Have Guide for Successful Debate, 6th ed.. 2013.

Although some of these texts are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal texts in this area of study.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Writing assignments
 - a. Compose multiple speeches and debate cases across recognized formats, such as National Forensics Association (NFA) Lincoln-Douglas Debate, National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) Parliamentary Debate, and International Public Debate Association (IPDA) Debate
 - b. Write formal evaluations of peer debates presented in class or in tournament settings
 - c. Submit written self-assessments and one-page reflections on judge feedback received during intercollegiate competition
2. Reading and research assignments
 - a. Read assigned materials on communication theory, debate structure, and delivery techniques
 - b. Conduct and review scholarly research to support the development of prima facie cases and argumentative positions
 - c. Evaluate and synthesize credible sources to construct persuasive and well-supported debate arguments
3. Performance and skills demonstrations
 - a. Deliver weekly in-class debates or related presentations for critique and refinement
 - b. Prepare and present at least one coach-approved debate aligned with tournament expectations and evaluative criteria
4. Evaluation and reflection assignments
 - a. Provide verbal critiques of peer performances using appropriate debate terminology and structured rubrics
 - b. Complete written assessments analyzing argument structure, delivery, and strategic effectiveness of in-class and competition debates
 - c. Reflect on performance growth and areas for improvement through digital portfolio entries and post-event evaluations
5. Debate viewing and analysis assignments
 - a. Watch and analyze video recordings of national and international parliamentary and IPDA debates, including the World Universities Debating Championship

- b. Practice flowing arguments while viewing these debates to build skills in organization, strategic analysis, and response planning

These assignments are representative of course requirements and may vary by instructor. All are designed to meet course objectives and support student success in competitive speaking environments.

Discipline(s)

Communication Studies