



SYLLABUS

COMA 211/411

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<p>Class Date/Time/Location: Monday & Wednesday, 3:40 - 5:25 PM (1 hour, 45 minute class), Ingram 100</p>	<p>Instructor: Dr. Marnie Ritchie, Assistant Professor of Communication</p>
<p>Student Hours: 2 - 3 PM in person in Ingram 129. Also available by appointment (email ritchiem@plu.edu).</p>	<p>Email: ritchiem@plu.edu Email is the best way to reach me. I try to respond within 24 hours. I do not correspond weekdays after 5 PM nor weekends.</p>

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ABOUT COMA 211/411

Course Description

This course introduces and advances the practice of academic and political debate. It introduces and builds on principles and theories of argument. Students will have opportunities to participate in in-class debates and a public advocacy forum. **The focal topic this semester is misinformation.**

Learning Outcomes

1. To understand debate as a public practice of argumentation, advocacy, and persuasion that can be used to address public problems
2. To learn theories of argumentation, advocacy, and persuasion in order to craft effective rhetorical messages
3. To work with, listen to, and advocate solutions to a variety of community stakeholders on the problem of misinformation and disinformation
4. To critically evaluate the practice of college debate by studying its historic and present issues, and self-reflecting on our place in the activity

Required Materials

- Articles and Book Chapters linked in the Course Schedule, as well as on Sakai under Close Readings and Resources. **There is no textbook for this course.**
- A tool (laptop, tablet, notebook) to take notes in class and do debate prep
- Access to the internet

Student Hours

- In-Person Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2 - 3 PM in Ingram 129
- I am also available virtually or by appointment (Email me to set up a time: ritchiem@plu.edu)

This time is set aside for you. You are not interrupting me when you pop in or set up a time to meet with me during these hours. You should feel free to use this time as you need. I am here to be responsive to your needs and ambitions in your education. Please wear a mask if we are meeting in person.

Land Acknowledgment

PLU is on the traditional lands of the Nisqually, Puyallup, Squaxin Island and Steilacoom peoples; we acknowledge and respect the traditional caretakers of this land. We recognize that members of these peoples are leaders in their communities. We recognize that land acknowledgments are not enough, and we will strive to connect the study of debate to Indigenous and Native interests and decolonization.

COVID POLICIES

Health Directives

All students and campus employees must follow university health directives. If those directives change during the term, I will be sure to share them with the class so we can discuss what the changes mean for our particular course.

All campus community members are required to wear face masks in all indoor spaces, regardless of their vaccination status. The requirement applies indoors when other people are present and in all public and common areas, including classrooms, dining areas (except when you are actively eating or drinking), meeting rooms, elevators, and shared vehicles.

Attendance Policy

Do not attend class if you believe you have been exposed to or might have COVID. Should your health or other circumstances change, negatively impacting your ability to attend our class in person, please notify me as soon as possible (ritchiem@plu.edu) so that we can work together to connect you to support resources and work through options.

I take attendance at the start of class as a way to keep track of whether I should reach out to you. If you miss a week of class, I will try to connect with you to see what you need.

If You Feel Sick...

Stay home! And then, email me (ritchiem@plu.edu) when you feel in good enough health to do so.

COURSE POLICIES

Self Care

Your personal well-being is essential and not just to your performance in college. Learning to manage stress is an ongoing process. Asking for help is a skill. If you feel that you might fall behind in work, **I ask that you speak with me ASAP.**

I encourage you to contact the Center for Student Success (CSS), which can connect you to resources. You can contact the CSS by email (success@plu.edu) or phone (253-535-8870).

Add/Drop

Students are responsible for understanding [the policies](#) and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, and similar topics.

Academic Integrity

All graded work must be the original work of the student claiming credit for it, with proper credit given to outside sources via citations. Students who use unoriginal work or permit another student to use their work will not receive for the course. Students who are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult with me. For more information, please see PLU's [statement on Academic Integrity](#).

Laptops, Tablets, Technology

I allow laptops and tablets in class, and I put considerable trust in students that you use them responsibly. Please put your phone away before our class begins.

Accommodations

I am committed to supporting the learning of all students in my class. If you have already registered with the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation (OAA), please meet with me early in the course to discuss, plan, and implement your accommodations in the course. If you have a documented disability that requires reasonable accommodations or have questions about what constitutes reasonable accommodations, please contact the OAA at 253-535-7073 or oaapl@plu.edu.

Pronoun Use

We will use one another's personally designated pronouns. Do not assume anyone's gender in the course. Some of our readings use "she and/or he" to the exclusion of a more inclusive "they." I encourage you in your reading to note these exclusions and normalize using gender neutral language in your communication practices.

Title IX

I am a mandatory reporter under Title IX. This means that if you disclose sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or gender-based discrimination to me related to the Pacific Lutheran University community, I must report it to Campus Safety, Students Rights and Responsibilities, Human Resources, and/or a member of the University Dispute Resolution Committee. If you would like to confidentially submit a disclosure, meaning one that does not activate Mandatory Reporting, you can do so via the following resources:

Advocacy Services in Center for Gender Equity (<https://www.plu.edu/genderequity/advocacy-services/> or 253-538-6304)

PLU Health Center (<http://www.plu.edu/health-center/> or 253-535-7337),

PLU Counseling Center (<https://www.plu.edu/counseling/> or 253-535-7206)

PLU University Pastor (<https://www.plu.edu/campus-ministry/staff/> or 253-535-7464)

Class Inclusivity

We will strive to make our learning spaces inclusive, equitable, and just. It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity across all dimensions, including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements.

Here are a few best practices for ensuring our space is actively inclusive: avoid words with exclusionary histories; try to summarize what a peer is saying in class in your head before responding; do not minimize historically marginalized students' feelings; take responsibility for the impact of our ideologies. If you are unsure what might constitute an exclusionary impact in class, let's chat in Student Hours or by appointment further.

Respectful Learning Environment

The University holds as basic the integrity and well-being of every person in the community. I am committed to providing a living, learning and working environment that is fair, consistent, caring, and supportive of intellectual and personal growth. Further, PLU is committed to protecting the rights of its community members to engage in dialogue and express ideas in an environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and exploitation. This freedom of expression does not, however, entail the freedom to threaten, stalk, intimidate, harass, or abuse.

Students are expected to treat every individual with respect. The University prohibits any activities that cause or threaten physical or mental harm, suffering or exhaustion, that demean the dignity of any

individual, and/or that interfere with one's academic progress, living environment, or employment responsibilities.

Content Warnings

Students are advised that difficult or sensitive issues may be represented or discussed in this class. While care will always be taken not to cause distress and to create a welcoming learning environment for everyone, there may be occasions where you will confront images or texts, or where you hear discussions that are uncomfortable for you. While I cannot presume to know what is and is not triggering or traumatizing for a student, the syllabus does include content warnings (signaled by CW) for topics in the readings that may be sensitive for students.

If you ever feel unable to continue to participate in a particular class, you may leave at any point. I will follow up to address any concerns and provide additional resources for support.

You are also welcome to share any concerns about the course content you may have at any time during the term, and I promise to listen openly and respectfully.

ASSIGNMENTS

How to Submit Assignments

Unless otherwise specified, written work should be submitted through Sakai under Assignments.

Discussion as a Practice

Your perspective is important to the critical discussions that we will have.

How I Assess Discussion:

- Level 1: Creative insights and questions, risked speaking in class on a regular basis (2-3 times a week), consistent evidence of preparedness, generous openness to other perspectives, excellent insights and questions, took an active role in their own success, evidence of listening to peers (references to peers' comments on hypothes.is and/or in class comments)
- Level 2: Adequate class participation, reliable evidence of preparedness, curiosity concerning other perspectives, was present and engaged
- Level 3: Present in class, adequate preparedness, acknowledgment of differing perspectives
- Level 4: Unpreparedness that disrupted others' learning, no acknowledgement of differing perspectives
- Level 5: Student interfered with peers' learning, disrespectful of class atmosphere, consistent unpreparedness

Doing the Readings

To make for the best discussions, readings should be done before class. I recommend that students bring the readings to class, either in print or digitally, so that we can reference them.

Close Readings

This class asks you to engage in "close readings" of the assigned readings using hypothes.is on Sakai. To do the close readings, click the Close Readings tab in the left-hand menu on Sakai.

To receive credit, these should be completed before class. These cannot be made up later for credit; they hold value for our course discussion when done before class.

Each close reading should have the following components:

1. TWO substantive comments on the reading. These can be a critical question, a reflection on why a sentence stuck out to you, a reference to other relevant sources, and/or a critique of something the author wrote.
2. AND ONE reply to a peer. This can be a specific compliment, a question, and/or a complication. If no one has responded to the reading yet, please make a third comment.

Self Reflections about Debate

For this short written project, I ask that you respond to the following two-part prompt: Why do I have a desire to debate? How does debate contribute to the life I want to live with others? I ask that you revisit this self reflection at the end of the semester. More information about this assignment, including the rubric, will be available on Sakai under Assignments.

Research Briefs

There are two assigned research briefs. Each research brief will revolve around a particular topic related to misinformation. I assign research projects for two reasons: 1. They demonstrate the connections between research and information literacy; and 2. This research will act as the basis for in-class debates and our public advocacy forum. Students will have opportunities to present their research to the class. More information about this assignment, including how this is assessed, will be available on Sakai under Assignments.

In-Class Debates

There are four in-class debates scheduled in our class. We will debate in British Parliamentary (BP) format. To receive full credit, students should participate in all four. Some debates, students will act as debaters. Some debates, students will act as judges. This will all depend on how many students we have in class during these class periods. More information about this assignment, including how this is assessed, will be available on Sakai under Assignments.

Forum Planning

We will plan a forum together to apply our understandings of ethical advocacy. There will be three teams for event-planning: 1. Marketing; 2. Forum Content/Direction; and 3. Technical Logistics. These teams will be randomly assigned. We will choose the topic and guest speakers together, and we will all have a say in how the event materializes. More information about this assignment, including how this is assessed, will be available on Sakai under Assignments.

GRADES

Specifications Grading

I use a form of grading called “specifications grading,” where work is assessed on the basis of whether it meets transparent and clear specifications set by the instructor. All work, save for the Discussion grade, is graded pass/not pass. In other words, all work is assessed on the basis of **completion**.

Resubmitting Work

If you do not receive a passing grade on an assignment on the first attempt, you will be asked to resubmit the assignment. See the Course Schedule for the due date on resubmitted work.

CITATIONAL ETHICS

I thank Dr. Amy Young for inspiration from her 211/411 syllabus from Spring 2021. I thank my old debate partner Alex Martel for always being an interlocutor and friend.

All links have been removed (except those to handouts) to protect student info & copyrighted materials.



COURSE SCHEDULE

COMA 211/411

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Please note: the course schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion. Any changes will be announced over email and reflected in this "live" schedule.

COURSE INTRODUCTION			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due by Start of Class
M 02/07	Remote Class over Zoom: Join here Is everything debatable?	Look over the Course Syllabus and Course Schedule (the document you are in) Read this Short Guide to Pronouns	Introduce yourself in our Introduction Slidedeck
UNIT 1: DEBATE AND ARGUMENTATION			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
W 02/09	Remote Class over Zoom: Join here "Who's in control?" Introduce Self Reflection	" In Search of Good Humans, Speaking Well: Communication's Ableism Problem " by Vanessa Beasley	Close Reading 1
M 02/14	Start of In-Person Classes Introduce British Parliamentary (BP) format	---	See these handouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate Format • Debate Tactics

	<p>Introduce teams for the Public Advocacy Forum</p> <p>Brainstorm topic selection for Public Advocacy Forum</p>		
W 02/16	<p>In-Class Debate 1 [Motion we debated that day: This House regrets the withdrawal of US Troops from Afghanistan]</p>	---	---
M 02/21	No Class: President's Day		
W 02/23	<p>Debate and liberatory education</p> <p>Does the "debate community" exist?</p>	<p>"Take No Prisoners: The Role of Debate in a Liberatory Education" by Brittney Cooper (CW: Discusses American history of anti-Blackness and racism; mention of lynching)</p>	Close Reading 2
M 02/28	<p>Is "contest debate" the best model of debate?</p> <p>Remote Guest Speaker: Professor Steve Llano (he/him)</p>	<p>"The Counterfeit Presentment: An Early 20th Century Model of Intercollegiate Debate as Civic Education" by Steve Llano</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Close Reading 3</p> <p>Please participate in this poll about our Advocacy Forum Topic by the end of the day (Upvote what you'd like us to focus on; you can also write in topics of your choice)</p>
W 03/02	<p>What is an argument? What is a good/bad argument? When do</p>	<p>"Evaluating Arguments" from <i>Cooperative Argumentation</i> by Josina M. Matau and Debina L. Marty (FYI: This</p>	Close Reading 4

	good arguments fail to persuade? Guest Speaker	reading is on the longer side! We'll use their framework to evaluate arguments in class.)	
M 03/07	“Switchside Gender” Guest Speaker: Angie O’Tinker, former instructor of this very class at PLU (!) and current grant writer for Pierce County AIDS Office (she/they)	---	Self Reflection Due through Sakai
UNIT 2: CRITICAL INFORMATION LITERACY			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
W 03/09	What is the role of research in information literacy? Introduce Research Brief 1 Guest Speaker: PLU Professor Julie Babka (she/her)	---	Bring a laptop to class, if you have one. The Ingram Computer Lab will also be available.
M 03/14	What is <i>critical</i> information literacy?	Excerpt from <i>You Are Here</i> by Whitney Phillips and Ryan M. Milner “Critical Disinformation Studies,” Rachel Kuo and Alice Marwick (CW: Mention of racism, sexism, xenophobia, religious discrimination, and other forms of oppression; discussion of stereotypes throughout; mention of Rohingya genocide)	Close Readings 5 & 6

W 03/16	In-Class Debate 2 [Motion we debated that day: This House would disallow police officers from unionizing.]	---	---
M 03/21	How is racism a form of misinformation? How is toxic masculinity a form of misinformation?	<p>“Tell Me Sweet Little Lies: Racism as a Form of Persistent Malinformation” by Nicole A. Cooke (CW: Discussion of police brutality)</p> <p>“#GamerGate and the Fapping” by Adrienne Massanari (CW: racial slurs mentioned on p. 339; violence against women discussed throughout)</p>	Close Readings 7 & 8
UNIT 3: ADVOCACY			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
W 03/23	How can one practice “ethical advocacy”? In-class logistics meeting for Public Advocacy Forum	<p>“Ethical Advocacy in Deliberative Communities” from <i>Cooperative Argumentation</i> by Josina M. Matau and Debina L. Marty</p>	Close Reading 9
M 03/28 - F 04/01	No Class: Spring Break		
M 04/04	In-class sharing of research: Please come prepared to present your research in a	---	Research Brief 1 Due

	10-15 minute presentation!		
W 04/06	In-class logistics meeting for Public Advocacy Forum	---	---
M 04/11	In-Class Debate 3 [Motion we debated that day: This House would criminalize corporate acts of greenwashing]	---	---
W 04/13	In-class logistics meeting for Public Advocacy Forum	---	---
M 04/18	Run-through of event	---	---
Tuesday 04/19 Time: 6-7:30 PM Location: Virtual	<u>First Annual Public Advocacy Forum</u> , hosted at PLU by us. Focal topic: Greenwashing. Woohoo!		
W 04/20	In-class advocacy debrief, relief, and celebrations Introduce Research Brief 2	---	---
UNIT 4: FOCAL ISSUES IN MISINFORMATION			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class

M 04/25	No Class: Celebrate our Forum last week. See you Wednesday.		
W 04/27	How does anti-vaccine misinformation spread?	“Misinformation, Crisis, and Public Health” by Kate Starbird, Emma S. Spiro, and Kolina Koltai	Close Reading 10
M 05/02	How do technology companies regulate or not regulate misinformation?	“Asymmetric Adjustment: Partisanship and Correcting Misinformation on Facebook” by Jay Jennings and Natalie Jomini Stroud	Close Reading 11
W 05/04	How do conspiracy and hate groups mobilize online?	“Conspiracy Theories in Online Environments: An Interdisciplinary Literature Review and Agenda for Future Research” by Daniela Mahl, Mike S. Schäfer, and Jing Zeng	Close Reading 12
M 05/09	In-class sharing of research	---	Research Brief 2 Due
W 05/11	In-Class Debate 4	---	---
COURSE WRAP UP			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
W 05/11	Sharing debating tactics and reflecting on the value of debate	---	Revised Self Reflection about Debate

	We will return to the question: Is everything debatable?		
W 05/18	Pizza	Come have fun with your teammates.	

*There is no midterm or final for this course.