

# INTRODUCTION TO POLICY DEBATE

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## Course Description

This is the introductory course which allows students to participate in competitive Policy debate. The focus is on developing thinking skills, an understanding of current events and the ability to make, and answer, oral arguments. Students will work closely with a teacher assigned partner, their TAs, and also with mentors from the varsity squad. They will do in-class speaking drills, and eventually, will learn how to research for and develop their own arguments. Students work with the same topic for much of the year. All students are required to participate in a minimum of two interscholastic tournaments, plus the two tournaments we host. Prerequisite: 9th/10th grade.

**Note: All parents are encouraged to join BOLD, the active parents organization, and to assist the team in fundraising and by judging.**

## Course Units, Goals, and/or Essential Questions

- Unit 1 will examine the basics of Policy Debate.
- Unit 2 will examine the fundamental issues related to the current topic.
- Unit 3 will introduce the students to the increasingly complex theoretical elements of policy debate, and a wider range of arguments.
- Unit 4 will focus on Advanced Policy concepts, for students continuing into the Varsity class, and will Introduce Public Forum to everyone else.
- Unit 5 will explore some other type of debate, typically Student Congress, World Schools or Big Questions.
- As a result of their participation in the course, all students should improve their confidence and skill when speaking in public, their ability to do quality research and their ability to organize facts and expert opinions into persuasive written and spoken arguments.

## Classroom Experience

Debate classes are meant to be interactive. Students do research, construct arguments, engage in group discussions, participate in debates and deliver practice speeches. Since students regularly evaluate one another, teaching everyone how to deliver appropriate feedback to their peers, and how to

receive that feedback, is critical to the classroom experience. Although it is noisy, we do small group speaking activities in class regularly.

## Materials

Two Different Colored Pens/Paper to Flow on During Debates/Notebook/Timer/Highlighters/Chromebooks/Beginners MAY use Laptops in January

## Homework

In the beginning of the year, most “Homework Assignments” are extensions of classroom activities like highlighting evidence, reading files or preparing for mini-debates. Later on, students will do original research, produce files and do presentations, always with class time first, before the out of class work.

## Assessments and Grades

All assignments are given point values and quarter grades are calculated based on the percentage of total points earned. Although the assignments are grouped into different categories on Aspen (e.g. Written Work/Speaking Activities/Evaluations) those categories are not weighted. Since writing a case or participating in a debate are the ultimate tests of mastery of the skills of debate, we have relatively few tests/quizzes. All Novices are expected to participate in a minimum of **two** tournaments outside of Lexington per year, in addition to participating in the two Lexington hosted tournaments (11/18/2023 and 1/13-15/2024 this school year). The final exam grades are based on the number of tournaments each student actively participates at.

## Extra-Help/ Support Available

I am available after school most days of the week when I am not in required (Monday) meetings or at debate tournaments. I am also available to help students at debate tournaments, by email, on Slack or in the Zoom Zone. We have TAs in the Beginning class whose job it is to mentor and support Beginning students, and we also assign additional varsity mentors.

## Teacher Information

This is my tenth year in Lexington and my 42nd as a teacher and debate coach. I have previously taught numerous Social Studies and English classes and am a member of the board of several state/national speech/debate organizations.

## **Additional Information**

All students are expected to follow classroom and tournament rules and to contribute to a positive team and classroom climate. Classroom discussions about the Lexington Public Schools Core Values and how they apply to both our classroom and team environment have taken and will continue to take place. Students are not permitted to work with private coaches, or in external evidence collectives.