

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC FORUM

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Course Description

This is the introductory course which allows students to participate in competitive Public Forum debate. Thinking skills, current events, research, organization and oral expression are stressed. Students work closely with partners and in small groups, and regularly do in-class speaking activities. Public Forum students debate the NSDA topics. All students have both senior TAs and varsity mentors. PFers use the NSDA topics, which change every 1 or 2 months. 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

- Units 1-6 are built around the NSDA Topics. The first two topics last for two months, and the remaining four last one month.
- Unit 1 will examine **Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially expand its surveillance infrastructure along its southern border.**
- The other topics will be announced throughout the school year.
- Unit 7 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 serve as mentors. 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. We will do in class practice

debates, presentations on our research, and collaborate to create the strongest arguments.

Materials

Two Different Colored Pens/Paper to Flow on During Debates/Timer/Headset/Wifi Connection/Chromebook (Advanced Public Forum Debaters may prefer to use laptops, but Chromebooks are fine for Novices)

Homework

Some research, case and block writing must be done at home, along with preparation for practice debates and tournaments. There are no officially designated "Homework Assignments." Instead, homework is linked to the completion of work begun in class, forms for tournament attendance, or to work for upcoming debates.

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. The final exam grades are based on the number of tournaments each student actively participates at. All Novices are expected to participate in a minimum of **two** tournaments per year **in addition to** the Lexington hosted tournaments 11/23/2024 and 1/18-20/2025. One of these tournaments must be before the beginning of December.

Extra-Help/ Support Available

I am available after school most days of the week when I am not in a required (usually Monday) meeting or at a debate tournament. I am also available to help students at debate tournaments, by email, on Slack or in the Zoom Zone. We also have a TA assisting in the Beginning Public Forum class and encourage older students to regularly assist/mentor younger students.

Teacher Information

This is my eleventh year in Lexington and my 43rd 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 and 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 exclusionary external evidence collectives.