

ADVANCED POLICY DEBATE

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Course Description

This course explores argumentation theory and advanced philosophical and political concepts, in order to prepare debaters for Varsity competition in Policy Debate. Students work closely with teacher assigned partners, and in small groups, to understand and develop quality arguments, and do in-class speaking activities and modified versions of practice debates. Policy debaters use the NSDA topic, which lasts for the entire season. We work with the topic for the new year in the Spring. All students are required to participate in a minimum of four interscholastic tournaments, and to help host our events.. Prerequisite: Introduction to Policy, Lincoln-Douglas or Public Forum Debate.

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

Course Units, Goals, and/or Essential Questions

- The Varsity Policy class does not divide into units the way most classes do. We work on research skills and argument construction throughout the year. We also work continuously on delivery and strategic thinking.
- Varsity Policy debaters must know about a great many issues, in considerable depth. We explore new subjects as we find we need to.
- Once the current season is nearly over, we begin work on the topic for next season, in addition to helping prepare students for national events.
- 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 interactive. Students do research, construct arguments, engage in group discussions, participate in mini debates and deliver practice speeches. Students also regularly evaluate one another, so teaching everyone how to deliver appropriate feedback to their peers, and how to receive feedback, is critical. Occasional after school practice debates are required.

Materials

Two Different Colored Pens/Paper to Flow on During Debates/Timer/Laptop or Chromebook (Chromebooks pose challenges unless they have Word)

Homework

Research, file production and preparation for practice/tournament debates must be done outside of class. There are few officially designated “Homework Assignments,” but Varsity policy debaters are expected to spend time at home preparing assigned files, which they are required to share with their teammates. Students are never permitted to develop/maintain secret files.

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, those categories are not weighted. Since writing a case, or participating in an in-class debate are the ultimate tests of mastery of the skills of debate, we have relatively few tests/quizzes. All varsity students are required to participate in a minimum of four interscholastic tournaments, at least two in the first semester, and also to assist at, or compete in, the two tournaments we host (11/18/2023 and 1/13-15/2024 this year). Juniors and seniors are also expected to judge. JUNIORS are required to judge 1 weekend-long tournament or 2 one-day tournaments. SENIORS are required to judge either: 1 weekend-long tournament AND a one-day tournament or 3 one-day tournaments. Judging and competing both count as tournament participation, but competing cannot replace the judging requirement. Final exam grades are based on the number of tournaments each student actively participates in.

Extra-Help/ Support Available

I am available after school most days, unless I am in a required 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. I encourage older students to assist/mentor younger students in the varsity classes.

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.