

## COMM 9 – Argumentation: Analysis of Oral & Written Communication

**Instructor:** Brandon Gainer (gainerbrandon@fhda.edu)  
**Office Hours:** By Appointment.  
**Times:** Asynchronous Online course

**Prerequisites:** ENG 1A/1AH  
 Fulfills IGETC Area 1B: Critical Thinking /English Composition  
 Fulfills CSU GE Area A3: Critical Thinking



### Course Textbooks



Mills, A. *How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing & Analyzing Texts in College*



Priebe, S. *Writing Unleashed*

Van Cleave, M.J.  
*Introduction to Logic & Critical Thinking*

All textbooks and free OER resources and accessible online via Canvas.

### Course Overview

Welcome to COMM 9! This is a unique course that will give you the opportunity to practice your debate, critical thinking and (primarily) writing skills! We'll be exploring a range of current events and socially significant issues. My hope is that you leave this class with the ability to craft better, logically sound arguments in writing, while also gaining the tools and vocabulary to pinpoint the weaknesses in the everyday argument.

Ultimately, this class is centered around 5 key objectives: **(1)** Helping you apply logic and reasoning to argumentative writing and speaking. **(2)** Becoming more effective at researching and evaluating arguments. **(3)** Analyzing diverse issues. **(4)** Giving you practice with different types of argumentative writing and **(5)** Discussing and debating issues using appropriate argumentation methods & structures.

### COMM 9 Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze critically the logic of arguments.
2. Compose well-organized essays that demonstrate complex writing and critical thought.
3. Deconstruct, examine, and confidently debate contemporary, socially relevant issues using current argument guidelines and strategies.
4. Find, evaluate and cite sources in writing and presentations using appropriate documentation format.

### Succeeding in COMM 9

- ✓ **Done** is better than **perfect**. Missed assignments, rather than imperfect ones are what hurt most students.
- ✓ Connect with at least **1** person in the class to bounce ideas off or serve as your peer reviewer: A second set of eyes on your major assignment can help catch anything you'd miss.
- ✓ Set aside dedicated days of the week to focus on your reading and assignments in the class
- ✓ Participate in discussions (even the optional ones!)! There is a lot to learn just by seeing the different perspectives of your classmates.

**Course Policies:**

Please refer to “Course Orientation” module in Canvas for a more comprehensive description of the course policies – below are the key ones.

**A Foreword Regarding Technology**

I will do my best to quickly resolve issues that I have control over within Canvas (broken links; missing files; etc.). If you are experiencing issues with Canvas beyond this, file a help-desk ticket clicking “**Help**” in Canvas. That said, technological discomfort, unfamiliarity, or difficulties will not be accepted as an excuse for late or incomplete work: Start early as your timeline permits will be helpful in avoiding such issues.

**Attendance & Participation:** You'll need to log on weekly to complete assignments and participate in discussions. Since this is a 5-unit course, ideally you should set aside a minimum of 10 hours per week during a 6-week summer session if you expect optimal success. **Please note:** Failing to log in and complete assignments during weeks 1 may result in being dropped from the course.

**Submitting Assignments:** All assignments are submitted through Canvas. Unless specified otherwise, they are due at 11:59 PM, PST on the respective date. Also, keep the following in mind:

- Please use .doc, .docx, pdf or .rtf format; If I can't open the assignment, it's not considered submitted.
- Unless I explicitly request it, **please do not e-mail me an assignment**. Being able to track it through Canvas benefits us both.

**Contacting the Instructor:** E-mail, my office line (**408-864-8802**), and our Canvas message board are all ways of reaching me. Please keep the following in mind for effective communication:

- Putting your **name, the course** and its **time** in the subject line helps me recognize your e-mail faster (e.g. “Brandon Gainer – COMM 9”) and get you a timely response (usually within 24 hours).
- I try to respond quickly, but I don't live in my inbox: I'll typically check in the mornings (around 11 AM) and again in the evening as I wrap my day up (around 4-5 PM).
- If it's a longer question or a sensitive matter, then I strongly encourage setting up a meeting.

**Office Hours:** Instructors are not required to hold office hours during the summer. That said, I do plan on being available to meet and see not being required to hold hours at a fixed time as a plus: It will allow me more flexibility in how I schedule them between class. I'll be surveying my classes beforehand to get a sense of what availability works for people and post the times on Canvas.

**Late Work:** Assignments may be submitted up to 24 hours after the due date posted on Canvas. These assignments generally receive less feedback and are subject to a deduction of **25%** from the final score. You may always submit an assignment ahead of time (and I encourage you to do so if it's complete).

**Academic Honesty:** Instances of academic misconduct will result in disciplinary action, which can include receiving a 0 on the assignment. This includes, but is not limited to: **plagiarism, submitting work from a previous course, submitting work written by an outside party, or misrepresenting facts to receive a changed grade**, etc.

Further information on the college's academic integrity policy can be found here: [De Anza Academic Honesty Policies](#).

**Accommodations:** If you are eligible for accommodations by Disability Support Services (DSS), please follow up to ensure that your accommodations have been authorized for the current quarter. If you are not registered with DSS and need accommodations go online to <http://www.deanza.edu/dss> for additional information.

## Assignments

Guidelines for each assignment will be posted online via Canvas. Below is a general description of each assignment area that you'll be assessed on throughout the term.

**Essays [50%]:** These comprise the biggest part of your grade. This class is required to have students write a minimum of 6000 words, which we're distributing across 4 major essays throughout the term. The specific requirements tied to revision will be noted on Canvas under the "**Essay Guidelines**" module. You'll have the freedom to choose your topic. Also, while it's not required, given the shorter length of the summer session, you may find it a lot more effective to stick with the same topics for Essay 2-4.

**Discussions [20%]:** These are discussion threads based on readings or other content within Canvas. They typically consist of an **initial post** (due Wednesdays) and a response to a peer (**due Friday**). I primarily grade these on **completion** (did you address the criteria) and **coherence** (is it relatively free of typos and grammatical errors). Your lowest score in this category will be dropped.

**Weekly Debates [10%]:** These are more free-form discussions based on a current, contemporary topic affecting us all. The requirement is simply to participate by contributing **twice** to the thread during the week. You'll get credit as long as you adhere to our debate guidelines (primarily focused on completion and civility). Think of it as a low-stakes way to test your argumentation skills against another person. Your lowest score in this category will be dropped.

**Writing Exercises [20%]:** These include your orientation activities and one check-in, but are primarily applied activities designed to help you build a better essay. While these are graded by rubric, I'm primarily looking at these for **completion** than perfection. These are noted on the course calendar as "Exercise #1, #2, etc." You'll notice that these aren't consistently due on a set day – they're set up in such a way to let you get an early start on your essays, but *also* so that I can give you feedback in a prompt manner to help you out. While I do not drop the lowest score here (the point totals are variable), check out the "Current Events" discussion thread in Canvas for further information on how you might make up a missed assignment in this area.

## Grading Scale

There are **500** points total available in this course. Final grades are assigned based on the following scale:

<b>A+ [100%]:</b> 500 and above	<b>A [99%-94%]:</b> 499-470	<b>A- [93%-90%]:</b> 469-450
<b>B+ [89%-87%]:</b> 449-435	<b>B [86%-84%]:</b> 434-420	<b>B- [83%-80%]:</b> 419-400
<b>C+ [79%-77%]:</b> 399-385	<b>C [76%-70%]:</b> 384-350	<b>D+ [69%-67%]:</b> 349-335
<b>D [66%-64%]:</b> 334-320	<b>D- [63%-60%]:</b> 319-300	<b>F [59% and below]:</b> 299 and below

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit will not be offered in this class: I believe in offering concessions built into the course are far more beneficial than creating extra work for either of us. As noted above, your lowest discussion and debate scores will be dropped. There will also be the opportunity to revise one of your essays before the end of the term. Mathematically, the value you get from these far exceeds any amount of extra credit I could give. Given this, **I will not respond to any requests to 'bump' a grade at the end of the term.**

## Assignment Help

If any assignment guidelines are unclear then don't hesitate to ask for clarification! If you need an in-depth explanation, then scheduling an appointment to talk live will work best. While I'm glad to answer essay related questions, I will not **proofread, edit, or review** drafts of major essays before submission (the campus tutoring services work best for that).

Additionally, asking for help on the day the assignment's due generally isn't going to get a response: By that point, I'm expecting you to utilize your critical thinking skills and have confidence in your ability to succeed. Plus I've often found that when I do answer those the person's already figured it out.

## Course Calendar

**UNIT I: Introduction to Argumentation, Critical Thinking, & Research**

<b>Week 1</b> 6/28-7-2	Course Orientation & Overview (Canvas) Critical Thinking & Argumentation ( <b>Mills Ch.1; Priebe p.4-7</b> ) Argumentation Structures & Models ( <b>Mills Ch.2.2; Priebe 8-12</b> ) Research & Source Documentation ( <b>Mills Ch.6; Priebe 52-70</b> )  <b>Note:</b> Failing to complete the orientation activities by <b>9 PM (PST)</b> on 6/27 will result in being dropped from the course	<b>6/27:</b> Orientation Activities <b>6/29:</b> Discussion #1 <b>7/1:</b> Essay #1; Debate #1; Exercise #1; Discussion Response
<b>Week 2</b> 7/4-7/8	Visual Rhetoric ( <b>Priebe p.44-48</b> ) Assessing Arguments: Peer Review ( <b>Priebe p.24-25</b> )	<b>7/6:</b> Discussion #2 – Initial Post; Exercise #2 <b>7/8:</b> Essay #2; Debate #2; Discussion Response

**UNIT II: Analyzing & Evaluating Arguments**

<b>Week 3</b> 7/11-7/15	Evaluating Evidence & Claims ( <b>Mills Ch.4; Ch.9</b> ) Warrants: Underlying Assumptions ( <b>Mills Ch.4.4</b> ) Structuring Analysis Essays ( <b>Mills Ch.10</b> )	<b>7/11:</b> Exercise #3 <b>7/13:</b> Discussion #3 <b>7/15:</b> Exercise #3; Debate #3; Discussion Response
<b>Week 4</b> 7/18-7/22	Logical Reasoning ( <b>Van Cleave p.17-24; p.139-169</b> ) Faulty Arguments: Logical Fallacies ( <b>Priebe p.14-16; Van Cleave Ch.4</b> )	<b>7/18:</b> Exercise #4 <b>7/20:</b> Discussion #4 <b>7/22:</b> Essay #3; Debate #4; Discussion Response

**UNIT III: Writing to Influence: Bringing it All Together**

<b>Week 5</b> 7/25-7/29	Language & Persuasion ( <b>Mills Ch.8</b> ) Response, Rebuttal, & Refutation ( <b>Mills Ch.5</b> ) Policy Arguments: Stock Issues (Canvas)	<b>7/25:</b> Exercise #5 <b>7/27:</b> Discussion #5 – Initial Post <b>7/29:</b> Discussion Responses; Debate #5
<b>Week 6</b> 8/1-8/5	Responding to Arguments: Application <b>Note: Assignments on 8/6 are due by <u>6 P.M. PST</u></b>	<b>8/3:</b> Essay #4 <b>8/5:</b> Discussion #6; Debate #6; Exit Survey.