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Debate for Civic Learning

Course Overview

The Basics

Course name	Branding Your Authentic Self
Discipline(s)	Interdisciplinary Fine Arts (IDFA)
Course level	Open- Mostly transfers, Sophomores, Juniors
Enrollment	10-16 Students
Faculty instructor	Jason Armstrong Baker
Faculty contact	jabaker@towson.edu
University	Towson University

Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

Branding Your Authentic Self is an interactive course that supports students in developing their ability to clearly identify and express their learned, habitual, and creative voices - culminating in the construction of a concise and authentic expression of their identity. The debate for civic learning was a natural fit into the curriculum for teaching students how to identify and understand multiple perspectives on a number of our class' concepts while simultaneously building student ownership of content and group cohesion.

Three of my course's SLOs were supported by this integration:
- Identify preferred styles of collaborative engagement.
- Reflect on and document responses to exercises and experiences through daily journaling.
- Offer and engage in constructive feedback with peers.

First, it gave students another engaging experience to reflect upon and then document through their daily journaling. This then helped students to identify which parts of collaborative engagement, debate, and discussion they excel at or are challenged by. Lastly, when each debate experience was complete, it offered another way to engage in constructive feedback with peers, supporting deeper levels of understanding of content and concepts.

Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

The course included three debate opportunities and expounded two debate techniques. The first opportunity was for a simple position debate on one of three topics: Authenticity – Real or not; Nature vs. Nurture; or Safe vs. Brave spaces

The second and third debate opportunities were in the stakeholders format for both the midterm and the final projects. Students were asked to identify people to whom they would like to present their passion project and mission statement; then in small groups their peers would role play as the identified person or people giving feedback to the presenter from the perspective of that character.

Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

For each debate we had a debrief. I asked students to be prepared to answer the following questions:
- What did we see, hear, and experience?
- Did you change your mind about any given topic?
- What did you learn?

In hindsight, and for the sake of documentation, I should have had students write this in a Blackboard discussion before coming to class. Nonetheless, we did have two highly engaging conversations that indicated students appreciated the format and the opportunity to learn in such a way. The first of these discussions turned into another mini- group debate where passions elevated and more perspectives were shared.

During the debates and debrief, I tracked participation and engagement. Students were assessed based on their engaged participation and the learning and reflections expressed in debrief.

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

What are your biggest takeaways as an instructor re: doing a debate activity in your class?

Overall integrating the debate for civic learning into this course allowed me to flip the teaching and development of class content in a fun and engaging way - creating more excitement around peer interaction. It was also another effective experience for students to self assess and reflect.

What were the challenges or barriers, how did you overcome them, and what did you learn from them?

The biggest challenge was that two students didn't show up to present with their group; which caused one student to be left in a group alone. The change became part of the reflection process. Another challenge was that some students did not know how to roleplay or did not commit to the process. I did my best to coach these students in real time; and in the future I would provide more guidance up front.

What would you do differently next time?

Looking towards next semester, I'd like to offer more guidelines on how to roleplay a stakeholder. This could include a set of questions the stakeholder would ask the presenter, pointers on how to embody the stakeholder, and a set of questions for the stakeholder to ask themselves about what was presented (e.g. were you persuaded?). In addition, I could explore the possibility of an acting student or professional conducting a mini workshop on roleplaying.

As previously mentioned, I would also require reflection on the debrief questions via blackboard in advance.

The Basics

Course name	COM 301: Rhetorical Theory
Discipline(s)	Department of Communication Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
Course level	Undergraduate, primarily sophomores and juniors who have completed the departmental gateway classes.
Enrollment per class section	25-30 students.
Faculty instructor	David Bollinger, MA: Senior lecturer in COM Studies
Faculty contact	bollingerd@uncw.edu
University	University of NC Wilmington

Why *Debate for Civic Learning* in this Course.

I was on my college undergrad debate team, and I know first-hand the experience of the research, argumentation theory application and critical reasoning that was the focus of a successful effort. Our department has been looking for a design component for teaching and measuring oral competency, including creating a tool that could be used across all disciplines and majors. This course was/is rhetorical theory, a perfect match for the initial testing and set-up.

From our dept. SLOs:

CR (Critical reasoning) 2- Synthesize viewpoints, qualitative data, or interpretations of experts and stakeholders. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Information Literacy]
Corresponding Student Learning Outcome:
SLO 2: Capacity to construct effective written argument or media product based on thorough analysis of the audience, communication technology choices and defendable ethical and rhetorical objectives.

CR 4- Articulate complex, logical, and informed (by researched or derived information and/or qualitative analysis) inferences and/or conclusions. [Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Expression]
Corresponding Student Learning Outcome:
You will demonstrate competence in constructing an effective written argument or media product based on effective application of methodology with clear rhetorical objectives.
You will demonstrate competence in conducting original primary research, locating, and critically evaluating secondary research, and integrating such information into new communication products. The debates will be the application.

Apart from developing these skills, one primary concern is employers have consistently stated for many years they want hires to be articulate, well-spoken, and have solid critical thinking skills.

Debate for Civic Learning **Activity Description.**

The debates were done at the end of the semester, although I will be looking at using them throughout the semester once I get back into the classroom (this fall) when it will be simpler for me to pull up a topic and do the lightening debates. The SLOs are in the previous section.

1) *Identify the topic and create the proposition.*

2) *Frame the proposition around a particular theoretical model, like terministic screens (Burke) or Gorgias' skeptical philosophy.*
3) *Divide the students into affirmative and negative.*
4) *Assign research points, pre-debate paper and other pre-debate activities.*
5) *Online, we had ZOOM sessions. In the classroom there will be assigned dates. The rest of the class observes.*
6) *As the semester progresses, we move toward a longer, more comprehensive debate format instead of the short ones.*
7) *I estimate out-of-class time invested will be about 2 hours per team per debate. This reflects a simpler level of debate and expectations since I am not going to try and create an actual team.*

Student Learning Assessment of the *Debate for Civic Learning* Activity.

All assignments are graded, including the initial proposition papers, statements, and research probes.

Pre-debate prep: 40% -are research goals achieved?
Debate: 40%- advanced public speaking skills, organization, and presentation.
Peer review: 20%- includes self-assessment.

Rubric is a specific breakdown of the separate components within the prep and the debate itself. I also use a peer review component I designed for my business class that has actual teeth (if a team member doesn't pull their weight there are actual grade penalties).

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

Due to the nature of the semester, there was one debate at the end of the class. It acted as an option for the final exam. I discussed the debate at the beginning of the semester, but it soon became clear that since my classes were not synchronous there would be limitations.

What I will do differently this fall is spread out the activities. Because I will be back in the classroom, this will be simpler to do than on ZOOM. This civic debate module really works best face-to-face.

What I learned and what I will do in the fall-

I learned this module is good for being part of a class. Some of our colleagues seemed to make an entire class out of this, and this is not our goal.

Have more short, almost spontaneous debates.
Finish creating the rubrics and shell for the module.

Debate for Civic Learning
Course Overview Template

The Basics

Course name	RHET 001 - Oral Communication
Discipline(s)	Department of Writing Studies and Rhetoric, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Course level	Undergraduate
Enrollment	30 students
Faculty instructor	Kevin E. Boston-Hill, Adjunct Associate Professor
Faculty contact	Kevin.e.bostonhill@hofstra.edu
University	Hofstra University

Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

Students in previous classes were concerned they did not have the requisite skills or experience to engage in civil discourse with classmates or colleagues, a fact that hindered their want of self-expression. As this is a course on communicating in a variety of settings and explores the group dynamic, it seemed the perfect class to teach and practice the skills of debate while also teaching students how to separate opinion and emotion and argue from a position of fact and logic. After learning these skills, the students will be able to better communicate in business or social settings

Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students were instructed that they would conduct panel discussions dealing with a controversial topic of their choosing. Each member of the group would present a different perspective of the topic. They need to conduct their research based on that perspective, which will keep their argument focused and intentional. They also have to cite source material during their argument, so they are not simply presenting an opinion and provide support for their argument, adding credibility. Each group has 25-30 minutes to present their discussion and can include audience Q&A if they choose.

Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students are graded based on how explicitly they state their argument and position, how clearly they state the rationale for the discussion, how they interact with other member of their group, how they use source material, and overall strength of their argument. This activity counts toward 20% of the overall grade.

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

Having instructed students in conducting panel discussions in the past, this was seen as a non-threatening way to introduce the idea of research-based conversation. The activity progressed as expected, though the group members were too polite. I tried to convince them that they could disagree with each other as long as they had the evidence to back it up. I felt the students understood the process and overall purpose. They learned this valuable skill to communication and conversation.

Debate for Civic Learning
Course Overview Template

The Basics

Course name	RHET 007 - Public Speaking
Discipline(s)	Department of Writing Studies and Rhetoric, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Course level	Undergraduate
Enrollment	25 students
Faculty instructor	Kevin E. Boston-Hill, Adjunct Associate Professor
Faculty contact	Kevin.e.bostonhill@hofstra.edu
University	Hofstra University

Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

Students in previous classes were concerned they did not have the requisite skills or experience to engage in civil discourse with classmates or colleagues, a fact that hindered their want of self-expression. As one of the necessary speeches in the course is a persuasive speech, it seemed the perfect class to teach and practice the skills of persuasion through debate while also teaching students how to separate opinion and emotion and argue from a position of fact and logic. After learning these skills, the students will be able to better communicate in business or social settings

Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students were placed in groups and instructed that they would conduct 2-person debates dealing with a controversial topic of their choosing. They were given the option of speaking order (ABAB, ABBA, AABB) they felt would give the best presentation. They also had to cite source material during their argument, so they are not simply presenting an opinion and provide support for their argument, adding credibility. Each group has 25-30 minutes to present their debate.

Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students are graded based on how explicitly they state their argument and position, how clearly they state the rationale for the discussion, how they interact with other member of their group, how they use source material, and overall strength of their argument. As a bonus, though not included in their grade, the rest of the class decided who had the most convincing argument. As part of the learning leading up to the debate, students wrote Letters to the Editor to practice delivering their opinions with research-based logic.

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

Since the focus of this class was on the individual's skill in public speaking, it seemed like a good idea to teach debate as a means of persuasion. Having the students speak from the perspective of their major, where possible, made the activity more relevant. I felt the students understood the process and overall purpose and art of debate. This valuable skill to communication and conversation will serve them sell in their chosen professions. I think this would have been more effective if they were shown an example of a debate so they would be familiar with the format.

Debate for Civic Learning
Course Overview Example

The Basics

Course name	ISAT 480/ENGR 498: Synthetic Biological Machines
Discipline(s)	Department of Integrated Science & Technology, ISAT, & Department of Engineering, College of Integrated Science & Engineering
Course level	Undergraduate, primarily juniors & seniors
Enrollment per class section	24 students
Faculty instructor	Stephanie Stockwell, Ph.D. Associate Professor of ISAT, & Kyle Gipson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Engineering
Faculty contact	gipsonkg@jmu.edu
University	James Madison University

Why *Debate for Civic Learning* in this Course.

Synthetic biology is an emerging interdisciplinary field that can be utilized to address environmental, health, and food issues that hamper the world. Little is known about synthetic biology that is accessible to the public like many emerging technologies. The use of argumentation and advocacy provides space for students to frame arguments that aid in deciding what issues are relevant, what problem space is manageable within the constraints of research capabilities, and to interrogate the legitimacy of the concepts.

We wanted the students to ultimately to be able to deliver a position statement and use supporting evidence to persuade others of its feasibility. The following were the specific deliverables:

- Integrate scholarly evidence to create balanced and informed summaries.
- Practice growing ideas by making a claim, collecting and organizing supportive evidence for that claim, and laying out that evidence in a logical fashion.
- Demonstrate the ability to respond to the arguments of others.

Debate for Civic Learning Activity Description.

The critical analysis activity focused on helping students with a decision process that leveraged systems thinking and advocacy to display ideas where others could add to the understanding of a complex system. Argumentation and advocacy were utilized as a means to articulate and share the problem/solution space of the team's focus.

Logistics:
- 2 Major Groups - 12 students per group (Environment and Disease)
- 2 Problem Statement Subteams per group - 6 students per Problem Statement Subteams
- 2 Concept Pitch Teams per Problem Statement Subteams – 3 students per Concept Pitch Teams

ENVIRONMENT GROUP
SUBTEAM A   SUBTEAM B
PROBLEM STATEMENT SUBTEAMS

CONCEPT A1 — vs. — CONCEPT A2   CONCEPT B1 — vs. — CONCEPT B2
CONCEPT DEBATE ROUND

CONCEPT A1   CONCEPT A2   CONCEPT B1   CONCEPT B2
CONCEPT PITCH ADVOCACY ROUND

Each subteam had to develop and refine one problem statement and determine two concepts that were feasible based on a synthetic biology criterion set and met the conditions of sustainable innovation. The process started with each individual creating a mind map, a tool to capture thoughts, ideas, or concepts about at a topic, pertaining to a large issue within the domain of the environment or disease. Small groups of three to four students were formed for sharing their mind maps and to discuss similarities and differences in order to create a group mind map. The individual factors within the group mind map indicated possible connections but did not inform how the factors were interrelated between the parts of the system. This was accomplished through the graphic language of causal loop diagrams that have the ability to capture the reasons for

the particular behavior of the system in a visual format. One criticism of causal loop diagrams is that they are static in nature and the component of time is not considered. To aid in moving to the structural understanding of a system, students were asked to select five factors from the causal loop diagram and graph them over time to evaluate the behavior of the factors. This step supports the creation of stock and flow diagrams which reveals information about rates of change of factors within the system. Through these exercises students would be able to refine the initial problem statement to one that explains the specific problem that will be solved with concepts born from the evaluation of the behavior of the system. The refinement process also complements the process of justifying the work that will be done through advocating the merit of design concepts based on the systems model i.e., causal loop and stock and flow diagrams.

Concept Debate Format:
- Opening Remarks – 3-minute prepared speech / team
- After opening remarks – 2-minute team debrief
- Rebuttal – 3-minute impromptu speech / team
- After rebuttals – 2-minute team debrief
- Closing Remarks – 2-minute impromptu speech / team
- Open Q&A – 5-minutes

Concept Pitch Advocacy Format:

- 5-minute Oral Pitch (problem, concept, synthetic biological machine prototype, implementation, impact)
- 2-sided marketing slick (why, what, how, and technical specifications)

Student Learning Assessment of the *Debate for Civic Learning* Activity.

The Concept Debate Round – formative assessment model: Rubric and Instructor/TA notes
The Concept Advocacy Pitch Round – summative assessment: Rubric and Grade

Advocacy and Deliberation - Critical Analysis Rubric
The debate activity will be assessed on mainly three criteria: support alignment, delivery, and content.

The debate portion was 80% of an assignment category that was 10% of the final grade.

		Poor	Below expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations
Support Alignment 30% (alignment between concept - problem - statement problem; evidence - warrant - claims)		No observable attempt to align concept with problem, problem statement, casual loop diagrams, and stock & flow diagrams, or evidence with claims and warrants	Attempts to align concept with problem, problem statement, casual loop diagrams, and stock & flow diagrams; evidence, claims, and warrants are somewhat present but do not make total sense - relies on implied assumptions, observable alignment attempts possibly wrong	Attempts to align and justify alignment are present between concept, problem, problem statement, casual loop diagrams, and stock & flow diagrams; generally well explained, and make sense. Some gaps might be present and implied with evidence, claims, and warrants but do not overwhelming distract	Alignment between concept with problem, problem statement, casual loop diagrams, and stock & flow diagrams is seamless and is clearly justified within alignment between evidence, claims, and warrants.
Delivery 20% (pace, voice, volume, body language, word choice, etc)		Delivery is such that it distracts the audience, and it is hard to follow overall. Lack of acknowledgment of the audience	Pace is somewhat too fast or too slow, there are no pauses, or they are too long. Voice volume is low making it hard to follow. Nonverbal cues hinder delivery. No acknowledgment of the audience either at the beginning, end, or both	Pace is appropriate, it facilitates understanding. Voice volume is adequate. Nonverbal cues help delivery. Appropriate acknowledgment of the audience	Fluid delivery, nonverbal language, volume, pace, beginning and end effectively engage the audience
Content 50% (evidence, flow logic, strength of advocacy, etc)		Statements are not supported. Mostly opinion and anecdotal evidence	Statements are somewhat supported, they still make sense	Statements are well supported	Statements are strongly supported
		Little or no connection between ideas presented	A few ideas do not follow logically	Ideas are logically sequenced; transitions are mostly effective	Ideas are impeccably sequenced, and transitions are seamless
		No summary at the end of main points	Summary is provided but it is not comprehensive	Main point of the presentation is effectively summarized	Summary of presentation is concise and persuasive
		No acknowledgement of the other group's points	Counterargument is somewhat acknowledged and addressed	Counterargument is acknowledged and addressed	Counterargument is strong, and yet effectively addressed

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

Creating learning experiences that is centered around collaborative projects as a common intellectual practice within emerging fields and technology are fertile spaces to explicitly address the social and environmental contexts in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The process of argumentation and advocacy give the students a different framework to research and begin to understand the upstream elements - motives, values, and initial scoping frameworks that drive the project, and downstream elements – related to the impact of the project, of a project that could have the capacity to shape our shared future. The incorporation of argumentation and advocacy provided the students an opportunity to interrogate their own personal positions while building from research and others. The students were able to develop and articulate their arguments that could be substantiated with evidence in a format that provided them a deeper exploration where they could potentially harness inquiry as a preparatory step for being a lifelong learner.

Students had apprehensions in the beginning but vote to carry out the debate portion with eagerness because they looked forward to the competition aspect among peers.

I plan to incorporate argumentation and advocacy into other courses with more scaffolding layers.

Debate for Civic Learning
Course Overview Template

The Basics

Course name	Introduction to Literature (Literature in the Context of Black Lives Matter)
Discipline(s)	English
Course level	110 (General Education)
Enrollment	35
Faculty instructor	Dr. Allison Harris
Faculty contact	Dr. Allison Harris; Dr. Jess Boersma
University	University of North Carolina Wilmington

Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

In addition to the practical skills of analysis and research, this course incorporates themes and topics that students often find difficult to discuss and express their perspectives. Debate structure provides a good mechanism for students to practice claims-forward, evidence-based arguments while also mediating the risk of contentious or inappropriate remarks. It also allows for interaction between asynchronous students.

Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students participated in a series of four debates throughout the semester. To prepare, students were asked "what makes a good debate." Students were given a premise based on course reading and assigned a debate position (Affirmative, Negative, Rebuttal to Affirmative, Rebuttal to Negative). Because this course was asynchronous online, the integrated Canvas Discussion Board was used to facilitate the debate. The primary positions posted on Thursday of the week of the debate and the rebuttals on Sunday. Students were required to use at least one reputable online or academic source. Throughout the semester, students had the opportunity to argue from each of the four assigned positions. Debate topics included A) "Casual racism, such as jokes, must be called out immediately and publicly by white people, regardless of the race or intention of the person who made the racist comment or joke." based on reading from *Just Us* by Claudia Rankine; B) "There can be no such thing as "color-blindness" when it comes to dealing with systemic racism." based on reading from *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X Kendi; C) "The Wakandans abandoned their responsibility to other black people by not using their technology to help." based on viewing *Black Panther*; D) "Code-switching is a valuable skill that allows people to be able to fit in with diverse groups." based on viewing *The Hate U Give*

Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students were assessed for each debate based on their clear statement of position that was not opinion, use of evidence, and appropriateness of research source. Students also completed an end-of-semester reflection survey in addition to the project's pre- and post-survey. Students overwhelmingly positively reported that the debate activities helped to facilitate discussion and created different ways of thinking critically about course themes and readings. They also positively reported that the debate structure helped them think consciously about rhetorical strategies for argumentation. Students reported that it was most difficult to argue from positions with which they did not personally identify and finding research to support the positions that they were assigned. The debate activities engaged learning outcomes of critical thinking, analytical thinking, empathic thinking, research, argumentation with claims/evidence/reasons, and the end-of-semester survey asked for metacognition of those skills.

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

Students' struggle to find research that they felt aligned with the positions they were assigned was illuminating for thinking about research skills. Although it was stated several times in the course that the Negative position could qualify, contextualize, or disagree, students often felt that the Negative position had to be the simplest opposition to the debate premise, for example that racist jokes were acceptable for the first debate. This is illustrative of how students, and the general population, perceive debate as black and white antagonisms. Moreover, students went into research looking for a particular source that would affirm their position, rather than allowing the research to guide their argument. One of my main learning objectives for this course is to present students with literature and perspectives they generally have little experience with in order to help them develop empathy. In the end-of-semester reflection, students overwhelmingly reported that debate was a useful way to develop empathy by considering other perspectives. Those who qualified this perspective stated that it was useful to challenge their own perspectives by arguing from other positions. Those who disagreed stated that it can further entrench beliefs and they felt that the structure of assigning positions and submitting in the discussion board could not produce personal investment.

Debate for Civic Learning
Course Overview Template

The Basics

Course name	Adventures in Literature (Civil Rights and Protest) and Protest Literature
Discipline(s)	English
Course level	190 (General Education Elective) and 392 (Majors and Cognates)
Enrollment	34
Faculty instructor	Dr. Allison Harris
Faculty contact	Dr. Allison Harris, Dr. Jess Boersma
University	University of North Carolina Wilmington

Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

These two courses focus on protest literature of the civil rights movements from 1955-1975. Because protest is at its core a form of debate, formalizing that structure helps to illustrate the complexities of the period and its literatures.

Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

These courses participated in three forms of debate activities. The first emphasized analyzing a piece of literature for evidence. Students were given a claim based on reading Toni Morrison's short story "Recitatif," which has a well-documented and ongoing literary debate over the characters' races as written, and were required to submit evidence for one side or the other using Kialo, an online tool for debate facilitation. The second introduced students to the formal debate structure by analyzing the famous 1965 Baldwin-Buckley Cambridge Union Debate. Students were asked to watch a televised recording of the debate and dissect Baldwin's and Buckley's presentations to identify their claims and the types of evidence provided and assess why Baldwin is voted the victor. The final debate activity was a live debate facilitated synchronously over Zoom. Students were grouped in threes and given a stakeholder position in the debate over the Vietnam War, including A) men who volunteered; B) men who were drafted; C) men eligible for the draft but undrafted; D) men who evaded the draft; E) U.S. women; F) U.S. Congress. Each student compiled an individual bibliography of five sources, two of which had to be peer-reviewed academic research. Each group member took on a role of opening statement presenter, cross-examiner, or rebuttal presenter, where the two-minute opening statement could be pre-written, the cross-examiner was responsible for posting questions during each group's opening using the chat function on Zoom, and the 90-second closing rebuttal was presented extemporaneously after a 10-minute breakout planning period. I facilitated time keeping while a colleague roleplayed as the US president and judged the most persuasive argument.

Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

The first debate activity assessed students' ability to close read and select evidence from a text based on their internalized judgement of the story. The second was assessed on their ability to identify rhetorical moves and devices in oral texts, understand types of evidence and their persuasiveness, and assess rhetorical fallacies. The third debate was assessed separately on the bibliography and appropriateness of sources and participation in the debate prep and live debate. Students also completed an end-of-semester reflection survey in addition to the project's pre- and post-survey. Students overwhelmingly reported that debate was a useful way to think about literature and rhetorical analysis. These debate activities engaged learning outcomes of public speaking, critical listening, critical thinking, analytical thinking, empathic thinking, research, argumentation with claims/evidence/reasons, rhetorical analysis, persuasion, and the end-of-semester survey asked for metacognition of those skills.

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

Like students in my other class, these students reported it difficult to find objective and appropriate sources to support their live debate positions and that arguing from positions with which they could not personally identify was both alienating and empathizing. Particularly because they had roleplay the debate stakeholder positions, students had to do more research to be versed in those perspectives and internalize them in order to write from that position. I found this to be both a useful creative exercise, fun and interesting on the day of the debate, and a powerful way to have them consciously practice skills of rhetorical argumentation without being stuck in their own way. Timekeeping and forcing them to brevity also helped them crystalize their arguments into claim/evidence/reasons without the throat-clearing so often found in undergraduate writing. Many students reported difficulty preparing for the live debate and working in

teams, which likely had much to do with the online format of the class due to COVID, so in future opportunities, I would certainly incorporate time during class meetings for students to meet and prepare. However, the Zoom technology did have the added benefits of being able to have chat and live speaking going at the same time for cross-examination, providing greater sound clarity with fewer visual distractions with the speaker mode enabled, bringing every voice into participation in the class meeting, and recording the debate. Bringing in an objective colleague who did a fantastic job of engaging with the students, identifying particularly salient or persuasive parts of each group's arguments, and then ultimately choosing a "winner" for the debate allowed for a bit of healthy competition and stakes for the assignment that were not perceived to be tied to the students' grades. Moreover, having students analyze the Baldwin-Buckley debate gave them a real-life example of debate as a model as well as illustrating the usefulness of debate in public forum. One of the most difficult parts of incorporating debate into this particular class was deciding what topics were debatable. Because debate artificially creates binaric thinking, it would be inappropriate to debate some topics relevant to the course themes, such as for or against segregation. I was confirmed in this apprehension based on the simplified positions that students in my other classes took in their debate activities. I settled on the Vietnam War due to the fact that it was hotly debated at the time as well as the students' relative emotional distance from the topic. However, as they would be roleplaying, it was also important to me that they recognize their positionality as predominantly white students in an American PWI and what positions it would be ethically appropriate for them to try to internalize and argue. Overall students positively reported that the debate assignments were enjoyable activities that helped them understand the content of the course better and made them feel more confident in argumentation, critical thinking and listening.

Debate for Civic Learning
Course Overview Example

The Basics

Course name	ENGL 322: Writing Across Contexts
Discipline(s)	Dept of English, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Course level	Undergraduate, primarily juniors and seniors
Enrollment per class section	25 students
Faculty instructor	Chris Warnick, Ph.D., Professor of English
Faculty contact	warnickc@cofc.edu
University	College of Charleston

Why *Debate for Civic Learning* in this Course.

ENGL 322 is designed to give students experience communicating ideas across different genres, including public writing genres such as op-eds, petitions, infographics, and others. Students in our Writing, Rhetoric, and Publication program—who are the target audience for the course—report having intensive practice in academic genres (like the research paper) but limited practice in public, technical, and everyday writing genres. Thus, ENGL 322 fits with our program's mission to have students gain experience with writing genres and technologies used across diverse writing workplaces and contexts, and to teach students rhetorical concepts such as the rhetorical situation, genre theory, remediation, and circulation that prepare them to adapt to the ever-changing demands of 21st-century workplaces and contexts.

In ENGL 322, we want students to design effective public writing genres that accomplish a specific rhetorical purpose, effectively address real-world audiences, and work within the constraints of specific genres. Given this goal of having students engage in civic writing, a civic learning approach fit extremely well with the course.

Debate for Civic Learning Activity Description.

To engage in civic debate, students completed a formal assignment in which they wrote an op-ed, on a topic of their choosing, suitable for publication in our institution's student-run magazine *The Yard*. They were also required to accompany their op-ed with a reflective memo describing their writing process and the choices they made as writers to adapt their message to the op-ed genre and the readers of *The Yard*. The goal of the assignment was for students to gain practice analyzing how a genre is performed in a specific local situation and writing in response to this situation. Ideally, the assignment also provided students with a clipping they could use in a professional portfolio to showcase their experience writing a popular public writing genre.

The op-ed assignment was the culminating activity in the first unit of the class, which spanned four weeks, or roughly 10 hours of in-class time and 24-36 hours of out-of-class time. To help students understand public writing, we spent two weeks reading and discussing scholarly research on genre theory that reframes genres as social actions (and not static forms) as well as rhetorical research that defines public writing, explores the ethical dimensions of public writing pedagogy, and examines the impact of neoliberalism on the public sphere. We spent a third week learning about the history of the op-ed genre, and its relationship to other related genres (such as the letter to the editor), and analyzing op-eds previously published in *The Yard*.

At the beginning of week four, students applied what they learned to write a pitch for their op-ed, which they shared via Google Docs and peer-reviewed in class. Taking what they learned from the peer review on their pitch, students posted a draft of their op-ed using Google Docs for peer review in the next class session. A revised version of their op-ed, along with their reflective memo, was submitted two days later.

Student Learning Assessment of the *Debate for Civic Learning* Activity.

I assessed student learning using a specifications grading method, providing them with screencast commentary on the final version of their op-ed. Students earned either a "complete" or "incomplete" grade on the assignment. To earn a "complete" grade, the students' op-ed and reflective memo must have met all eight grading criteria described on the assignment. These grading criteria aligned with the rhetorical goals of the assignment. For instance, one criterion was that the op-ed "performs the rhetorical function of an op-ed, presenting a reasoned and authoritative opinion on a timely issue of concern to *The Yard's* readers." Submissions that did not meet one or more of the grading specifications was graded "incomplete"--although students had three tokens they could use throughout the semester to resubmit work within two weeks that was originally graded incomplete.

A "complete" grade on the assignment earned a student an Op-Ed badge that counted toward their final course grade. There were a total of 10 available badges in the course, with 9 badges earning an A, 8 a B, and so on. Students could earn +/- grades depending on whether they made halfway or more progress toward certain badges (for instance, there was an Attendance badge requiring students to participate in a certain number of virtual class sessions). For the two peer review class sessions, students were provided a set of holistic questions they addressed, both through written comments they posted on their classmates' Google docs and through conversation they had in breakout rooms about each other's writing.

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

The most significant takeaway from the assignment was that students reported it as being a valuable introductory step in public writing. As I finalized the assignment, I was initially concerned that the op-ed genre resembled too closely academic genres like the five-paragraph essay that students are already well-versed in. However, in class discussions and in an end-of-the-semester in-class reflection, students reported that the op-ed was their favorite genre to write in the class. They explained that the genre offered them an opportunity to express themselves, to write in their own voice, in ways they believed they couldn't in academic writing genres. During our discussions of public writing research, students also shared the challenges they faced expressing themselves publicly, with a significant number of students describing how they spend most of their time on social media platforms reading content rather than writing content for fear of being misunderstood or inadvertently starting a flame war. These students stated that they viewed the op-ed genre as a useful tool for getting more comfortable with public writing.

The experiences of two students in the class further demonstrated students' growing confidence as public writers. One student revised her op-ed urging Trader Joe's to open a location in an area popular with students and published it in a local news and culture blog. Another student said her experience writing an op-ed pointing out the problems with restaurant tipping encouraged her to take on a different public writing project, this time around the environmental impact of fast fashion, which she eventually had published as a feature article in *The Yard*.

Students' attitude toward the genre also created challenges, though. Those students who saw the genre primarily as a vehicle for their voice sometimes didn't provide sufficient evidence for their opinion or neglected opposing viewpoints. There were also op-eds in which students provided an overwhelming amount of evidence and reportage that ended up diminishing their opinion. Teaching this activity again, I would devote more time to analyzing model op-eds, observing the moves they make balancing opinion with evidence and engaging with different viewpoints.

Students' responses to the assignment have prompted me to redesign ENGL 322 so that in the future it focuses exclusively on public writing. Currently, the class has a unit on public writing, a second unit on technical writing, a third unit on everyday writing, and a fourth unit in which students write a genre set (a group of different genres that work toward a shared purpose) focused on accomplishing the actions they called for in their op-eds. When creating their genre sets, students frequently opted to write public writing genres, including online petitions, crowdfunding pages, bumper stickers, letters to elected representatives, press releases, public signage, Instagram infographics, and others. Specifically, I'm considering dropping the units on technical and everyday writing and refocusing the class so that students still initially create an op-ed but then spend the remainder of the semester designing a public messaging campaign related to the subject of their op-ed and consisting of multiple genres.

Debate for Civic Learning
Course Overview Template

The Basics

Course name	Political Science 101: American Government
Discipline(s)	Department of Political Science
Course level	Introductory
Enrollment	30
Faculty instructor	Claire Wofford, J.D., PhD Associate Professor
Faculty contact	woffordcb@cofc.edu
University	College of Charleston

Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

My pedagogical approach is centered on two principles: 1) teaching students how to think rather than what to think and 2) teaching students there is (almost) always a reasonable argument about any particular political issue or problem. I wanted to add a formal debate to this class in particular because many students come into class having only heard (and believed) "one side" of political discussions or debates. They also are not used to listening and understanding positions that conflict with their own. I wanted to use formal debates to enhance their listening and critical thinking skills and help them recognize how productive and informative reasoned discourse can be. I also wanted them to learn basic skills of formulating arguments, supporting it with evidence, and public speaking.

Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students were divided into teams of 2-3 students each. They were randomly assigned to one subject matter relating to American Government (i.e., Congress, campaign finance) and then provided short, recently published opinion pieces by scholars, politicians, or political commentators that articulated opposing positions on that issue. The assignment was for them to read the op-eds, consult 3 additional (academic) sources and then engage in a debate in front of the class. Each team was given 5 minutes to present their argument followed by additional time for rebuttal. After each team had completed their part, students in the class were invited to ask questions and make comments. The debate exercise was done 6 times in the semester, with 60-75 minutes allocated for each debate.

NOTE: I provided students a detailed set of instructions which I am happy to share as needed.

Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students were graded by the instructor. Grades were based on the content of the presentation, the persuasiveness of the presentation, and how well the team responded to rebuttal. The debate grade constituted 20% of their final grade.

The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

I was generally extremely pleased with the way the debate worked in this class. Though of course student preparation was somewhat uneven, there was very good "buy-in" by all the students and most seemed to really work hard at understanding the issue and responding to alternative arguments. I think that providing them with the op-eds (rather than having them research it themselves) brought a level of intellectual sophistication to the debates. I also think that selecting "hop topics" in current events/politics helped a great deal with augmenting their interest and participation. I was also very happy with participation from the student audience – many were very eager to get involved in the discussion. It seems overall that my students really *want* a way to discuss and argue about politics, but they need the formal structure of a class assignment and faculty supervision to do so in a calm, rational and reasonable way.

In the future, I would like to find other ways for the students in the audience to participate – perhaps as peer evaluators or as formal questioners (with several students officially assigned to develop and ask questions of the presenters). I did put questions on the exams that drew from the debates (i.e., list three reasons why someone might oppose the filibuster) and this indicated most students were paying attention and learning. I also am unsure if the grade allocation (20%) was correct – I set it as a relatively large % to encourage students to work harder but I am not sure this is what motivated them. I also want to consider devoting at least a small bit of class time for the teams to prepare for the debate, as it can be difficult for students to coordinate outside of class time. This might also encourage them to really work together (another skill they need to build) rather than simply divide up the assignment.