

Rhetoric & the Art of Advocacy: Public Deliberation in Democratic Society

Curriculum Proposal for A-G Approval
Silicon Valley Urban Debate League
Rev. 4/2020

Course Information

Title:

**Rhetoric & the Art of Advocacy:
Public Deliberation in Democratic Society**

Transcript abbreviations:

Length of course:

Full Year

Subject area:

College-Preparatory Elective (G) / Interdisciplinary

UC honors designation?

No

Prerequisites:

No

Co-requisites:

None

Integrated (Academics/CTE)?

No

Grade levels:

9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Course learning environment:

Classroom Based

Course Description

Reason, evidence, and persuasion is the lifeblood of American democracy and a keystone for civic-minded professionals from the courtroom to the boardroom. Student participation in this living tradition of public advocacy is crucial to the future growth of balanced politics and healthy civil society. In this class, students will learn to participate in civil deliberation over controversial social questions by researching, writing and communicating clearly, in dialogue both with their contemporaries and with the intersecting social and political histories that inform their own American experience. In Unit 1, students will learn to identify, describe, and utilize the classical elements of rhetoric – ethos, pathos, and logos. Students will be introduced to the art of rhetoric and will comprehend the way rhetoric is used in public advocacy by analyzing and performing keystone speeches in the American political tradition. In Units 2 and 3, they will examine a series of ethical and policy controversies in American life, analyzing key political, ethical, and literary texts in order to write original oratory that stakes out a position on contemporary controversies. As they dissect literary, political, and ethical sources and craft them into their own advocacy, they will learn to situate their voice in relation to historical and contemporary arguments about ethical and policy controversies in American democracy. They will also learn to compare and contrast their view to opposing historical and contemporary perspectives. In Unit 4, students analyze the role of media in advocacy and will formulate their own extemporaneous speeches to address issues in contemporary American life, applying the historical, ethical and policy knowledge they have learned in the previous units. In the final unit, students will hone the skills they have developed by participating in a series of policy debates. Students will be taught to reason by analyzing the logic behind opposing arguments in order to identify and correct fallacies, and will be challenged to bring their rhetoric, research and reasoning skills into a public forum, in debates with other students on controversial topics in American life that will be sponsored by the California High School Speech Association. Students will be required to participate in a sponsored speech tournament in the Fall Semester, and a debate tournament in the Spring semester. In learning how to utilize rhetoric in public advocacy, students will develop skills they will continue to use in their collegiate careers as well as in their ongoing participation in social democracy.

A Note on Standards

Common Core Standards

While the content of this course is interdisciplinary, exploring the intersection of rhetoric and social studies, the skills taught in each unit of this course align with California College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening, Reading, and Writing in the Social Studies.

Speaking and Listening

Each unit requires students to engage in collaborative discussions, promotes civil discourse crucial to democratic life, and allows construction, defense, and critical reflection upon diverse perspectives. Each asks students to integrate their own experience and empirical study to form cohesive logical arguments. Each unit requires students to evaluate multiple sources of information, as well as a speaker's rhetoric and point of view. Each unit asks students to adapt speech to a variety of public situations, by analyzing and emulating the rhetorical arguments of community organizers, legislators, and media personalities among others.

Reading for Social Studies and the Social Sciences

Each unit requires students to cite specific textual evidence to support their analysis, determine central ideas and provide accurate summaries, evaluate various explanations on the basis of curated evidence, analyze the rhetorical use of words and phrases in various legal, political, and social contexts, analyze the structure of primary sources and evaluate different points of view.

Writing for Social Studies and the Social Sciences

Each unit requires students to engage in short research projects and write arguments that introduce, develop, and defend claims, clearly and coherently, in a formal style and objective tone. Each requires students to revise and strengthen writing on the basis of feedback and in interaction with new arguments and information. Unit 4, in particular, also teaches students to assess the strengths and limitations of media sources.

California History-Social Sciences Content Standards

This is an interdisciplinary course, emphasizing the intersection between the performance of the rhetorical arts and the historical and social sciences. As such, the course aligns with the History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, for it meets eight of the ten standards in the Principles of American Democracy section outlined for Grade 12. I have explained the standards met under the units that address them below.

California Arts Standards

I explain under each Unit Standards section how the whole curriculum fulfills the five component strands of the Visual and Performing Arts Standards for California Public Schools (Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Historical and Cultural Context, Aesthetic Valuing, and Connections, Relationships & Applications).

Resources

California State Board of Education, *California Arts Standards for Public Schools, Prekindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/vapacontentstds.asp>

California State Board of Education. *California Common Core State Standards* (California Department of Education, 2013), <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>

California State Board of Education, *History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (California Department of Education, 2000), 54-59. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>

Unit 1: Declamation: Historical Models of Advocacy

Unit Topics

Students will describe and identify foundational concepts in rhetorical analysis. Students will analyze the form and content of a selection of seminal speeches from various streams in the classical republican and classical liberal streams of American democratic thought, noting the way that ethos, pathos, and logos shaped the persuasive appeal of speakers, both to their original audience and to subsequent generations of Americans. After analyzing speeches as a product of the political, cultural, and social questions of their time, students will reflect in Socratic seminars upon the continuing significance of the speeches for contemporary democratic life. Students will then perform a foundational speech they have analyzed to their peers in a way that accentuates its continuing social and cultural significance in a 5-7 minute declamatory speech.

Unit Standards

History-Social Science Content Standards

- 12.1 Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.

California Art Standards

1. Artistic Perception: Students will learn to analyze public speeches using the classic Aristotelian categories of ethos, pathos, and logos and will perceive the building blocks that constitute persuasive appeal in public speaking.
2. Creative Expression: Students will perform a creative interpretation of an essential speech within the American political tradition in order to express its continuing relevance to political and social life.
3. Historical & Cultural Context: Students will analyze the historical and cultural significance of a political speech in its original context in order to comprehend how it was understood by its original audience and in order to determine how modern interpretations builds upon and appropriates this original understanding.
4. Aesthetic Valuing: Students will evaluate the continuing significance of a historical speech as it relates to their own life and participation in the project of American democracy and will evaluate and provide constructive feedback on the rhetorical performances of historical speeches by their peers.
5. Connections, Relations, and Applications: Students will be invited to use the speeches they have performed in Declamation competitions sponsored by the California High School Speech Association, and all students will use the skill of rhetorical analysis to prepare, deliver, and analyze speeches and other forms of communication in classrooms across the curriculum.

Unit Assignments

For one assignment, students will turn in a five-page rhetorical analysis paper that distinguishes and then describes the way ethos, pathos, and logos form the persuasive appeal of a foundational speech they have chosen in the American democratic tradition. They will then explain the continuing relevance of the speech to current political and social questions they face in their community. The teacher will facilitate a series of Socratic discussions regarding the continuing significance of the historic speeches that students have researched. Students will be individually assessed based on the quality of their paper, as assessed by a rubric reflecting Common Core Writing Standards, as well as corporately, based on the quality of the class Socratic discussion, as assessed by a rubric regarding the habits of successful academic discourse. In the capstone assignment, students will present a 5-7 minute speech to their peers, and the class will fill out a feedback form and provide constructive criticism based on a rubric the teacher will provide to evaluate the persuasive appeal of the speech. Students will be graded based on their speech, as well as the quality and rubric aligned relevance of the constructive criticism they offer to their peers.

Unit Resources

Print Resources

Widmer, Edward L. and Ted Widmer, eds., *American Speeches: Political Oratory from Patrick Henry to Barack Obama* (Library of America Paperback Classics, 2011). ISBN: 1598530941, 9781598530940.

Internet Resources

American Rhetoric, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html>

California High School Speech Association, <http://www.chssa.org/>

Constitution Center, <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/looking-at-10-great-speeches-in-american-history>

The History Place, <https://www.historyplace.com/speeches/previous.htm>

The History Channel, <https://www.history.com/news/10-modern-presidential-speeches-every-american-should-know>

National Speech and Debate Association, speechanddebate.org

Unit 2: Original Oratory: Advocacy & Ethics

Unit Topics

Students will be introduced to basic concepts in ethical decision-making and will examine contemporary conflicts between duty-based and utility-based theories of ethical decision-making. Students will analyze speeches from community organizers, religious leaders, and advocates for public morality on a variety of pressing contemporary questions in American society, noting how logos, ethos, and pathos inform both the form and the content of a speech. Students will examine an ethical controversy of their choosing in contemporary American life, taking and defending positions regarding the fundamental values and principles of civil society. They will research and then analytically read a selection of articles discussing the controversy from multiple perspectives. In a series of Socratic discussions, they will examine the dual nature of the social contract: the obligations that individuals have to each other in social institutions like the economy, health care institutions, the government, and the family, and the obligations that social institutions have to those who participate in them. On the basis of an understanding of their controversy and the social contract, they will develop an analysis of how concepts of freedom and justice ought to influence the reform of society in the controversy they have chosen. As a capstone assignment, students will role play as a community organizer, writing and perform a 5-7 minute speech presenting their advocacy of this ethical understanding to their peers. Students will also be invited to use their skills in the competitive Original Oratory division of tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association.

Unit Standards

History-Social Science Content Standards

- 12.2 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.
- 12.3 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

California Art Standards

1. Artistic Perception: Students will learn to analyze a contemporary ethical controversy in American life using the language and conceptual tools of a community organizer, in order to understand how activists utilize the art of rhetoric in public deliberation over the values that ought to inform a just society.
2. Creative Expression: Students will create an original oratory on an ethical controversy in American political life which marshals evidence (logos), appeals to authority (ethos), and passionate emotion (pathos) to persuade an audience.
3. Historical & Cultural Context: Students will analyze an ethical controversy by examining both the cultural conditions and historical development that give rise to its present form, and will understand the place of their own rhetorical appeal within an already established dialogue between competing perspectives on the issue.
4. Aesthetic Valuing: Students will evaluate different ways of analyzing and communicating about a contemporary ethical controversy in American life and will evaluate and provide constructive feedback on the rhetorical performances of original oratory by their peers.
5. Connections, Relations, and Applications: Students will use the original oratory they have performed in speaking competitions sponsored by the California High School Speech Association, and students will also use the skills they develop to prepare, deliver, and analyze speeches and other forms of communication in classrooms across the curriculum.

Unit Assignments

Students will research, write, and present a 5-7 minute original oratory to their peers addressing an ethical controversy facing America society. The class will fill out a feedback form and provide constructive criticism based on a rubric the teacher will provide to evaluate the thesis, structure, and persuasive conclusion of the speech. Students will be graded on the analysis of the ethical problem and call to action in their original oratory speech, their utilization of rhetorical tools in their performance, and the quality and rubric aligned relevance of the constructive criticism they offer to their peers.

Unit Resources

Print Resources

Blackburn, Simon. *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Mack, Ashley. *The Art and Science of Original Oratory* (Ripon: National Speech and Debate Association, 2013).

Internet Resources

California High School Speech Association, <http://www.chssa.org/>

National Speech and Debate Association, speechanddebate.org

Unit 3: Original Oratory: Advocacy & the Law

Unit Topics

Students will examine proposed legislative remedies that address the scope and consequences of a social ill. This will be determined each year by the policy debate topic chosen by the National Speech and Debate Association, which during the 2020-2021 school year will be criminal justice reform. Students will analytically read a selection of articles advocating substantial legal reforms in forensic science, policing, and sentencing in order to address how the evils of mass incarceration intersect with social categories such as race, class, and gender. On the basis of this reading, students will participate in a series of Socratic seminars discussing the costs and benefits of different legislative remedies. Students will then analyze speeches advocating for criminal justice reform legislation, noting how logos, ethos, and pathos inform both the form and the content of a speech. As a capstone assignment, students will role play as a state or federal legislator, or a litigator in front of the Supreme Court, writing and performing a 5-7 minute original oratory advocating for the comparative benefits of a proposed reform or to the criminal justice system in front of Congress, or advocating on behalf of a plaintiff in a topic related controversy in front of the Supreme Court. Students will also be invited to use their skills in the competitive Original Advocacy division of tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association.

Unit Standards

History-Social Science Content Standards

- 12.4 Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the U.S. Constitution.
- 12.5 Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.
- 12.7 Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments as it pertains to a significant controversy in American political life.
- 12.10 Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.

California Art Standards

1. Artistic Perception: Students will learn to analyze a contemporary policy controversy in American life using the language and conceptual tools of a legislator or litigator, in order to understand how politicians and activists utilize the art of rhetoric in public deliberation over policies that seek to mitigate social ills.
2. Creative Expression: Students will create an original oratory proposing a legislative remedy which marshals evidence (logos), appeals to authority (ethos), and passionate emotion (pathos) to persuade an audience.
3. Historical & Cultural Context: Students will analyze a policy controversy by examining both the cultural conditions and historical development that give rise to its present form, and will note the way race, class, sex and other social categories influence the articulation of social ills and policy alternatives. Students will also understand the place of their own rhetorical appeal within an already established dialogue about the opportunity costs of various legislative proposals.
4. Aesthetic Valuing: Students will evaluate different ways of analyzing and communicating about a contemporary legislative controversy in American life and will evaluate and provide constructive feedback on the rhetorical performances of original oratory by their peers.

5. **Connections, Relations, and Applications:** Students will use the original oratory they have performed in speaking competitions sponsored by the California High School Speech Association, and students will also use the skills they develop to prepare, deliver, and analyze speeches and other forms of communication in classrooms across the curriculum.

Unit Assignments

Students will research, write, and present a 5-7-minute original oratory to their peers addressing a legislative controversy facing America society. The class will fill out a feedback form and provide constructive criticism based on a rubric the teacher will provide to evaluate the thesis, structure, and persuasive conclusion of the speech. Students will be graded on the analysis of the ethical problem and call to action in their original oratory speech, their utilization of rhetorical tools in their performance, and the quality and rubric aligned relevance of the constructive criticism they offer to their peers.

Unit Resources

Print Resources

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012).
Mack, Ashley. *The Art and Science of Original Oratory* (Ripon: National Speech and Debate Association, 2013)

Internet Resources

California High School Speech Association, <http://www.chssa.org/>
National Speech and Debate Association, speechanddebate.org

Unit 4: Extemporaneous Speaking: Advocacy & the Media

Unit Topics

Students will analyze a selection of speeches from contemporary public figures on a variety of pressing contemporary questions, noting how logos, ethos, and pathos inform both the form and the content of a speech. Students will analyze how these rhetorical presentations in the media influence American political life and will formulate and defend a judgment about whether or not the media environment today serves the public good.

Students will then role play as a public figure preparing to give an extemporaneous speech in the media on a series of prompts regarding issues facing American society today, such as the spread of contagious viruses, climate change, criminal justice reform. Following the model of extemporaneous tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association (CHSSA), students will not know ahead of time the prompts they will address, but will have 30 minutes to use the background research they have curated ahead of time to prepare a speech on a topic they are given. To prepare for this, students will first be taught to gain the background knowledge necessary for extemporaneous speaking by analyzing current events, utilizing national news syndicates, think tanks, government agencies, public policy journals and other media outlets. Students will then compile a database of articles they will prepare for use in the preparation period they are allotted prior to the speech to prepare. Finally, students will use their analytical reading of this background material to craft a 5-7 minute extemporaneous speech with an introduction that engages the audience and addresses a prompt in a sentence-long thesis, main points with warranted claims that support the thesis, and a persuasive conclusion that synthesizes the arguments for the thesis. Students will deliver their speeches to an audience of their peers in class, and will also be invited to use their skills in the competitive extemporaneous speaking division of tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association.

Unit Standards

History-Social Science Content Standards

- 12.8 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.

California Art Standards

1. Artistic Perception: Students will learn to analyze a contemporary issue in American politics using the language and conceptual tools of public policy, in order to understand how politicians and activists utilize the art of rhetoric in civic deliberation.
2. Creative Expression: Students will create a structured extemporaneous speech on a contemporary issue in American political life which marshals evidence (logos), appeals to authority (ethos), and passionate emotion (pathos) to persuade an audience.
3. Historical & Cultural Context: Students will analyze a political issue by examining both the cultural conditions and historical development that give rise to its present form, and will appreciate the place of their own rhetorical appeal within an already established historical dialogue about the issue.
4. Aesthetic Valuing: Students will evaluate different ways of analyzing and communicating about a contemporary issue in American politics and will evaluate and provide constructive feedback on the rhetorical performances of extemporaneous speeches by their peers.
5. Connections, Relations, and Applications: Students will be invited to use the extemporaneous speeches they have performed in Domestic and International Extemporaneous Speaking competitions sponsored by the California High School Speech Association, and students will also use the skill of rhetorical analysis to

prepare, deliver, and analyze speeches and other forms of communication in classrooms across the curriculum.

Unit Assignments

Students will research, prepare, and present a 5-7 minute extemporaneous speech to their peers addressing a domestic political issue facing America society. The class will fill out a feedback form and provide constructive criticism based on a rubric the teacher will provide to evaluate the introduction, thesis, structure, and persuasive conclusion of the speech. Students will be graded on the research database they curate, the structure of their speech, and their utilization of rhetorical tools studied in Unit 1, as well as the quality and rubric aligned relevance of the constructive criticism they offer to their peers.

Unit Resources

Print Resources

Bailey, Jessica. *Extemporaneous Speaking: Engaging with Current Events* (Ripon: National Speech and Debate Association, 2013).

Internet Resources

California High School Speech Association, <http://www.chssa.org/>
National Speech and Debate Association, speechanddebate.org

Unit 5: Policy Debate: Advocacy & Public Deliberation

Unit Topics

Students will learn about the history and importance of public debates to movements for social change in American democracy, and will be introduced to contemporary examples of policy debate. Students will learn to identify and describe the key facts an advocate for change must establish to meet the burden of proof in a policy debate, including inherency (a description of the legal and political status quo), harm (the suffering arising from this legal and political state of affairs), the plan (the legislative proposal to change the status quo), and solvency (the ability of this new proposal to meet the need presented and resolve the suffering in the status quo). Students will also be taught to reason by analyzing the logic behind opposing arguments in order to identify and correct fallacies. Building on and deepening the research they have used to develop their original oratory on criminal justice reform, students will develop policy briefs advocating for legislative change that they can utilize in policy debate tournaments. Students will learn the rules and best practices of a four-person policy debate round as exemplified by the norms of the California High School Speech Association, focusing on the different norms and rhetorical techniques employed in constructive and rebuttal speeches. They will observe a series of exemplar debates and will use their briefs to engage in debates with their peers on the relative merits of proposed legislative reforms to the criminal justice system.

Unit Standards

History-Social Science Content Standards

- 12.7 Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments, as it pertains to a significant controversy in American political life.
- 12.10 Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.

California Art Standards

1. Artistic Perception: Students will learn the language, rhetorical strategies, and conceptual tools common to policy debate events.
2. Creative Expression: Students will research and create cases proposing a legislative remedy or defending the status quo, which marshal evidence (logos), appeals to authority (ethos), and passionate emotion (pathos) to persuade an audience.
3. Historical & Cultural Context: Students will understand the historical and cultural significance of policy debate as a tradition of deliberation in democratic society and will engage in a contemporary debate about an issue of cultural significance, criminal justice reform.
4. Aesthetic Valuing: Students will evaluate the effectiveness of different rhetorical techniques in constructive and rebuttal speeches and will evaluate and provide constructive feedback on the rhetorical performances of their peers.
5. Connections, Relations, and Applications: Students will use the original oratory they have performed in speaking competitions sponsored by the California High School Speech Association, and students will also use the skills they develop to prepare, deliver, and analyze speeches and other forms of communication in classrooms across the curriculum.

Assignments

Students will write a brief advocating for a legislative reform to the criminal justice system and a brief defending the status quo against the proposal for change. In four person debates, modelled after the structure of a policy debate provided by the California High School Speech Association, students will have debates on these proposals that include both constructive speeches, laying out their evidence and rebuttal speeches, comparing and analytically dissecting their opponent's arguments as well as defending their own original claims. The class will fill out a feedback form and provide constructive criticism based on a rubric the teacher will provide to evaluate the logic, evidence, and persuasion of each speaker in the debate. Students will be graded on the quality of the evidence they use, the logic of their brief, their utilization of rhetorical tools to persuade their audience, and the quality and rubric aligned relevance of the constructive criticism they offer to their peers.

Resources

Print Resources

Edwards, Richard. *Competitive Debate* (New York: Alpha Books, 2008)

Internet Resources

National Speech and Debate Association, speechanddebate.org
California High School Speech Association, <http://www.chssa.org/>