PSI 243 Contemporary Political Issues
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E-mail messages will be responded to in a timely manner.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This is a course in policy analysis, which has a debate/advocacy approach to dissect and critically evaluate policy choices. Students will examine polarizing political issues and each student will act as an advocate for either the pro or con side in two separate debates on selected issues. Students not actively involved in presentation in any given session will act as evaluators to critique or challenge the debaters.

TEXT:

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
1. To develop critical thinking skills necessary to present the most accurate and relevant information on the factors bearing on an issue.
2. Develop the ability to critically evaluate fiscal, political, and societal influences on public policy.
3. Develop the ability to build a logically consistent argument using appropriate sources and data.
4. Critically evaluate the issues as both a debater and debate judge.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
• All students are expected to attend every class session. Attendance and participation will be a substantial part of the final grade.
• Each student will act as a presenter for TWO debate issues.
• For each issue assigned for presentation, students acting as presenters/debaters will be prepared to argue either side of the issue.
• No scheduled presentations/debates will be rescheduled. A missed presentation will result in a failing grade for that presentation.
• Issues for debate by each student and sessions for presentation will be decided by lottery during the first class session. Detailed explanation for how the course will operate, grading criteria, and student performance expectations will be clarified during this class meeting. The information and explanations shared during this class meeting will not be repeated. Therefore, week one attendance is mandatory. If you expect to miss the first class meeting, do not register for this course.
• When not acting as a debater, all students are expected to be sufficiently conversant with all covered issues to participate in critique and evaluation of the debaters.
• Grading of presentation will be based on quality of the presentation, as determined by both the teacher and classmates. Presentation quality will be evaluated using the rubric provided.
• Grade for participation will be based on quality of participation using the guidelines provided.
• Two absences for any reason will result in a final grade of “C” or lower.
GRADE FOR PARTICIPATION
Students will be evaluated on their participation as evaluators/judges of the debaters’ presentations. Up to 30% of the final grade will be based on these criteria.

Credit will be given to those who most consistently offer:
- Alternate sources of information or arguments for either side of the issue presented
- Additional viewpoints or explanations drawn from sources/data presented
- Critical evaluation of data presented and/or conclusions drawn by the debaters

Students will have an opportunity to present their evaluations both orally during class discussion and in writing using evaluation sheets that will be distributed prior to each presentation.

GRADE FOR PRESENTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOURCES</td>
<td>7 or more reliable sources that are data-based and from original sources</td>
<td>5 reliable sources that are data-based and from original sources</td>
<td>3 reliable sources that are data-based and from original sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESENTATION</td>
<td>clear, coherent, and data-based with at least 3 points made in affirmation and/or refutation</td>
<td>clear, coherent, and data-based with at least 2 points made in affirmation and/or refutation</td>
<td>clear, coherent, and data-based with at least 1 point made in affirmation and/or refutation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REBUTTAL</td>
<td>directly addresses all points made in opponent’s presentation</td>
<td>directly addresses majority of the points made in opponent’s presentation</td>
<td>directly addresses few of the points made in opponent’s presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMATION</td>
<td>clear summation of advocacy and addresses issues of rebuttal point by point</td>
<td>summary of advocacy and issues of rebuttal</td>
<td>cites some points made in advocacy and rebuttal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SESSION ONE, THURSDAY, AUGUST 23
- We will discuss course policies, procedures, and requirements.
- We will identify the issues to be debated and the format for formal debate.
- Teacher will introduce the process for discovering and identifying “appropriate” sources for a debate on any political issue.
- We will conduct the lottery for identifying the issues to be addressed by each student.

The activities of subsequent sessions will be determined during the first class meeting.