**Curriculum**

**Debate and Public Speaking**

**Course Overview**

This elective prepares students to build sound cases with convincing logic, deliver moving speeches with eloquence and poise, and argue against opponents with flexibility and confidence. Students will explore and debate many current controversies and deliver a variety of original speeches; students are required to enter several speech and debate competitions during the year. Interdisciplinary in its approach, the course draws on readings from such fields as ethics, rhetoric, logic, sociology, and current events.

**Department Standards**

Expected Outcomes:

1. Knowledge of and interest in history, the social and behavioral sciences and related subjects.
2. Constructive participation in a democratic society.
3. Understanding of various societies throughout history.
4. Development of critical analysis skills.
5. Development of research skills.
6. Development of communication and presentation skills.

**Benchmarks**:

The three chief goals of this course are for students…  
1) to understand in some depth the problems and controversies that society faces;  
2) to become adept at applying ethics and logic to build arguments and defend them; and  
3) to become competent, confident public speakers.

**Performance Indicators**

Students will be able to develop sound, well-supported arguments: thesis development, coherence, evidentiary support, and interpretation. Various forms of persuasion (e.g., use of authority) will be explored.

They will gain necessary research skills to build evidentiary support: setting objectives, using databases and search engines, extracting information, and citing sources.  
  
Students will grasp the fundamental elements of the philosophical field of ethics: Classical foundations, differences between schools of philosophy, and value hierarchies.  
  
Students will understand and practice the physical aspects of formal speaking: eye contact, facial expression, poise, and gesture.

Students will learn how to recognize fallacies and weaknesses in an argument: learning the range of potential fallacies, understanding their misuses, noticing signs of weakness.

They will learn how to ask effective questions of opponents: choosing areas to probe, wording questions for clarity and leverage, and developing follow-up questions or lines of questioning.   
  
Students will understand the fundamental elements of two competing schools of ethics: the value structures of deontology and consequentialism, the foundational contributions of Kant and Mill, useful applications in debates, and potential critiques.  
  
Students will become competent in oral delivery: enunciation, volume, pacing, and emphasis.   
They will troubleshoot habits of speech that are unproductive.

Students will become competent in rebuttal and refutation: targeting weaknesses in opposing arguments, applying cross-examination answers, structuring and delivering extemporaneous rebuttals, anticipating and analyzing attacks from an opponent, and defending against them.   
  
Students will begin to understand Twentieth Century ethics: the development of the field since WWI, competing schools, and the limits of philosophy.   
They will focus on equality, particularly Rawls's Theory of Justice.  
  
Students will gain further confidence in their public speaking, particularly in extemporaneous speaking: organizing thoughts, organizing preparatory notes, phrasing, tracking, rehearsing, and concluding.

Students will learn how to respond forcefully to an opponent: matching rebuttal and refutation to an opponent's value structure to maximize clash, and asserting dominance in reviewing for judges.

They will grasp the fundamentals of evaluating a debate: note-taking for both sides, recognizing effective attacks and defenses, and choosing a fair rationale for decision.  
  
Students will learn to apply ethical critique to contemporary issues: analyzing value conflicts and paradoxes, matching the values of an issue to a school or body of work, and accounting for weaknesses or inconsistencies.

They will also study various approaches in problem-solving and critical thinking.  
  
Students will learn to use rhetorical devices appropriate to the content and form of a speech.

They will attain confidence in speaking with conviction: combining previously learned speaking skills to create a seamless, dynamic effect.

**Assessments**

**1st Quarter**

Writing  
• Draft two short speeches: one informative, one persuasive

• Research and draft cases for self-chosen, current topic, in teams: affirmative or negative  
• Compose an original oratory based on personal experience  
  
Speaking  
• Two or three short speeches

• Two debates: one affirmative, one negative  
• Deliver oratory; focus: eye contact

Activity  
• Flowing (note-taking) practice and assessment for debate

• Optional trip to speaking / debate event

**2nd Quarter**

Writing  
• Research and draft cases for L/D November/December topic: affirmative and negative  
  
Speaking  
• Three solo debates, emphasis on rebuttal techniques  
  
Test  
• For exam, a performance assessment of debate  
  
Activity  
• Analyze weaknesses in arguments; formulate corresponding questions

• Optional trip to speaking / debate event

**3rd Quarter**

Writing  
• Research and draft speech for Rotary competition

• Research and draft cases for L/D March/April topic: affirmative and negative  
• Research extemporaneous topics relating to L/D topic  
  
Speaking  
• Two debates, emphasis on rebuttal and defense  
• Experiment with Public Forum debate  
• Deliver extemp. speeches  
• Compete in Rotary competition and debate meets with sister schools

**4th Quarter**

Writing  
• Revise cases for debates on L/D March topic: affirmative and negative

• Compose an original speech; open theme, open format;  
  
Speaking  
• Compete in debate tournament; emphasis on optimizing clash;  
• Deliver speech before larger audience  
  
Activity  
• Judge debates between classmates

**Core Topics**

Argumentation  
Ethics  
Speech

**Specific Content**

**1st Quarter**

Argumentation  
• Thesis/Coherence  
• Value Structure  
• Lincoln-Douglas  
(L/D) debate  
  
Speech  
• Visual Impact

• Delivery

**2nd Quarter**

Argumentation  
• Fallacies/Weakness  
• Cross-Examination

• Rebuttal techniques  
  
Ethics  
• Deontology and Consequentialism  
  
Speech  
• Extemporaneous

**3rd Quarter**

Argumentation   
• Rebuttal/Refutation; Clash  
  
Ethics  
• TBA, to fit topic  
  
Speech  
• Confidence  
• Extemporaneous

**4th Quarter**

Argumentation  
• Clash  
• Judging   
  
Ethics  
• Applied Ethics  
• Critical Thinking  
  
Speech  
• Rhetorical Devices  
• Dynamic Effect

**Resources**

Required Texts

1. Competitive Debate, Alpha, 2008. ISBN: 1592576931  
2. Talk the Talk: Speech and Debate Made Easy, Gravitas Publishing, 2006. ISBN: 0973868201  
3. How to Win Every Argument: The Use and Abuse of Logic, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007. ISBN: 0826498949  
4. Ethics (Oxford Readers), Oxford University Press, 1994. ISBN: 0192892452

Supporting Resources

Bowie, N.E. & R.L. Simon. The Individual and the Political Order. ISBN: 0847687805  
Critical text for Lincoln-Douglas debate.  
  
McGraw-Hill, pub. Basic Debate, Student Edition (5th). ISBN: 0078729947  
  
Sather, T. Pros and Cons: A Debater's Handbook. ISBN: 0415195489  
A collection of foundational arguments for dozens of controversial issues.  
  
Singer, P., ed. A Companion to Ethics. ISBN: 0631187855  
Articles explaining the main schools of philosophy, from consequentialism to deontology to virtue ethics  
  
Weston, A. A Rulebook for Arguments, 3rd ed. ISBN: 0872205525  
  
Assorted videos from National Forensics League Tournaments: Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, Oratory  
  
Liberty Briefs: Dossiers for bimonthly Lincoln-Douglas debate topics (5 per year)