COMM 4350 (Special Topics in Speech and Debate)  
CRN: 22527, Spring 2019

General Information

Contact Information
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Required Texts
There will not be any required textbooks for this course. However, students will be assigned readings and resources that will be made available through online platforms such as Box and/or Microsoft OneDrive. Please contact your instructors if you have difficulty accessing these materials.

Course Overview
This course is designed to provide a survey of competitive speech and debate (otherwise known as forensics) through an in-depth exploration of all genres of competitive activity: platform speaking, limited preparation speaking, oral interpretation of literature, and debate. Functionally, this class is designed as an advanced public speaking course that will provide students with training in speech writing, argumentation, critical thinking, research methods, and synthesis of complex information and concepts. Students will develop proficiency with creating researched, structured presentations that deal with real-world issues and encourage civic engagement. Moreover, this course will provide students with a better understanding of the role public speaking plays in academic and professional contexts.

Unlike many courses, however, assignments and work in this course will largely be student-centered and guided by interest in particular events and/or subjects. Throughout the course of the semester, all students will be expected to create public presentations (from topic selection to delivery), participate in class discussion, and strive for self-improvement in public speaking. Because all students entering the class will have varying levels of experience with public speaking, the focus will be on individual improvement and skill building. Learning the skills listed above will prepare you to compete in
intercollegiate speech tournaments, if you choose to try out to add competition to your educational experience. However, even if you do not want to compete, you can become a more organized thinker and a more effective writer and speaker after you learn the skills taught.

**Course Goals**

- Conceptualize, focus and develop topics into meaningful, purposeful communication
- Understand the organizational components of a speech in various genres of competition and speaking
- Organize logically and develop ideas fully, utilizing examples and analysis
- Develop advanced research skills and research competency
- Improve public speaking skills, with a particular focus on civic engagement

Please Note: All students enrolled in COMM 4350 are required to complete a Title IX training coordinated with the office of the Dean of Students. Additionally, all students are required to complete the personal and contact information page found in the 2017-2018 UTEP Forensics Handbook.

**Course Assignments and Evaluation**

Although traveling and competition are not the sole focus of this class, instruction will largely be focused on developing presentations that meet competitive standards and norms. All classroom activities are designed to improve your public speaking ability. Daily lessons may include the practice sessions for individual events, impromptu and extemporaneous preparation, and debate scrimmages.

By the third week of the semester, students should identify whether they wish to be placed on either the (1) competition track, or (2) non-competition track. Although both tracks will develop similar skills and will be focused on the same activities, this distinction will help coaches determine the standards that will be used for subsequent evaluation in the course.

Beginning students are required to develop one “competition-ready” platform or interpretive event. The development will include the conceptualization, synthesis, memorization, and presentation of an approved topic. Beginning students are encouraged to develop additional events. Classwork will include workshops for each individual event and repeated workshops and scrimmages relating to debate and limited preparation events. Depending on the event(s) that students choose to develop, different assignments will be expected (e.g. students wishing to work on impromptu speaking will be required to develop and maintain an impromptu example notebook).

Experienced speakers are expected to develop, memorize, and present three competition-ready platform or interpretive events. For the purposes of evaluation, limited preparation events (extemporaneous speaking, impromptu speaking, and IPDA debate) will count as half an event fulfilment. Students can select both limited-prep events for a single prepared event i.e., you fulfill the minimum requirements if you develop and present and informative speech, a poetry interpretation, impromptu, and extemporaneous speech for competition.

All approved topics for competition events will conform to established guidelines in the speech and debate community. Part of your instruction will include editing and feedback to guarantee a high level of quality for prepared events. UTEP Speech and Debate operates under the competition guidelines established by the American Forensics Association, the National Forensics Association, Pi Kappa Delta,
and the International Public Debate Association, among others. The ethical standards of The University of Texas at El Paso and our affiliate organizations are of upmost importance.

**Grading and Evaluation**
Beginning speakers: At a minimum, one competition event including conceptualization, synthesis, memorization, and performance will be developed over the course of the semester. Students are highly encouraged to develop additional events to improve their skills. Performance in competition is not required, but students opting in to the “performance track” are subject to additional requirements as the semester continues. For instance, one event may satisfy readiness requirements for attending a first tournament, but developing additional events may be required for attending additional competitions.

Experienced speakers: A minimum of three events suitable for competition including memorization and performance. Competition readiness will be determined on a case-by-case basis and students must maintain readiness throughout the semester. All efforts will be made to allow students multiple competitive opportunities, but travel decisions will be governed by the policies outlined in the team handbook and will be made solely at the discretion of the coaching staff.

Please note: Grading and evaluation will be determined on an individual basis. That is, beginning speakers will not be compared with/against advanced speakers for the purposes of evaluation. Individual improvement, meeting deadlines/benchmarks, successfully completing revisions, etc. will be the focus of grading. If you are uncertain about the grading process, please feel free to contact your instructors at any point.

**Team Travel**
Students interested in travelling to competition and who meet the minimum travel expectations are expected to follow travel policies established by the UTEP Forensics. Each student should notify each of their instructors regarding their affiliation with the team and the potential for travel during the semester. Students should prepare for travel by being current, or ahead, of their classroom assignments. We cannot guarantee that there will be time allowed to complete assignments while at competitions, so please plan accordingly with your other instructors.

UTEP requires a minimum of 2.0 GPA for travel. Eligibility for travel will be cleared through the office of The Dean of Students. In addition to university clearance, students are required to advise their instructors concerning impending travel and submit verification signed by each instructor. Absence excuse forms will be provided for each competition; it is the responsibility of the student to make sure that these are provided to all instructors prior to departure.

Note: Given several policies at the departmental, college, and university level, travel decisions must be made several weeks in advance. If you are interested in attending a trip, please notify the coaches as soon as possible and work to have events cleared for competition in order to be considered. Under no circumstances will last minute ‘adds’ be allowed for trips (e.g. the list of travelling students will be verified at least 14 days prior to departure).

**Classroom Policies**

**Attendance**
Students are required to attend all scheduled class meeting and practices. Unexcused absences will impact your grade. Three unexcused absences will reduce your grade by a minimum of 10% (or one letter grade). All attendance-related issues must be submitted to the instructor of record. Students on the competition track (or those interested in competing) are required the practice that immediately follows the class (from 4:30-6:00pm on MW) as well as an additional scheduled practices. Failure to attend these practices may disqualify you from consideration for travelling.

CASS
If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu. Or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

Academic Integrity

“Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.”

Note: Scholastic misconduct in forensics extends beyond written speeches. For instance, speakers competing in impromptu speaking who are found to be ‘recycling’ or ‘canning’ speeches will be referred to relevant campus offices for academic misconduct. When in doubt, please ask your coaches.

Classroom Behavior
This classroom is a safe haven for all ideas. Respect not only your instructors, but also your peers, as equals. We are all unique individuals entitled to our own opinions and beliefs. Therefore, any comments, jokes, or remarks that denigrate the worth of an individual’s physical or mental ability, physical appearance, religion, race, creed, ethnic background, sexual preference, or gender are inappropriate and strictly forbidden. Given the nature of forensics, many of the topics that will be discussed during the semester may be controversial. Please be welcoming of the diverse viewpoints and perspectives that speakers will be discussed throughout the semester.

Course Calendar
Note: Course Calendar reflects team travel only, expectations for individual students to be determined by coaching faculty and staff. Experienced competitors are expected to develop a minimum of three events by the end of the semester. Beginning members of the team are expected to develop one competition ready event by the end of the semester.

The competition-ready speech includes the draft outline and manuscript development, memorization, and performance of said event. Because of the dynamic nature of our class and forensics, a calendar of activities/assignments for the semester is not feasible. Students should come prepared to work on their
events to all class meetings and be ready to engage in a variety of activities, exercises, and drills that will help improve public speaking proficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tournament Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Anticipated Travel Dates</th>
<th>Anticipated # of Students</th>
<th>Travel Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hill Country Swing</td>
<td>San Marcos, TX</td>
<td>September 21-24, 2018</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice University Classic</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>Sept. 27-Oct. 1, 2018</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aztec-Mills Swing</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>October 3-8, 2018</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowtown Classic</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
<td>October 25-29, 2018</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCA Conference</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, UT</td>
<td>November 6-11, 2018</td>
<td>2-3** Restricted Travel</td>
<td>Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin-Dahlin</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>November 15-18, 2018</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Broadway Swing</td>
<td>Hofstra, NY</td>
<td>Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2018</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Salt Lake Invitational (Co-Hosting)</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, UT</td>
<td>January 17-20, 2019</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring TIFA</td>
<td>San Antonio, TX</td>
<td>March 31-February 3, 2019</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western States Communication Association Tournament</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>February 21-25, 2019</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pi Kappa Delta Nationals</td>
<td>Hofstra, NY</td>
<td>March 19-25, 2019</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPDA Nationals</td>
<td>Shreveport, LA</td>
<td>April 12-17, 2019</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Forensics Association (NFA) Nationals</td>
<td>Santa Ana, CA</td>
<td>April 17-23, 2019</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE – WE MAY/MAY NOT ATTEND THESE TOURNAMENTS

**Final Examination**

There is no final exam for COMM 4350; your grade will be determined on an individual basis. Assessment will include team participation, level of completion of your selected events, delivery, and team travel, if warranted.