



Everyday Debate

(Fall 2020)

“This is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering; this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else.” —Socrates

“For what should a man live, if not for the pleasures of discourse?” —Plato

“The person who says he knows what he thinks but cannot express it usually does not know what he thinks.” —Mortimer J. Adler

Course Description

Everyday, all day, different ideas and arguments are proposed to you. These ideas and arguments come in many shapes and forms: an advertisement pops up on your internet page and tries to convince you why this toothpaste is the best toothpaste; a politician speaks on the evening news and tries to convince you that you should vote for or support him; the authors of each of those books on your shelves is trying to convince you that something is true; your friend calls you on the phone and tries to convince you that you should join them in their weekend adventure. And all of these arguments respond to questions that we have: What toothpaste should I buy? Who should I vote for? What is the truth about this particular topic? What should I do with my free time? And we have many questions; as human beings, it is natural for us to wonder about all sorts of things. But, some ideas, claims, and arguments are more serious than others, because some questions are more serious than others. Should I match, for example, the color of my socks with the color of my shoes, or the color of my pants? That certainly could be a matter of debate. But, that question is very different than this one: How should I go about living my life? What makes a life a good life? The way that we answer this question is going to shape the way we live; our ideas have consequences and so, we must examine them. Once examined, these ideas can be shared. You, too, have the ability, and even the responsibility, to propose ideas and contribute to the discovery of the truth. One of the primary goals of this course is to learn how to examine your ideas and the ideas of others and then argue your point well. With these skills, you will be able to help others realize what is true; you will have the skills needed to change minds, and with that power, imagine what a force for the good you can be.

Instructor: Miss Coleman

Contact: coleman.scholeacademy@gmail.com

Class times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:15 p.m. (EST)

Class dates: September 8-January 21, with the exception of the holidays listed on the Scholé Academic Calendar

Office hours: TBD, also by appointment

Required Course Texts: *Everyday Debate and Discussion: A Guide to Socratic Conversation, Informal Discussion, and Formal Debate*

A Note on Work for this Course and Late Work

Work for this course will include reading assignments, writing assignments, memorization, and preparation for in-class debates. I will post your assignments for the week on Schoology; assignments will be given to you for each of the five days of the week so that you know what to work on each day. It would be a good idea to print this weekly student lesson plan at the beginning of each week and put it into a binder, along with your notes for the course. No additional work will be assigned on the days that we meet for class, but I will include a note about what we will be doing in class that day.

You should strive to complete the assignments on-time because this will allow you to gain the most out of this class. It is your responsibility to have your assignments completed by the time they are due. If for some reason you are unable to complete an assignment by the due-date, please send me an email to let me know and include your plan for completing the work. There is no numeric penalty for turning in an assignment late. Completing the assignments late, however, means that you will fall behind in the course and this will affect both your ability to participate well in class and your ability to master the material.

COURSE MAP

Our class will follow the outline below. Please note that it is subject to change; the pace will be adjusted as needed to allow for ample study and discussion of the material.

Quarter 1

Units I - Introduction to Debate

Unit II- Some Basics of Debate

Unit III-Logos: Inductive and Deductive Logic

Quarter 2 -

Unit IV - Ethos, Pathos, Style

Unit V - Arrangement

Unit VI - Presentation and Debate Possibilities

How to be a Good Learner in this Class:

- ❖ Come prepared to class: come to class on-time, with the material for the day completed, ready to participate in discussion, with all the materials you need on hand (note-taking paper, a pencil, etc.)
- ❖ During class, be present - do not be eating, sleeping, or using your cell-phone
- ❖ Participate in class: ask good questions; share your thoughts; when you are not talking, be attentive to the person who is talking - give them your full attention and take the time to consider their ideas and share your thoughts in response
- ❖ Be respectful of others in the discussion; if you disagree, express your disagreement politely and carefully

- ❖ Strive for mastery of the material

Attendance

If you know that you are going to miss a class, please send me an email to let me know in advance. You will need to take the initiative to complete the material you missed (watch the video of the class and make sure you understand any material that was covered). That said, videos are no substitute for the dynamic back-and-forth of class discussion. Regular attendance is essential for learning the course material.

Late Work

You should strive to complete the assignments on-time because this will allow you to gain the most out of this class. It is your responsibility to have your assignments completed by the time they are due. If for some reason you are unable to complete an assignment by the due-date, please send me an email to let me know and include your plan for completing the work. There is no numeric penalty for turning in an assignment late. Completing the assignments late, however, means that you will fall behind in the course and this will affect your ability to participate well in class.

Contacting Miss Coleman

Please email me with any questions or concerns you have. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours of receiving your email. If there is an issue or concern that requires a lengthier conversation, we can also set up a Zoom meeting instead.

Grade Breakdown and a Note on How to think about Grades in this Class

Our primary goal in this course is to learn how to examine ideas and argue convincingly for ideas which, under examination, prove to be true. At the end of the semester, you will receive a final grade; this is, unfortunately, a necessary thing. It is important not to let the earning of a good grade become your primary goal in this course; if this becomes your main goal, you will rob yourself of the joy of learning the material. The goal is to develop skills in debate and to sharpen your mind and become as adept with each skill as you possibly can. So, when you sit down to prepare for a debate, for example, do your best push away the thought that says, 'I need to win this debate so that I can get a good grade in this class'; instead think, 'Why do I think that it is better for people in cities to travel by trains than by cars?' and 'How am I going to convince them that it is better for people in cities to travel by trains?' Do you want to just earn a letter stamped on a paper, or would you like to aim at developing the skill to speak your mind on one of the great debates in the realm of urban planning? Keep your bar for yourself high; strive to develop a mind and a voice that is to be reckoned with, not just an 'A-student.'

To the end of helping you keep your focus on learning and off grade-earning, I will not put letter grades or percentages on all of your assignments. Instead, I will give you concrete feedback on what you did well and what you need to continue working on. If you are concerned about how you are doing in the class, we can have a conversation about that.

***Participation** (Contribution to class discussions): 40%

Writing (Shorter writing assignments in the textbook, Written responses to reflection questions, Essays-debate in writing, and Reading Notes): 35%

In-class Debates: 25%

*A Note on Participation - Participating actively in class will do much for you in terms of learning the course material. There are many ways to participate actively in class; answering a question that comes up in the course of discussion is just one way to participate. Other ways include asking a good question (sometimes this is a question for clarification, other times this is a more substantial question), responding to a peer's idea by expressing agreement or polite disagreement or building on what they have said. Keep in mind that when you articulate your thoughts and questions you are helping yourself and those around you learn. If you are struggling to participate, or don't know again, this is something I would be glad to discuss with you.

*Magna Cum Laude: 95%-100% B=89% to 80% Cum Laude: 85%-94% C=79% to 70% Satis: 75-84% D=69% to 60% Non Satis: 74% and below

Academic Integrity

Students are on their honor to abide by Scholé Academy's Learning Philosophy, which assumes the personal cultivation of Student Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook. Additionally, plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense. Proper citation of all sources is essential to the academic endeavor. Your work should be your own. Remember to cite any source you are referring to if the information is not common knowledge or is an opinion from any other source. A plagiarized assignment will result in a failing grade.

About the Instructor:



Miss Coleman completed her undergraduate studies in English and Latin at Hillsdale College, where she was awarded a fellowship to study the life and writing of Winston Churchill. She has taught middle school and high school students in subjects ranging from Humane Letters and Scripture to Literature and Life Science. She loves creating an atmosphere where her students can experience wonder and pursue the truth together through Socratic dialogue. She has an active interest in permaculture farming and exploring the ways ecosystems work together to enhance communities. When not teaching, she enjoys playing the violin, running, reading, writing, and cooking.