

Literacy and Advocacy: An Introduction to the Speech Arts

Curriculum Proposal for A-G Approval
Silicon Valley Urban Debate League

Course Information

Title:

Language Arts as Advocacy: An Introduction to the Speech Arts

Transcript abbreviations:

Length of course:

Full Year

Subject area:

English (B)

UC honors designation?

No

Prerequisites:

None

Co-requisites:

None

Integrated (Academics/CTE)?

No

Grade levels:

9th, 10th, 11th, & 12th

Course learning environment:

Classroom Based

Course Description

Literacy and advocacy are essential to civic participation in a functioning democracy and a keystone for college readiness, as well as the prerequisite for professionalism in every context, from the courtroom to the boardroom. Student ability to write, read, listen, present persuasively, collaborate, and express civic agency is the *sine qua non* of every facet of public life.

Student participation in a living tradition of language arts is crucial to the future growth of democratic civil society. In this class, students will learn to participate in civil deliberation over controversial social questions by developing skills in critical reasoning, reading, writing, speaking and listening, in dialogue both with their contemporaries and with the intersecting social and political histories that inform their own experience. Students will apply knowledge and exercise skills they have learned in both the classroom and interscholastic competitions. Students will develop skills for critically analyzing news sources, government and academic scholarship on public policy, credible internet sources, and select works of literature.

Students will fulfill the Core Competencies required to complete the English (B) requirement in the following manner.

1. **Reading:** Students will learn to read, analyze, and evaluate the rhetorical, grammatical, and syntactical patterns forms and structures in classic prose (Unit 1), academic texts on ethics and legal reform (Unit 2-3), government and think tank reports on policy (Unit 4), media and news sources (Unit 5) and literary fiction and nonfiction (Unit 6) in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various ways advocacy is utilized in the speech arts. Thus they will read extensively in a variety of genres, including full length works, in order to expand their understanding of the human experience in historical and ethical contexts, as expressed through complex written expressions by a variety of authors. They will formulate reflective questions and hypotheses about their reading based on an analysis of different kinds of evidence.
2. **Writing:** In each unit, students will write extensive structured speeches in a diversity of genres directed at public audiences in various contexts and appropriate to the distinct rhetorical purposes of declamation, original oratory, extemporaneous speech, policy advocacy, and dramatic interpretation. Students will be asked to gather and evaluate evidence in order to justify the claims they make in their speeches and will be required to cite sources and respond constructively to differing points of view. Students will also be given repeated opportunities to perform the drafts of speeches for feedback, revision, and editing both inside the classroom and in interscholastic competition with peers from the California High School Speech Association.
3. **Listening and Speaking:** In each unit, students' assignments will include a public performance of an original speech, either a historical piece of classic prose (Unit 1) or an original piece the student has written (Unit 2-6). Multiple genres, disciplines, tasks and purposes will inform the different varieties of speech art explored in each unit. Students will perform before small groups of peers to receive feedback, before having an opportunity to perform before the entire class. They will thus be trained to speak and listen with awareness of both the self, others, and the context of the performance. They will incorporate iterative feedback from these experiences in order to present the speeches at interscholastic tournaments before trained judges. Peers will be taught to discern the thesis and intent of the speaker, evaluate key points, listen and provide constructive feedback appropriate to the genre of speech given, in a professional manner that is emotionally intelligent.

In each task (reading, writing and researching, and performing and reviewing original creative speeches), students will be trained to reflect on the selection of topics, the development of thesis statements, and evaluation and processing of information. They will be taught to use technology and digital media to access and evaluate a wide range of information related to their speech, and they will be taught to use collaborative digital platforms such as the Google Suite and Flipgrid in order to write, collaborate, and publish their speeches for constructive feedback.

Students will learn mastery of the above Core Competencies in English by moving through the following units:

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 famous political speeches from history.

In Units 2 and 3, they will examine a series of ethical and policy controversies, analyzing key political, ethical, and literary non-fiction 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 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 life, applying the historical, ethical and policy knowledge they have learned in the previous units.

In Unit 5, 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 a controversial resolution provided by the National Speech and Debate Association.

In Unit 6, students will learn to analyze and perform works of literature in order to communicate an argument about a topic they have chosen to address to an audience. After students read a literary work and conduct a literary analysis of that literature, they will write and perform a script that explores their chosen topic by making connections between the literary work, the literary terms used, authorial choices, and the audience.

Students will be required to participate in at least one sponsored speech tournament in the Fall Semester, and a debate tournament in the Spring semester. In learning how to utilize the speech arts 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.

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 a diversity of sources from around the world, noting the way that ethos, pathos, and logos shaped the persuasive appeal of speakers, both to their original audience and to subsequent generations. 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 (which 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 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. 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. Students will also be invited to use their skills by presenting their speech in the competitive Declamation division of tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association.

Unit Resources

Print Resources

Montefiore, Simon S., *Voices of History: Speeches That Changed the World* (Vintage Books, 2021). ISBN: 978-1-9848-9818-0

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 our global 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 life, taking and defending positions regarding the fundamental values and principles of civil society. They will research and then analytically read a selection of academic and literary texts discussing the controversy from multiple perspectives. In 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 performing 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 Assignments

Students will research, write, and present a 5-7 minute original oratory to their peers addressing an ethical controversy facing 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, mass incarceration. 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 or the International Court of Justice at the Hague. Students will write and perform a 5-7 minute original oratory advocating for the comparative benefits of a proposed reform to the criminal justice system in front of Congress, advocating on behalf of a plaintiff in a topic related controversy in front of the Supreme Court, or advocating for a related reform to international norms of incarceration in front of the International Court of Justice. 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 Assignments

Students will research, write, and present a 5-7-minute original oratory to their peers addressing a legislative controversy facing 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).
Dreisinger, Baz. *Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice in Prisons Around the World* (Other Press, 2016).
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 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 society today, such as the spread of contagious viruses, climate change, and criminal justice reform. Following the model of extemporaneous tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association,

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 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 Assignments

Students will research, prepare, and present a 5-7 minute extemporaneous speech to their peers addressing a political issue facing society or the world. 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 articles 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 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 skills they have used to develop their original oratory, 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 a resolution chosen by the National Speech and Debate Association. Students will be invited to use their skills in the competitive policy debate division of tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association.

Assignments

Students will write a brief advocating for a legislative reform and a brief defending the status quo against the proposal for change. In four person debates, modeled 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.

Unit 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/>

Unit 6: The Interpretation of Literature: Advocacy Through the Arts

Unit Topics

In Dramatic Interpretation, students read a full-length literary text, learn to critically analyze it, and choose one or more portions of the piece to perform to an audience. In so doing, students gain a strong sense of physical communication, and earn increased confidence and poise as public speakers. Students may investigate and perform from a selection of topics that range from serious social subject matters such as coping with terminal illness; significant historical situations, events, and figures; to racial and gender discrimination, suppression, and oppression. Students will be guided and supported to select topics and pieces appropriate and of interest to them.

Dramatic Interpretation involves performing literature aloud to communicate meaning to an audience. The student, as the interpreter, analyzes the literature in order to interpret it, and uses their voice to communicate this interpretation. The interpreter is the connection between the literature and the audience and uses the connection as a way to make an argument about the struggle of a protagonist with the challenges of the human condition. This unit teaches students to be reflective about their interpretive choices, for these choices themselves express an argument about the meaning of works of art and their continuing significance for today. Students will deliver their interpretation of literature to an audience of their peers in class, and will also be invited to use their skills in the competitive Dramatic Interpretation division of tournaments held by the California High School Speech Association.

Assignments

Students will write a literary analysis that describes how their chosen text explores the topic they are investigating by unpacking the use of literary terms and other authorial choices. Students will analyze the text's literary devices, e.g., characterization, imagery, irony, point of view, etc., as a means to dissect the literary work and as a foundation upon which to build their interpretations. After students have an in-depth knowledge of the text that includes the character's motives; way of being and thinking; the theme of the text; and the conflict in the text, they will write a script of their performance that makes clear the connections between the text, interpreter, topic, and audience. Students will also write a rationale that explicitly states and explains the connections between the text, interpreter, topic, and audience that the student made in their script. These assignments will lead up to the summative assessment where students will perform their oral interpretation script live in front of the class. In this performance, students will show mastery of a range of literary terms, the meanings embedded in authorial choice, public speaking skills, and the investigative process.

Resources

Print Resources

Kiger, Travis & Newman, Ganer. *Interpretation of Literature: Bringing Words to Life* (Wisconsin: The National Speech & Debate Association, 2013)

Internet Resources

National Speech and Debate Association, speechanddebate.org

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