

MIT HSSP

How to Question Everything and Argue with Everybody

Syllabus, Spring 2010

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Room: 1-273

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Description:

In this course, we will teach you how to think logically, spot mistakes, formulate opinions and change those opinions in the event of new information. This should allow you to rationally carry on (and win) a debate or argument about any issue while avoiding common fallacies.

This isn't your politician's debate course; sounding elitist and condescending is not only acceptable but it is encouraged!

Weekly Schedule:

April 17th –

- Introductions
- Icebreaker debate
- Review the syllabus
- Deductive reasoning in popular culture
- Guided debate
Are law enforcement cameras an invasion of privacy?

April 24th –

- Formulating arguments
- Choosing a side
- Deductive reasoning in popular culture
Famous presidential speeches
- Debate and discussion
Is global climate change man-made?

May 1st –

- Introduction to logic and logical fallacies
- Structured rebuttals
How to eliminate ambiguity by word choice and sentence structure
- Debate and discussion
Should animals be used for research?

May 8th –

- Classical rhetoric
- Rhetoric in popular culture
- Famous historical debates
- Debate and Discussion
Should cigarette smoking be banned?

May 15th –

- Topics to avoid
- How to lose
- SOMEONE IS WRONG ON THE INTERNET!
- Debate and discussion
Should English be the official language in the United States?

Recommended Reading:

Heinrichs, Jay. *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can*

Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion. New York: Three Rivers, 2007. Print.

Hirschman, Albert O. *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy*. Cambridge,

Mass.: Belknap of Harvard UP, 1991. Print.