



## COM 120: *Public Discourse*

Spring 2022: Section 4, Tuesday/Thursday, 10:30 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.  
BH 315

**Instructor:** Sarah Wolter

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:30 or by appt.

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**Office:** Beck Hall 365

**Office Phone:** 507-933-7365

### ***Course Description***

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The objective of this course is to provide students with an introduction to the principles of public discourse and civic engagement. The focus is on a practical background in recognizing, analyzing, and constructing arguments in the public sphere. Readings, class time, and assignments focus on the skills and concepts necessary for successful application of the principles of public discourse to an actual civic engagement project.

### ***Student Learning Outcomes***

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Student learning outcomes provide a foundation for instilling a capacity and passion for lifelong learning in every Gustavus student. The aim of *Public Discourse* is for students to gain knowledge, enhance and hone skills, and thoughtfully practice and consider their place in communities.

After completing *Public Discourse*, students fulfill the following course- and department-level student learning outcomes:

- A. Effectively create and present oral, written, and mediated communication. Effective communication is contextual and contributes to deliberative discourse by identifying issues, adapting to audiences, marshaling arguments and evidence, and employing appropriate presentation standards.
- B. Find and utilize relevant and reliable library and community-based evidence.
- C. Ethically engage in research, interactions with community members, and in presentations according to project guidelines: Community-based (local, collaborative, sustainable, appropriate), Deliberative (evidence-based), and Ethical (reflexive).
- D. Effectively engage in opportunities for positive social change.
- E. Articulate a plan for continued skill and content development based on accurate assessment of strengths and areas for growth.

Additionally, students in *Public Discourse* fulfill multiple Gustavus Liberal Arts Perspective (LAP) and Challenge Curriculum (CHAL) student learning outcomes:

#### **Overall LAP SLOs:**

- A. **Intellectual Capacities:** Students will demonstrate the ability to understand and communicate effectively across a variety of modes, including written, oral, visual, creative, and quantitative.
- B. **Cognitive Practice:** Students will thoughtfully analyze enduring and contemporary questions from multiple perspectives, will independently develop original and creative solutions to complex problems, and will support their reasoning while considering other possibilities.
- C. **Integration of Learning:** Students will synthesize and apply their broad and specialized knowledge, skills, and ways of knowing in varied contexts.
- D. **Ethical Reflection:** Students will critically contemplate the conflicting value choices of the ethically complex world in which we live, will articulate their own values, and will reflect on how these values shape their ethical decisions.

#### **LARS (LAP)**

- A. Students will identify conventions that situate a text within a literary or rhetorical genre.

- B. Students will describe the historical and cultural contexts in which texts are produced and received and explain the mutual influence between specific texts and contexts.
- C. Students will engage critically with literary or rhetorical discourses in a variety of ways, which may include close reading, critical interpretation, personal reflection, creative expression, formulating questions, and raising issues of meaning and value.

**WRITI (LAP)**

- A. Students choose effective rhetorical strategies shaped by their appreciation for the purpose, audience, and context for the writing task.
- B. Students use writing as a tool to explore ideas, assimilate new knowledge, and reflect on the purpose of their learning.
- C. Students use writing to evaluate texts critically, and to create arguments that communicate effectively with varied audiences, while acknowledging the limits of their own judgments.
- D. Students develop a flexible process for writing that includes self-reflection and strategies for responding to feedback, enabling them to draft, revise and polish written work effectively.

**Overall CHAL SLOs:**

- A. Students will be able to analyze enduring and contemporary questions or challenges from multiple disciplines, using qualitative and quantitative methods.
- B. Students will be able to use ethical and philosophical frameworks to evaluate their own and others’ responses to enduring and contemporary challenges.
- C. Students will be able to examine issues of cultural difference both locally and globally.
- D. Students will be able to communicate effectively in written, spoken, and creative expression with a variety of audiences.

**HUMN (CHAL)**

- A. Critically analyze a cultural product in its historical, intellectual, and/or cultural contexts.
- B. Discuss the ways that humanities disciplines raise broader questions of meaning and values.

**WRITL (CHAL)**

- A. Students distinguish and evaluate different forms of information and analyze the arguments that such information supports.
- B. Students use their own language to describe and analyze key concepts or course materials, and write to explore ideas, assimilate new knowledge, and reflect on the purpose of their learning.
- C. Students write arguments that make and support claims successfully for readers in multiple contexts.
- D. Students are able to draft, revise, and edit work with feedback from others.

**Required Texts**

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*Public Discourse Course Pack* – available through *The Book Mark*.

**Online Resources**

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*Moodle*

The course Moodle site is the main communications platform for this class and should be accessed several times a week. The Moodle site will detail each week’s topic, assignments, and in-class exercises.

*Google Docs*

Google Docs is the main platform for collaborating on small group work.

*Jamboard*

Jamboard is an online whiteboard collaboration tool for small groups.

## Assignments/Grading

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Participation (60 points)  
Problem Identification Proposal (10 points)  
Problem Analysis (50 points)  
Scholarship Presentation (35 points)  
Plan (60 points)  
Public Advocacy Presentation (35 points)  
Action Proposal (15 points)  
Action Step (20 points)  
Final Reflection (15 points)

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**Total points:** 300 points

Pay close attention to deadlines—there will be no make-up assignments or quizzes, or late work accepted without a serious and compelling reason and instructor approval. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested *before the due date*. Extensions will not be given after the due date except under extreme circumstances.

Points you receive for graded activities will be posted to the Moodle Grade Book. Click on the My Grades link on the left navigation to view your points.

Assignment guidelines for all assignments will be discussed and distributed in class.

## Grading scale

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Final grades assigned for this course will be based on the percentage of total points earned and are assigned as follows:

|           |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| A 93-100% | B+ 87-89% | C+ 77-79% | D+ 67-69% |
| A- 90-92% | B 83-86%  | C 73-76%  | D 60-66%  |
|           | B- 80-82% | C- 70-72% | F 0-59%   |

Students must receive a grade of C- or higher for the course to count toward completion of the Communication Studies major. Students need a grade of D or better for the course to count toward graduation credit requirements.

## Attendance

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Students are expected to attend all class sessions as listed on the course calendar, including online synchronous sessions. Students who are required to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 or as the result of a COVID contact trace are not required to inform the instructor of their reason for missing in-person classes but should contact the instructor via email giving the duration of their absence. These students will be provided with options that will allow them to be counted as participating remotely (e.g. watching lecturecapture videos of class and completing participation exercises on their own). Quarantined students who remain active and on track in an existing online class component (for example, Moodle activities) will be considered as “in attendance” (see participation policy for more information).

## Academic Accommodations

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Gustavus Adolphus College is committed to ensuring equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students. If you have a disability and anticipate or experience barriers to equal access, please speak with the accessibility resources staff about your needs. A disability may include mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, physical, and/or short-term conditions. When appropriate, staff will guide students and professors in making accommodations to ensure equal access. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively; therefore, to maximize your academic success at Gustavus, please contact them as early as possible. Accessibility resources staff are located in the Academic Support Center (<https://gustavus.edu/asc/accessibility/>) (x7227). Accessibility Resources Coordinator, Corrie Odland ([codland@gustavus.edu](mailto:codland@gustavus.edu)), can provide further information.

Gustavus Adolphus College is committed to ensuring equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students. If you have a non-disability-related academic concern related to COVID for which you are not already receiving assistance from the Academic Support Center, please contact the Provost's Office ([provostoffice@gustavus.edu](mailto:provostoffice@gustavus.edu)). When appropriate, the Provost's Office will help guide students and faculty in making any necessary academic adjustments.

### ***Multilingual Student Support***

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Some Gusties may have grown up speaking a language (or languages) other than English at home. If so, we refer to you as "multilingual." Your multilingual background is an incredible resource for you, and for our campus, but it can come with some challenges. You can find support through the Center for International and Cultural Education's (<https://gustavus.edu/cice/>) Multilingual and Intercultural Program Coordinator (MIPC), Pamela Pearson ([ppearson@gustavus.edu](mailto:ppearson@gustavus.edu)). Pamela can meet individually for tutoring in writing, consulting about specific assignments, and helping students connect with the College's support systems. If you want help with a specific task (for example, reading word problems on an exam quickly enough or revising grammar in essays), let your professor and Pamela know as soon as possible. In addition, the Writing Center (<https://gustavus.edu/writingcenter/>) offers tutoring from peers (some of whom are themselves multilingual) who can help you do your best writing.

### ***Research Assistance***

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Students can always get help with research at the library. Reference librarians will help find information on a topic, develop search strategies for papers and projects, search library catalogs and databases, and provide assistance at every step. Drop-ins and appointments are both welcome. Visit [https://gustavus.edu/library/reference\\_question.php](https://gustavus.edu/library/reference_question.php) for hours, location, and more information.

### ***Mental Wellbeing***

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The Gustavus community is committed to and cares about all students. Strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol or drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation may affect a student's academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. If you or someone you know expresses such mental health concerns or experiences a stressful event that can create barriers to learning, Gustavus services are available to assist you, and include online options. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential health services available on campus at <https://gustavus.edu/counseling/> and <https://gustavus.edu/deanofstudents/services/>.

### ***Ask for Help***

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If you have trouble with any aspect of the course, make sure you let me know as early as possible. By being proactive in reaching out for assistance, I can better help you identify strategies for success. If you have any questions about assignment values, attendance, or other course components that are part of course grades, please contact me before the close of the semester grading period.

### ***Academic Honesty***

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Gustavus Adolphus College is proud to operate under an honor system ([https://gustavus.edu/general\\_catalog/current/acainfo](https://gustavus.edu/general_catalog/current/acainfo)). The faculty and students have jointly created an Honor Board to enforce the Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Policy. Each faculty member is responsible for stating course penalties for academic honesty violations, and for defining the level of authorized aid appropriate to the work in their courses. Each faculty member is also required to report violations of the Academic Honesty Policy to the Provost's Office. It is your responsibility, as a student, to ask questions if you are not sure about situations such as when to cite a source, how to cite a source, sharing data with lab-mates, and avoiding inadvertent cheating when working in groups. It is also your responsibility to learn about the policy and the consequences for violations so please ask questions!

The overarching principle of the Academic Honesty Policy is that students shall submit their own work, in fairness to others and to self. I want you, a developing scholar, to be able to take pride in your own academic work and to maintain your academic integrity. Citations must accompany any use of another's words or ideas that are not common

knowledge. Quoting or paraphrasing from electronic sources without proper citation is as serious a violation as copying from a book or other printed source. A student may not submit work that is substantially the same in two courses without first gaining permission of both instructors if the courses are taken concurrently, or permission of the current instructor if the work has been submitted in a previous semester. Ask me if you have questions about a particular assignment or kind of work. Please make sure you fully understand the rules related to online work, as it pertains to this course. Unauthorized aid during online exams and assignments is every bit as serious and inappropriate as it would be in an in-person course. In fact, in the online environment it is sometimes easier for faculty to detect violations.

The sanction in this course for a violation of the Honor Code involving plagiarism, copying another student on an exam, or other kinds of cheating on a single assignment will usually be an “F” on the plagiarized assignment or exam. For a more significant event, I reserve the right to assign you a grade of “F” for the course. In addition, for any Honor Code violation, I will notify the Provost’s Office. A letter will be generated by the Provost’s Office and sent to you. The letter will remain on file. There will be no further consequence, beyond the course penalty and the letter, if you do not commit any further Honor Code violations. Repeat offenses could ultimately lead to dismissal from the College. You have the right to appeal any Honor Code violation through an Honor Board hearing process. In this course, I aim for you to learn how to cite sources properly, do your own work on all exams, and function as a scholar with integrity. Please feel welcome to ask questions about the important matter of Academic Honesty and let me know how I can best support your learning.

### ***Course Attendance***

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Students are expected to attend all class sessions as listed on the course calendar, including online synchronous sessions. Students who are required to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 or as the result of a SARS-CoV contact trace are not required to inform the instructor of their reason for missing in-person classes but should contact the instructor via email giving the duration of their absence. These students will be provided with options that will allow them to be counted as participating remotely. Quarantined students who remain active and on track in an existing online class component (for example, Moodle activities) will be considered as “in attendance” (see participation policy for how this activity will be recorded).

### ***Incomplete Policy***

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A grade of incomplete may be awarded at the discretion of the instructor, if requested by the student, under the following conditions: 1) the last day to withdraw has passed, 2) and unforeseen circumstances beyond the student’s control (usually restricted to illness or family emergency) preclude completion of the remaining work for the course by the semester deadline. Note that poor planning or having a lot of work to complete at the end of the term are not, in fairness to other students, considered circumstances beyond a student’s control. This additional time to complete coursework may not extend beyond the final day of the following semester, and earlier limits may be set at the discretion of the instructor.

The grade “I” for a particular student, along with an expiration date, is reported at the end of the term to the Office of the Registrar on a special form, which is signed by both the instructor and the department chair. A temporary grade will also be submitted, in the computation of which the instructor has considered work not completed as a zero or an F. If before the end of the expiration date, the instructor reports a final grade to the Registrar, that grade will be recorded and the grade point average will be computed accordingly. When the expiration date has passed without a grade being reported, the temporary grade will replace the “I” and become a permanent part of the transcript record.

### ***Title IX: Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Resources***

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Gustavus Adolphus College recognizes the dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, we are committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available; you can learn more online at <https://gustavus.edu/titleix/>.

Please know that if you choose to confide in me, I am required by the College to report to the Title IX Coordinator, because Gustavus and I want to be sure you are connected with all the support the College can offer. Although it is encouraged, you are not required to respond to outreach from the College if you do not want to. You may speak to someone confidentially by contacting the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART/CADA), Chaplains, Counseling Center, or Health Service staff; conversations with these individuals can be kept strictly confidential. SART/CADA can be reached 24 hours a day at 507-933-6868. You can also make a report yourself, including an anonymous report, through the form at <https://gustavus.edu/titleix/>.

### ***Copyright and Recording***

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Unless they have an approved academic accommodation that specifies recording, students must request in writing permission from the instructor to record (audio or video) any component of this class. Any recording that includes other students will require that the class be given a general notification by the instructor (for an accommodation or instructor recording) or that those present give consent (for regular Zoom or Google Meet video conversations, etc.). Your instructor will not identify any student who has an approved accommodation.

Recordings and videos of the class, as well as those produced as part of class instruction, are not to be posted or distributed in any format or on any platform without the written consent of the instructor. Posting any class recordings or materials (including excerpts and clips) to external sites or to social media will be considered a violation of this policy.

Some class materials may be copyrighted. Access to these materials is restricted to students registered for the class using a Gustavus password. These materials may not be reproduced, shared, or distributed by students, and are made available only to those currently enrolled in this class. If a tutor needs access to these materials in order to provide you with academic support, please ask your instructor for assistance.

### ***Communication***

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Email is an official means for communication at Gustavus Adolphus College. Use your Gustavus email for class-related communications for identity verification purposes. Submit all work using either your Gustavus email account or the class Moodle site. I expect that you will check your Gustavus email at least once every day.

The course Moodle site is the main communication platform for this class and should be accessed several times a week. A college-wide set of resources may be uploaded to each course's Moodle site that will help students learn about COVID-19 policies and procedures.

### ***Difficult Conversations***

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In this course, we will have opportunities to explore some challenging issues and increase our understandings of different perspectives. Our conversations, whether in person or virtual, may not always be easy. We will make mistakes in our speaking and our listening. When we post ideas or comments in an online format, we will need to pay close attention to word choice, and review what we have written carefully before we post. In video meetings or conversations, we will need to stay focused on the speaker and use the technology in a courteous manner (see Technology under "Netiquette" for some suggestions). We will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. Always, we will need respect for others. Thus, an important aim of our course will be for us to increase our abilities for constructively engaging in the sometimes-difficult conversations that arise as we deepen our understandings of multiple perspectives. More specifically, we seek to cultivate the ability to listen and respond constructively to the ideas of others as we endeavor to increase the ability to express your own. As your professor, please know that it is my goal to make every student in this class feel included and welcome while we learn.

You may find yourself uncomfortable or offended by views expressed in class – whether by the course texts, by me, and/or by your classmates. Phrases such as, "I know you did not mean to be offensive, but what you said bothers me

because..." are effective ways of noting your discomfort and asking the class to consider your objection. It can be challenging to speak up in such moments. Doing so treats others as well-intentioned participants in the classroom community. If you do not wish to address the interaction during class, please speak with me outside of class. If I offend you or cause you discomfort, I hope you will tell me. I commit to listening calmly, thoughtfully, and respectfully to you, and I promise to think carefully about your concern and my response.

You may find that your views offend or discomfit others. It can be difficult to hear that you have offended someone, but being able to respond calmly and constructively to criticism is an important skill for learning new things and for growing and developing. It is also an important skill for communicating across differences. An appropriate response to learning that you have caused offense or discomfort is, "Thank you for telling me." You may ask questions to learn more about what the other person thinks. If you are genuinely sorry, you may apologize. After you have heard the other person, you may decide to change how you think or talk. Or you may decide that you still think you are correct, but at least you will be aware that some people will take offense when you express that idea.

### ***Understand When You May Drop This Course***

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It is your responsibility to understand when you need to consider dropping/withdrawing from a course. Refer to the Gustavus Academic Catalog for dates and deadlines for registration.

[https://gustavus.edu/general\\_catalog/current/calendar](https://gustavus.edu/general_catalog/current/calendar)

### ***COVID Policies in the Classroom***

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All classrooms will follow the most up-to-date [COVID policy of the college](#) with regard to masking, social distance, food and beverage in the classroom, and sanitizing of technology and spaces. Individual faculty members may ask for additional COVID precautions at their discretion. The college strongly recommends surgical or N95 or KN95 masks.

If an unvaccinated individual has been exposed to COVID-19, they will become part of a contact trace. It does not matter whether the individual or the COVID-positive individual was wearing a mask. The Gustavus staff person will assist any individuals who may need to enter quarantine.

### ***Course Calendar***

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See Moodle for the most updated course calendar.

#### **Thursday, February 3**

*Topic:* Introduction to the course and to each other; goal setting; assessments

*Assignment due:* None

#### **Tuesday, February 8**

*Topic:* Rhetoric and civic life

*Assignment due:* Read Introduction, Chapter 1, complete Chapter 1 preparation questions (on Moodle)

#### **Thursday, February 10**

*Topic:* Deliberative rhetoric

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 2, visit/add to discussion forum with questions on the project (on Moodle), start researching ideas for projects

#### **Tuesday, February 15**

*Topic:* Project introduction speeches, overview of Problem Analysis assignment

*Assignment due:* Prepare a 1-2 minute speech that explains your project to your colleagues, Problem Identification Proposal

**Thursday, February 17**

*Topic:* Argument and evidence

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 3, complete chapter 3 preparation questions (on Moodle)

**Tuesday, February 22** – Meet in Library eClassroom

*Topic:* Research

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 4

**Thursday, February 24**

*Topic:* Reasoning

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 7

**Tuesday, March 1**

*Topic:* Problem Analysis work day

*Assignment due:* draft outline for Sarah to review

**Thursday, March 3** – Meet in groups on your own (no large class gathering – Sarah at International Association of Communication & Sport Conference in Philadelphia)

*Topic:* Peer review of Problem Analysis drafts

*Assignment due:* Draft of Problem Analysis

**Sunday, March 6, 11:59 p.m.** – No class meeting – submit Problem Analysis and Writing Reflection to Moodle

**Tuesday, March 8**

*Topic:* Audience and rhetorical situation

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 5

**Thursday, March 10**

*Topic:* Preparing for the Scholarship Presentation: Structure and delivery

*Assignment due:* Read chapters 6 and 12, complete chapter 12 preparation question (on Moodle)

**Tuesday, March 15**

*Topic:* Scholarship Presentations

*Assignment due:* Prepare for Scholarship Presentation – submit practice speech link and reflection on Moodle

**Thursday, March 17** – (No large class gathering – Sarah at Campus Compact Retreat in Swarthmore, PA)

*Topic:* Watch video explaining the Plan assignment

*Assignment due:* Start working on the Plan assignment

**Tuesday, March 22** – No class (spring break)

**Thursday, March 24** – No class (spring break)

**Tuesday, March 29**

*Topic:* Refutation

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 8, fill out the Scholarship Presentation self-evaluation (on Moodle)

**Thursday, March 31**

*Topic:* Plan workshop

*Assignment due:* Start working on your plan – have an idea ready to share

**Tuesday, April 5**

*Topic:* Plan workshop day

*Assignment due:* Start on Plan outline – focus on details

**Thursday, April 7**

*Topic:* Ethics, go over Action Proposal and Action

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 14

**Tuesday, April 12**

*Topic:* Plan peer review

*Assignment due:* Bring a complete outline of your Plan for peer review (not the Problem Analysis part)

**Thursday, April 14**

*Topic:* Individual meetings about Plans

*Assignment due:* Sign up for an individual meeting to talk about your Plan

**Tuesday, April 19**

*Topic:* Credibility, introduce Public Advocacy speech

*Assignment due:* Plan and Writing Reflection to Moodle

**Thursday, April 21**

*Topic:* Public Advocacy Presentation preparation

*Assignment due:* Read chapter 10, Advocacy Planning exercise

**Tuesday, April 26**

*Topic:* Public Advocacy Presentation workshop

*Assignment due:* Action Proposal

**Thursday, April 28**

*Topic:* Public Advocacy Presentations

*Assignment due:* Prepare for Public Advocacy Presentation – submit practice speech link and reflection on Moodle

**Tuesday, May 3**

*Topic:* Public Advocacy Presentations

*Assignment due:* Prepare for Public Advocacy Presentation – submit practice speech link and reflection on Moodle

**Thursday, May 5**

*Topic:* Free speech deliberation (1 hour)

*Assignment due:* Fill out the Public Advocacy Presentation self-evaluation (on Moodle), Read “Free Speech Issues Forum Guide”

**Tuesday, May 10**

*Topic:* Skill development reflection

*Assignment due:* None

**Thursday, May 12**

*Topic:* Final reflections on projects, the process of public inquiry and civic action; assessments

*Assignment due:* Action Step documentation, prepare for final reflection oral report (elements on Moodle)

**Monday, May 16, 10:30 a.m.** (no class meeting): Final reflection due to Moodle

\*\*Students enrolled in COM 120 are responsible for the information in this syllabus. Read it regularly throughout the semester. The contents of this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.\*\*