

Syllabus for Compare, Persuade, Debate

Course Name

Compare, Persuade, Debate

Academic Year

2024–2025

Instructor

William Walter

About the Syllabus

For the most part the class assignments will follow the syllabus, which is intended to give a general overview. However, specific assignments, which will be posted week to week on the online assignment page or given in class, may vary slightly from the syllabus. If the assignment page or class directions disagree with the syllabus, please follow the former.

Course Description

This course will be divided up into two semesters. The first semester course titled “Compare, Persuade, Debate” will be comprised of literature from different genres, time periods and countries, with an emphasis, however, on English and American literature. With the purpose of encouraging students to see the continuity of older literature with the new as well as to understand the “Zeitgeist” of particular periods despite cultural and language differences, the course will present plays, short stories, novels, essays, and poems that have obvious similarities. For example, Shakespeare’s works are heavily dependent on antecedents; for example, *Romeo and Juliet* is heavily reliant on a narrative poem written more than two decades earlier, titled, *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet* and borrows many elements from its predecessor, including plot, characters and even themes. The course will also compare movements such as the German Romantic and the English Romantic Movements and show that certain literary “trends” transcend culture and national boundaries. The student, however, will also be encouraged to take note of the differences between the works and draw conclusions regarding the significance of those differences (and similarities), such as culture, period, the author’s creative genius, etc. The year’s reading will include works by such authors as William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Voltaire, Friedrich Schiller, Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, Anton Chekhov, Nicolai Gogol, Herman Melville, Leo Tolstoy and others.

The second semester “Compare, Persuade, Debate” will cover logic, logical fallacies, polemical writing, speech-making and debate. Students will learn not only the format of the persuasive composition, but learn the art of persuasive speech-making and debate. Using various instructional works, such as Cicero’s *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, students will learn various rhetorical devices and methods when composing a polemical speech. At the end of the year, students will be paired for a formal debate on a particular controversial topic. Those students who took the course “Greek Influence on English History” would progress to this course, although last year’s course is not a prerequisite.

Literature

Students will read and study a wide variety of literature, including novels, plays, poems, essays and short stories. The specific works are mentioned in the syllabus.

Public Speaking

Students will learn how to write a persuasive speech and read examples as models. They will then write several persuasive speeches and deliver one in front of a large audience..

Reading Comprehension

Students will work on their reading comprehension skills with weekly oral questions given in class that test for detail as well as written multiple choice questions that test for inferences, technique, figures of speech, vocabulary in context, etc.

Essays Due

- There will be a total of seven formal compositions due in the school year, due every four weeks, which will include four comparison compositions and three persuasive compositions. There will also be one formal opening argument in a debate.
- There will be four in-class expository essays on a particular topic which students will develop using personal narrative, or references to history or literature. Students will have 35 minutes to respond to an idea expressed in a quotation by a famous author, teacher, statesman, scientist, philosopher, or theologian. The essays will be given in October, January, March, and May.

Week 1

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing themes and finding archetypes.* Works: Christina Rossetti’s “The First Day of Spring” and John Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”

- *Comparing themes and finding archetypes.* Works: William Cowper’s “The Nightingale” and Thomas Hardy’s “The Darkling Thrush”
- *Comparing themes and finding archetypes.* O’Henry’s “Gift of the Magi” and Boccaccio’s “Falcon”

COMPOSITION

- Draw three comparisons and one contrast between two of the works read. In four sentences write out the comparisons and contrast. Be able to explain the significance of the similarities as well as the one difference.

Week 2

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Themes.* Christina Rossetti’s “The First Spring Day” and Stevie Smith’s “Black March”
- *Comparing Themes.* Keats’ “To Autumn” and John Greenleaf Whittier’s “November”

COMPOSITION

- Draw three comparisons and one contrast between two of the works read. In four sentences write out the comparisons and contrast. Be able to explain the significance of the similarities as well as the difference.
- You will now write an outline for a composition comparing two works either from this or last week. Use the comparison composition outline sheet.

Week 3

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Themes.* (a moral tale about riches) Leo Tolstoy, *Death of Ivan Ilych* (first half) and the Parable of the Rich Fool

COMPOSITION

- Be able to state the thematic similarity between the parable of the Rich Fool and the first half of *Ivan Ilych*.
- Write the introduction to the comparison composition 1.

Week 4

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Themes.* (social satire) Leo Tolstoy, *Death of Ivan Ilych* and *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton (an excerpt)

COMPOSITION

- Complete your comparison composition, making sure that you use textual support for all of your statements.

Week 5

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Themes.* “The Overcoat” by Nikolai Gogol and *Bartleby, the Scrivener* by Herman Melville.

Week 6

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Themes.* “The Overcoat” by Nikolai Gogol and *Bartleby, the Scrivener* by Herman Melville.

Week 7

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Works of Same Period but of different Countries.* “Der Handschuh” by Friedrich Schiller and “Eve of St Agnes” by John Keats
- *Comparing Works of Same Period but of different Countries.* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Das Erlkönig” and John Keats’ “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”

Week 8

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Works of on the same topic.* “Im Wunderschönen Monat Mai” (In the Wonderful Month of May”) and “Ich Wollte, Meine Lieder” (“I Wish that All My Songs”) by Heinrich Heine and “My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose” by Robert Burns; “I Wish I

Could Remember That First Day” by Christina Rossetti; “Batter my Heart, Three-
Personed God” by John Donne; “I Loved You” by Alexander Pushkin

- Selected Sonnets by William Shakespeare; *Sonnets from the Portuguese* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

COMPOSITION

- Complete comparison composition 2, making sure that you use textual support for all of your statements.

Week 9

Compare

LITERATURE

Comparing Works on the Same Topic: “The Man He Killed” by Thomas Hardy; “Wer Weiss Wo: Schlacht bei Kolin” (“Who Kows Where: Battle of Kolin”) by Detlev von Liliencron; “Battle of Blenheim” by Robert Southey; “The General” Siegfried Sassoon.”The Soldier” by Rupert Brooke”

Week 10

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing Works on the Same Topic, continued: All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque (Edited) and the war poems already read.

Week 11

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Comparing technique*: “The Wreck” and “Two Friends” by Guy de Maupassant; “Mammon and the Archer” and “The Last Leaf” by O Henry

Week 12

Compare

LITERATURE

- Comparing works by the same author: William Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” and “Intimations Ode”

COMPOSITION

- Complete comparison composition 3, making sure that you use textual support for all of your statements.

Week 13

Compare

LITERATURE

- Comparing styles of writing and social concerns: excerpts from *Cecilia* by Fanny Burney and excerpts from *Emma* by Jane Austen.

Week 14

Compare

LITERATURE

- Comparing works by the same author: Katherine Mansfield's "A Garden Party" and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"

Week 15

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Influences*. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet*

Week 16

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Influences*. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet*

COMPOSITION

- Complete comparison composition 4, making sure that you use textual support for all of your statements.

Week 17

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Influences*. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet*

Week 18

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Influences*. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet*

Week 19

Compare

LITERATURE

- *Influences*. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet*.

COMPOSITION

- (Debate) Think of a topic that you would like to debate from the list of topics that I have given you. If you prefer to, you can choose a topic of your own, but you must submit your choice to me for approval.

Week 20

Persuade

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Logical fallacies in arguments.
 - * What is an argument?
 - * Brief discussion of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*: The fallacy of four terms, the fallacy of the undistributed middle, the fallacy of the major and minor term and affirmative conclusion from a negative premise. New terms: *equivocation, obversion, universal affirmative and universal negative, particular affirmative and particular negative, contrapositive, inversion, conversion, negation*.
 - * Formal and Informal Logical fallacies.
 - * Essays from *Happy Days were Here Again* by Conservative Commentator William F. Buckley

COMPOSITION

- Complete your persuasive essay 1 using narrative elements or anecdotal evidence. Follow the model of William F. Buckley.

Week 21

Persuade

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Formal Logical fallacies in arguments. Discussion of Formal Logical fallacies, such as non sequiturs, and base rate fallacy.
- Fighting the War on Drugs: two views: essays by William Bennet and Edward Bunker

COMPOSITION

- (Debate) Write an outline of your argument, giving reasons to support your position on the issue.

Week 22

Persuade

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Informal Logical fallacies, such as ad hominem, ad populum, appeal to authority, appeal to emotion, appeal to pity
- *Authenticity of the Bible: Two Views*. C. S. Lewis ("Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism") and an essay on Modern Theology.

COMPOSITION

- (Debate) The opening argument of the debate will be due.

Week 23

Debate

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Presentation of five additional informal logical fallacies.
- Watch the debate between Obama and Romney in the 2004 debate.

Week 24

Debate

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Presentation of five additional informal logical fallacies.

- Debate between writer and political commentator William F. Buckley and linguist/political commentator Noam Chomsky on the Vietnam War.

COMPOSITION

- Write persuasive essay 2, using empirical evidence and authorities. Use the Bennet essay as an example.

Week 25

Debate

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Presentation of five additional informal logical fallacies.
- Watch first thirty minutes of the debate between writer and political commentator William F. Buckley and linguist/political commentator Noam Chomsky on the Vietnam War.

Week 26

Debate

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Presentation of five additional informal logical fallacies.
- Watch formal religious debate between atheist Peter Atkins and Christian apologist William Lane Craig about creation. (The debate is divided into 12 segments. Watch the first 6 segments.)

Week 27

Debate

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- A comprehensive review of formal and informal fallacies
- Continue watching formal religious debate between atheist Peter Atkins and Christian apologist William Lane Craig about creation. (Watch the last 6 segments)

Week 28

Debate

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.

- Continue watching formal religious debate between atheist writer and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins and Christian apologist and Oxford mathematics professor John Lennox about creation. (Watch first 45 minutes)

COMPOSITION

- Write persuasive essay 3, using empirical evidence and authorities. Use the Bennet essay as an example..

Week 29

Debate

LITERATURE

- Discuss Cicero's *Ad Herenium*; learn five rhetorical devices.
- Continue watching formal religious debate between atheist writer and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins and Christian apologist and Oxford mathematics professor John Lennox about creation. (Watch remaining video)

COMPOSITION

- Student will debate in class.

Week 30

Debate

Students will prepare to a debate in class.

Week 31

Speech Night Preparation

Students will prepare for debate in class.

Week 32

TBA