

Debate Course Descriptions

Middle School

Public Speaking

6th Grade; Required Foundations

Half-Trimester (6 Weeks)

After completing this course, students will have a set of portable communication skills that they can use in a variety of experiences throughout the curriculum at Rowland Hall. The class will start by playing games and learning tips that will help reduce or eliminate communication apprehension (the fears associated with public speaking). Students will then learn about and practice structured impromptu and extemporaneous speeches with emphasis on verbal and nonverbal delivery skills (organization, projection, inflection, eye-contact, hand gestures, and more). Finally, students will build a foundation for effective argumentation and advocacy (claim/warrant/evidence) by developing one research-based persuasive speech on a class wide controversy. Because public speaking functions in a larger democratic context, the class will also consistently stress critical listening skills and an attitude of appreciative inquiry with diverse perspectives.

Debate

7th/8th Grade; Elective

Half-Trimester (Winter Only)

After completing this course, students will have a set of portable argumentation and advocacy skills that they can use in a variety of experiences throughout the curriculum at Rowland Hall. Students will initially learn about and practice structured extemporaneous speeches with emphasis on verbal and nonverbal delivery skills (organization, projection, inflection, eye-contact, hand gestures, and more). Students will then build a foundation for effective argumentation and advocacy (claim/warrant/evidence) by participating in “SPAR” debates and ultimately presenting one research-based persuasive speech on the official Utah debate resolution. Special emphasis will be placed on critical thinking and listening skills as well as argument resolution. This class is ultimately for students who want to explore debate in a non-competitive environment but may choose to participate in the debate team during the third trimester or later in their high school experience.

Competitive Debate

7th/8th Grade; Prerequisites Required

Full-Trimester (Spring Only)

After completing this course, students will be comfortable with all dimensions of competitive debate. Building on the foundation built in the “Public Speaking” or “Debate” course, this class will emphasize participation in formal debates (1-on-1 or with a partner) and will require attendance in at least one team tournament (there are 4-5 tournament opportunities during the season). This course will review the basics and introduce advanced forms of argumentation including topicality, counterplans, disadvantages, weighing mechanisms and frameworks. Students will primarily research both sides of the official Utah debate resolution, but will have opportunities near the end of the term to conduct in-class debates on a topic of their choice. In addition to practicing constructive, rebuttal, and cross-examination strategies, students will develop a variety of tactical skills including: evidence comparison, cost-benefit analysis, note-taking, audience adaptation and more. While debate is competitive in nature, students will never be graded on wins or losses and the class works collaboratively to create and prepare cases against other schools. Finally, this class satisfies the prerequisite requirement of taking “Intro to Debate” before competing for the Upper School team.

Debate Course Descriptions

Upper School

Intro to Debate

9th Grade; Elective

Full-Trimester (Fall Only)

Intro to Debate is a one-trimester beginning level course offered in the fall for students who are new to high school or have never debated before. This is a regular class that rotates throughout the schedule. After completing this course, students will have a set of portable argumentation and advocacy skills that they can use in a variety of experiences throughout the curriculum at Rowland Hall. Students will initially learn about and practice structured extemporaneous speeches with emphasis on verbal and nonverbal delivery skills (organization, projection, inflection, eye-contact, hand gestures, and more). Students will then build a foundation for effective argumentation and advocacy (claim/warrant/evidence) by participating in “SPAR” debates and ultimately presenting one research-based persuasive speech on the official debate resolution. This class is ultimately for students who want to explore debate and may choose to participate in the debate team (usually in a beginners division). The majority of students in this class are 9th graders, but any student who chooses to explore debate could enroll in the class.

Public Debate

9th – 12th Grade; Prerequisites Required

Two-Trimester (Fall & Winter)

Public Debate is a core class for students interested in participating in the debate program and is offered in the fall and winter trimester. This is a regular class that rotates throughout the schedule and students should re-enroll in this class every year they want to compete for the team. Students from any grade level may enroll in this class so long as they have completed Debate 1 or competed extensively Middle School. This class emphasizes “Public Forum” and traditional “Lincoln-Douglas” debate events as well as individual speaking events. From a competitive standpoint, students who take this class may want to succeed in debate while also pursuing other extracurricular activities (a more “balanced” approach). Debate II students will be eligible to compete at all local tournaments and 1-2 national travel trips.

Policy Debate

9th – 12th Grade; Prerequisites Required

Two-Trimester (Fall & Winter)

Policy Debate is the most advanced class offered for debaters and is for students who have prioritized debate above other activities (a more “all-in” approach). The class is held after school starting at 3:00pm and will usually go until 3:45. However, students will also be expected to attend extended practices once or twice a week which will last until 5:00 pm. Students from any grade level may enroll in this class so long as they have completed Debate 1 or competed extensively Middle School. This class will emphasize growth in the “Policy Debate” format and thus will be more rigorous and will require more independent research and practice. With that dedication comes additional opportunities. Debate III students will be eligible for all local tournament opportunities and a variety of national travel trips.

Independent Debate

11th – 12th Grade; Prerequisites Required

Two-Trimester (Fall & Winter)

Independent Debate is for students who want to participate in the program but don't have room in their school schedule. Students with varying experience levels and goals would meet with me to hear announcements, register for tournaments, and receive small amounts of coaching. Students would supplement this time with independent work. Students would apply for academic credit at the end of each trimester and would receive a grade if their level of participation warranted it.