SOCIAL ADVOCACY/ETHICAL LIFE 200
SOCIAL ADVOCACY AND ETHICAL LIFE

BULLETIN INFORMATION
SAEL 200: Social Advocacy and Ethical Life (3 credit hours)
Course Description:
Introduction to nature and relationship of ethics and oral forms of advocacy. Includes foundational training in ethical theory and its relevance to socio-political expression and training in the principles and performance of ethical oral communication, with emphasis on argumentation and audience engagement

SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW
Social Advocacy & Ethical Life is addressed to the nature and relationship of ethics and oral forms of expression in a variety of socio-political contexts. Students in the course will have an opportunity to critically investigate theories of ethics and principles of spoken advocacy, and to apply their inquiry in a cumulative series of exercises and performances. Both critical and practical, the work undertaken in this course offers a chance for students to: 1) question the meaning and importance of contemporary calls for civility, engaged citizenship, and deliberation; 2) investigate the roots, power, and limits of ethical discourse and its relevance to social and political decision-making; and 3) develop a working understanding of the principles of social advocacy and the ways in which oral communication constructs, supports, and remakes the grounds of ethical interaction.

ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon successful completion of SAEL 200, students will be able to:
1. Define the idea of social advocacy, identify distinct forms of oral advocacy, and demonstrate an understanding of the respective values and limits of such communicative practices in a variety of social, political, and cultural situations;
2. Define sources and functions of ethical reasoning and explain its importance in the development of individual and collective life, identify key ethical concepts and recognize the kinds of social and political issues that provoke ethical questions, and critically analyze and engage ethical controversies that shape personal and social norms of responsibility;
3. Understand, perform, and critically assess the ways in which social advocacy can invent, shape, and upset personal and collective ethical commitments and the ways in which ethical frameworks enable, promote, and guide advocacy;
4. Understand and explain the fundamental concepts and frameworks that enable social advocacy, including principles of argumentation, ethical forms of persuasion, theories of the rhetorical situation and audience interaction, and modes of listening;
5. Apply and demonstrate the basic concepts of ethical social advocacy through the performance of speeches that address a variety of ethical issues and which engage audiences with diverse and conflicting ethical commitments;
6. Critically assess the ethical responsibilities entailed in social advocacy and the conditions under which advocacy may be an ethical responsibility.

SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS
1. Course readings will be made available on the course website and through Blackboard

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAMS
In this course, we will engage in a variety of activities, including lecture, lecture-based discussion, group activities, student speeches, and critical evaluation of contemporary discourse. Over the semester, students in this course will be asked to undertake and complete the following assignments. Each assignment will be detailed in handouts and discussed in class.

1. Imagining Advocacy: For this assignment, each member of the course will develop, compose, and deliver a 3 ½ - 4 minute speech addressed to a social, political, and/or cultural problem that provokes their interest and for which they are willing to advocate. The speech will be developed around several specific questions: For what would you advocate? When? To whom? Why? At what risk? In these terms, the speech does not ask the students to fashion a specific case but to introduce, describe, and explain their interest in giving voice to a particular issue. It thus serves three goals: 1) the speech offers an opportunity for class members to introduce themselves to their primary audience for the semester; 2) the speech provides a basis for reflection and discussion about how individuals, groups and cultures identify, accept, and defend values; 3) the speech offers a working introduction to principles of informative speaking and the ways in which information may (not) be heard by diverse audiences.

2. Discovering an Issue: In this second speaking assignment, each member of the class will choose and research a significant social-political-public issue and then develop and deliver a 4 ½ - 5 minute speech addressed to the history, contours, and ethical importance of that issue. Building from the first speech, the goal of this assignment is not to defend a particular position but to provide an audience with a full and clear understanding of an issue’s roots, sides, and potential ethical significance. The assignment thus serves several goals: 1) it provides an opportunity to investigate the advocacy of a significant issue through the lens of one or more ethical theories; 2) the speech requires a careful investigation and articulation of the “sides” of an issue, the ways in which issues are composed of different if not competing opinions about what is good, valuable, or appropriate; 3) the speech lays the groundwork for the course’s concern for the motives of advocacy and the role of argumentation and audience analysis in its performance and evaluation.

3. Making a Case: This assignment asks each member of the class to develop and present a 5 ½ - 6 minutes speech that proceeds from a specific claim about an issue and which endeavors to generate interest from an audience. Working with the issues taken up in
the “discovering an issue” speech, the goal of this speech is to move from providing information about a problem to making a specific claim about the meaning, significance, and/or appropriate resolution of an ethical issue. In this respect, the speech may contend that one perspective about an issue is rooted in a stronger argument than its counterparts or that the issue’s different sides are limited and require a new approach. This work serves several goals: 1) the speech requires the application of argumentation theory, including the formulation and development of a claim that takes a position on the ethical significance of an issue; 2) the speech affords a working understanding of the rhetorical situation, an opportunity to invite an audience to listen critically and to present a case that engages the interests of those with different views of the issue under consideration; 3) the speech provides the chance to reflect critically on the specific ethical choices and dilemmas entailed in addressing an issue about which people disagree.

4. **Debating for Judgment:** The aim of the assignment is to undertake a debate over a single issue or problem and to do so in a manner that invites an audience to undertake deliberation and judgment about the merits and implications of the question under consideration. This is a collaborative exercise in which class members will work in pairs. Each debate will consist of a ten (10) minute performance. The goal of the debate is not to “win” but to collaborate in a manner that enables the ethical practice of deliberation. To this end, partners will work together to develop and compose speeches that provide contrasting and clashing views about the meaning, significance and basis for deliberation over a particular ethical issue. This effort affords an opportunity to: 1) consider the different sides of the issue, specifically with an eye to how they form a controversy and how we might begin to understand the connections between the arguments that compose the controversy; 2) apply principles of ethical clash and consider how the process of clash can create space to define the meaning and significance of values; 3) open a moment of deliberation in which speakers and audiences reflect on and perhaps revise their own ethical and moral commitments.

5. **Reasoning about an Ethical Issue:** Each student in the course will develop and compose a five (5) page paper addressed to an ethically significant social, political, or cultural issue. Working from a clear and directed thesis, the paper should 1) detail the issue in question, 2) explain its ethical significance in light of one or more appropriate ethical theories, and 3) draw from relevant ethical theories in order to build a case for how the issue can be productively addressed or resolved. The issue addressed in the paper will be the same as that for Speaking Assignment #3 – Making a Case. The paper is due on the day this speech is delivered.

6. **Addressing Ethical Controversy:** Each student in the course will develop and compose an eight (8) page paper that investigates specific ways in which ethical claims provoke opposition and how this opposition can be productively addressed. This paper will first involve a substantial revision of paper #1 (Reasoning about an Ethical Issue) based on instructor feedback and course readings. In addition, the paper will 1) detail two significant objections to the position defended in the paper, 2) identify how these
objections are rooted in specific forms of ethical thought, and 3) draw from specific ethical theories to develop replies to these objections. The paper is worth 100 points. It is due on the last day of class.

7. **Critical Speech Analysis:** Each student in the course will write one critical analysis of a speech given by another member of the class. This paper will be addressed to the ethical assumptions, claims, and implications of a particular speech, with specific attention paid to the types of ethical-moral reasoning that are employed in the speech and how such reasoning might be heard by a diverse audience. The paper is worth 50 points and can be written only for the “Discovering an Issue” and “Making a Case” speeches. Papers are due one week after the last speech for each speaking assignment is delivered.

**SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS**

Specific reading assignments and questions for subsequent course meetings will be distributed at the beginning of each lecture. It is up to each member of the course to keep current with any changes in the schedule. Reading assignments are given by date and should be completed prior to that day’s class.

**Week 1/ Beginning Questions**

An introduction to the course, including readings and exercises that shed light on its rationale, focus, and scope.

At issue: contemporary fault lines and controversies that circle the problem of what it means to live a good life – individually and in relation with others – and the ways in which ethical-political disputes and violence rest on, underwrite, and complicate human expression; introduction to the concepts and intellectual traditions that support critical and practical inquiry into communicative interaction and ethics.

**Class 1:** Speaking of values - Why are we here?

1. Course Introduction
2. Lecture and discussion: Contemporary issues that raise questions about the status, meaning, practice, and connection of ethics and advocacy, including civic engagement and literacy; culture wars; civility; the terms of secular and religious life; evil; public and political life – participation, expertise, deliberation; networked culture and society; marketability and productivity – “communication skills” and “responsibility.”
3. Video and discussion: Judith Butler @ Occupy NYC, Peter Schiff @ Occupy NYC

**Class 2:** What questions are we going to ask? How are we going to answer them? Or, thinking through three contested words – Philosophy, Rhetoric, Politics

1. Lecture and discussion: Introductory reflection on how contemporary controversies rest on difficult definitional questions: What are values? What is morality? What is advocacy? Rhetoric? What are the public and/or
common activities that constitute the theoretical and practical connections between advocacy and ethics? Politics? How are questions about ethics, advocacy, and politics rooted in fields of inquiry that are historically suspect, i.e. why are philosophy, rhetoric, and politics important and troublesome? What is the value of thinking through the connections of words, values, and acts? How is this both a theoretical and practical question? What do the learning outcomes of this course mean? What do they say about the relationships between morals and ideology, persuasion and manipulation, and productive norms and stifling normality?

2. Reading: Selections from the introductory chapters of basic textbooks in Political Science, Ethics, and Rhetoric
   a. Lucas, Dahl and Stinebrickner, and Shafer-Landau, introduction
   b. Text/Artifact: Selection from AACU, A Crucible Moment

Week 2/ Questions of Beginning, Or being there before you have arrived
An introduction to the contested histories and functions of ethics, politics, and advocacy as they pertain to the calling and obligations of higher education.
At issue: Is this a course that inculcates specific ethical systems or political ideologies or promotes specific kinds of speaking? If not, what are the assumptions of the course and where do they come from? What are the prior if not unspoken commitments of this course and how do these commitments inform and complicate its aims and work? These questions point to the discourses that surround and underwrite the course, a set of assumptions about the need for training in ethics and advocacy. An investigation of these discourses – in antiquity and the present moment – offers an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the interest of this course has been ‘pre-defined’ and how such visions both constrain and open spaces in which individuals can ask whether and how they wish to cultivate a commitment to expression and the ways in which this commitment draws from and composes the grounds of ethical and political action and interaction. Such work affords an introduction to the question of where values come from and the ways in which they can be engaged, questioned, and advocated.

Class 3: The relationship between ethics, advocacy and socio-political life – a difficult inheritance
1. Lecture and discussion: What is the fundamental or constitutive importance of advocacy and ethics in societies, cultures and political systems? How is this importance expressed – historically and in the terms of contemporary life? What is the nature and value of language, speech, and advocacy? What are the grounds and force of ethics? How are advocacy and ethics related and separated? Which comes first? Why? How do these questions blur the difference between theoretical, practical, and performative inquiry?
2. Reading: United States Declaration of Independence; United States Constitution

Class 4: Is there a vocation in this class? Understanding the discourse of advocacy an
ethics
1. Lecture and discussion: A concern to derive the questions about advocacy and ethics arise from a consideration of “founding” texts. How do these texts, and our ways of thinking about them, shed light on contemporary controversies over the nature and value of liberal arts education, including the ethical/ideological agenda of the modern American university, the need to provide students with citizenship training and incentives for communicative engagement, and debates over the practical value (and value for money) of liberal arts-based inquiry? How does this course open lines of inquiry that will be relevant over time in respect to your major, your career, and your life? How does it seek to enable choices about when, how, and where to take up ethical questions and opportunities for advocacy?
2. Reading: James B. White, Althusser, and Michael Roth
3. Discussion of “Imagining Advocacy” assignment

**Week 3/ Imagining Advocacy’s Value(s)**

The first speaking assignment, “Imagining Advocacy,” in which each member of the course develops, composes, and delivers a 3 ½ - 4 minute speech addressed to a social, political, and/or cultural problem that provokes their interest and for which they are willing to advocate. The speech will be developed around several specific questions: For what would you advocate? When? To whom? Why? At what risk? In these terms, the speech does not ask the students to fashion a specific case but to introduce, describe, and explain their interest to give voice to a particular issue. It thus serves three goals: 1) the speech offers students an opportunity to introduce themselves to their primary audience for the semester; 2) the speech provides a basis for reflection and discussion over how individuals, groups and cultures identify, subscribe, and defend values; 3) the speech introduces students to principles of informative speaking and the ways in which information may (not) be heard by diverse audiences.

**Class 5:** Delivery of speeches and discussion

1. Reading: Zarefsky

**Class 6:** Delivery of speeches and discussion

2. Reading: Havel

**Week 4/ Defining, Discerning, and Expressing Values – Why and how do we come to care?**

Directed readings and discussion regarding the ways in which values are defined, explained, enacted, and contested.

At issue: a critical introduction to the systematic study of ethics, with particular attention paid to the emergence and significance of ethics, that is, questions that provoke ethical inquiry and controversy, the justifications and potential force of ethical commitments, and the ways in which ethical stances take shape within, support, and follow from communicative interaction. Discussion will be guided partly by the questions raised by student speeches presented in week 3.
Class 7: The sites, beginnings, and expression of values
1. Lecture and discussion: Are values created or discovered? How do values emerge in various contexts? What provokes ethical questions? How are they explained, codified, disseminated, contested, and revised? What is an ethical relation? How is the work of relationship-formation embedded in the work of language?
2. Readings: Plato, Smith, and Gadamer
3. Text/Artifact: Have

Class 8: The terrain of ethical life
1. Lecture and discussion: What are values, norms, and ethics? What are the justifications for their study? What are the subjects and objects of normative interest? What are the constitutive features of an ethical system? Is ethics a discourse? Is there a difference between ethics and morality?
2. Readings: Rachels, Singer
3. Text/Artifact: Selection from Nicomachean Ethics

Week 5/ For what do we care? Values about which we (don’t) argue.
Directed readings and discussion addressed to core social, political and cultural values. At issue: critical investigation of concepts that focus ethical theory and advocacy, including the ways in which ethics shape expression and how advocacy contributes to the invention of socio-political life. Questions that will focus discussion include: What are the conceptual pillars of ethics? What do key ethical concepts mean? How do they develop within and give rise to discourses that invite and shape human action and interaction?

Class 9: Freedom
1. Lecture and discussion: On the nature, meaning, and struggle for freedom.
2. Reading: Mill
3. Text/artifact: Mandela

Class 10: Equality
1. Lecture and discussion: The nature, significance and measure of equality.
2. Reading: Sen, Vonnegut, Harrison Bergeron
3. Text/artifact: Mary Church Terrell

Week 6/ For what do we care (II)
Directed readings and discussion addressed to core social, political and cultural values. At issue: critical investigation of concepts that focus ethical theory and advocacy, including the ways in which ethics shape expression and how advocacy contributes to the invention of ethical life. Questions that will focus discussion include: What are the conceptual pillars of ethics? What do key ethical concepts mean? How do they develop within and give rise to discourses that invite and shape human action and interaction?
Class 11: Happiness
1. Reading: Nozick, Schopenhauer, Gilbert
2. Text/artifact: “Love in 2-D”

Class 12: Justice
1. Reading: Plato, Rawls
2. Text/artifact: M.L. King

Week 7/ For what do we care (III)
Directed readings and discussion addressed to core social, political and cultural values. At issue: critical investigation of concepts that focus ethical theory and advocacy, including the ways in which ethics shape expression and how advocacy contributes to the invention of ethical life. Questions that will focus discussion include: What are the conceptual pillars of ethics? What do key ethical concepts mean? How do they develop within and give rise to discourses that invite and shape human action and interaction?

Class 13: Beauty
1. Readings: Sontag, Barthes, Klee
2. Text/artifact: Miss Teen South Carolina
3. Discussion of “Discovering an Issue” assignment

Class 14: The open question of ethical life and its terms
1. Readings: Marx, Frankfurt, Foucault
2. Text/artifact: Kafka, Stephen Colbert

Week 8/ Discovering an Issue
The course’s second speaking assignment, Discovering an Issue, in which students choose and research a social-political-public issue and then develop and deliver a speech addressed to the history, contours, and ethical significance of that issue. Building from their first speech, this assignment does not ask students to defend a particular position but to provide an audience with a full and clear understanding of an issue’s roots, sides, and potential importance; that is, the ways and terms through which it has emerged through advocacy. The assignment thus serves several goals: 1) it provides an opportunity to investigate the advocacy of a significant issue through the lens of one or more ethical theories; 2) the speech requires a careful investigation and articulation of the “sides” of an issue, the ways in which issues are composed of different if not competing opinions about what is good, valuable, or appropriate; 3) the speech lays the groundwork for the course’s concern for the motives of advocacy and the role of argumentation and audience analysis in its performance and evaluation.

Class 15: Discovering an issue: delivery of speeches and discussion
1. Reading: Zarefsky
Class 16: Discovering an issue: delivery of speeches and discussion
2. Reading: Breton

Week 9/ Advocating Norms and Values
A critical investigation into the nature of advocacy and its roots in argumentation theory and practice
At issue: An examination of the concept of advocacy and its basic relationship to the question of what it means to be human. Discussion and readings will focus on how advocacy shapes the terms of individual being and collective interaction, along with the question of how advocacy depends heavily on the formation of arguments and the practice of argumentation.

Class 17: The necessity of advocacy
1. Lecture and discussion: What does advocacy mean? What is the historical and conceptual relationship between advocacy and the human condition? How does the idea and practice of advocacy illumine and respond to the world’s contingency and the presence of others? How does this work open and make a place for individual and collective life?
2. Reading: Arendt, Blumenberg,
3. Text/Artifact: Lourde

Class 18: The elements and burdens of advocacy (argumentation theory I)
1. Lecture and discussion: How does advocacy depend on and develop through arguments? What is the difference between an argument and argumentation? What are the formal elements of an argument?
2. Reading: Toulmin, Brockreide and Ehninger,
3. Text/Artifact: Mbeki

Week 10/ Performing Ethical Advocacy
Directed readings and discussion about the elements of arguments, along with the dynamics, rules and limits of argumentation
At issue: A further engagement with argument theory, including inference-making and fallacies

Class 19: Argumentation theory (II)
1. Lecture and discussion: What is the connection between an argument’s claim and its evidence? What is a warrant and how does it guide the work of inference? How does inference disclose the values on which advocacy rests?
2. Reading: Klumpp, Goodnight
3. Text/Artifact: Powell

Class 20: Negotiated Logics
1. Lecture and discussion: What are the ‘rules’ that guide the formation and expression of arguments? Why are these rules important? What are their limits?
3. Text/Artifact: Lincoln

**Week 11/ The Difficult Value of Speaking About the Terms of Ethical Life**

Historical and critical accounts of the freedom of expression and the ways in which this freedom takes form through the constraints of audience and situation

At issue: The freedom of expression is a fundamental constitutional and human right, one that sets significant faith in the power of advocacy to shape opinion, relations, and the terms of public life. Readings and discussions will focus on the conceptual assumptions of “free speech” and its limits, particularly with respect to the ways in which advocacy is addressed, the way in which it is offered to a variety of audiences and situations that may constrain what can be heard and understood.

Class 21: The difficult freedom of expression
1. Lecture and discussion: What are the conceptual and historical roots of “free speech”? What are interests, aims, and limits of the freedom of expression? How is the right to expression tied to ethical visions of individual and collective life? What remains unspeakable? Why?
2. Reading: Haiman, Fish, Waldron
3. Text/Artifact: selection from USSC in re Citizens United

Class 22: Making a scene
1. Lecture and discussion: How does the advocacy open between a right to expression and the power of an audience? What is an audience? What are the constraints and opportunities afforded by different types of audiences? What does it mean to be heard? To listen? How does apathy, distraction, and antipathy disrupt advocacy?
2. Reading: Bitzer, Nancy, Thaler and Sunstein
3. Text/Artifact: selection from USSC in re Westboro Baptist Church
4. Discussion of “Making a Case” Assignment

**Week 12/ Confronting Controversy and Inventing Principled Dis/Agreement**

The nature, dynamics and value of disagreement and the ways in which advocacy provokes ethical questions about the constructive possibilities and resolution of conflict.

The course’s third speaking performance - Making a Case, in which students develop and present a speech that proceeds from a specific claim about an issue and which endeavors to generate interest from an audience. Working with the same issue that they addressed in their second speech, students will move from providing information about a problem to making a specific claim about the meaning, significance, or appropriate resolution of an ethical issue. In this respect, students may contend that one side of an issue has the better argument or that the
issue’s given terms require mediation, perhaps with a new perspective. This work serves several goals: 1) the speech requires the application of argumentation theory, including the formulation and development of a claim that takes a position on the ethical significance of an issue; 2) the speech affords students with a working understanding of the rhetorical situation, an opportunity to invite an audience to listen critically and to present a case that engages the interests of those with different views of the issue under consideration; 3) the speech provides students with the chance to reflect critically on the specific ethical choices and dilemmas entailed in addressing an issue about which people disagree.

Class 23: Recognizing disagreement
1. Readings and discussion: How does advocacy address, resolve and create controversy? How does controversy both constrain and expand the ethical demands of advocacy? What is the value of engaging with contrary positions and risking something of one’s own view?
2. Reading: Goodnight, Butler

Class 24: Making a Case – Delivery and discussion of speeches

Week 13/ Can’t We Just All Get Along?
Continuation of third speaking assignment and introduction to principles of ethical clash and rebuttal
At issue: the third speaking assignment raises question about the inevitability of disagreement and how advocates approach and attempt to resolve controversy. Readings will provide a critical and practical view of the skills needed to undertake engagement that entails clash between positions and which may hinge on the possibility of direct rebuttal.

Class 25: Making a case – delivery and discussion of speeches

Class 26: (Dis)passionate clash
1. Reading and discussion: What happens in the midst of deep and extended disagreement? What does it mean to clash with an opposing view? Are their better and worse ways of undertaking clash and rebuttal? In the heat of the moment, what role does emotion play in ethical advocacy?
2. Reading: Allen, Sunstein, Gross
3. Text/Artifact: Stanton
4. Discussion of “Debating for Judgment” assignment

Week 14: Making words (that) do (good) things
A critical introduction to speech act theory and theories of deliberative judgment.
At issue: with words, human beings perform deeds, not least the work of judgment in the midst of contingent and controversial issues. Through readings that draw from
contemporary speech act theory, discussion will be focused on the precise ways in which advocacy constitutes action and how the performative dimensions of speech underwrite deliberations oriented to reaching collective judgment about matters of common concern.

Class 27: Is Speech Action?
1. Reading and discussion: What does speech do? How? What does it mean to say that speech is a form of human action? What types of action does speech perform? To what end? At what cost?
2. Reading: Austin, Searle
3. Text/Artifact: Encomium of Helen

Class 28: Deliberating and Judging
1. Reading and discussion: How does advocacy open spaces for judgment? How does it invite and support collective deliberation? What are the dynamics, forms, and ends and risks of such interaction?
2. Reading: Aristotle, Gaskil, Rawls
3. Text/Artifact: Excerpt from Presidential campaign debate

Week 15/ The Experience of Language’s Calling
Critical reflection on the ways in which human beings are thrown into and called toward a language that defies full control, along with discussion of how the resulting uncertainty discloses the ethical potential of advocacy
Performance and discussion of the fourth speaking assignment – Debating for Judgment. The aim of the assignment is to undertake a debate over a single issue or problem and to do so in a manner that invites an audience to undertake deliberation and judgment about the merits and implications of the question under consideration. This is a collaborative exercise in which class members will work in pairs. Each debate will consist of a ten (10) minute performance. The goal of the debate is not to “win” but to collaborate in a manner that enables the ethical practice of deliberation. To this end, partners will work together to develop and compose speeches that provide contrasting and clashing views about the meaning, significance and basis for deliberation over a particular ethical issue. This effort affords an opportunity to: 1) consider the different sides of the issue, specifically with an eye to how they form a controversy and how we might begin to understand the connections between the arguments that compose the controversy; 2) apply principles of ethical clash and consider how the process of clash can create space to define the meaning and significance of values; 3) open a moment of deliberation in which speakers and audiences reflect on and perhaps revise their own ethical and moral commitments.

Class 29: The virtue of suffering language
1. Reading: John in New Testament, Heidegger, Benjamin
2. Text/Artifact: Video, Paul Muldoon at the United Nations
Class 30: Debating for Judgment - Delivery and discussion of speeches

**Week 16/ Judging Words**

Class 31: Debating for Judgment - delivery and discussion of speeches

Class 32: Debating for Judgment - delivery and discussion of speeches