

Justin W. Kirk

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Director of Debate
Associate Professor of Practice
Communication Studies Department
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Appointments

2024-present	Associate Professor of Practice and Director of Debate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
2019-2024	Assistant Professor of Practice and Director of Debate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
2018-2019	Lecturer and Director of Debate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
2017-2018	Visiting Instructor of Communication and Assistant Director of Debate, Pepperdine University
2017	Visiting Lecturer, Chemeketa Community College

Education

2018	Ph.D. – Communication Studies, University of Kansas Dissertation and Comprehensive Exam Defense Honors Dissertation Title: Barack Obama’s Mass Shooting Eulogies: Tucson, Newtown, and Charleston as moral guideposts for a nation in crisis Committee: Robert C. Rowland (advisor), Donn W. Parson, Beth Innocenti, Frank Farmer, Brett Bricker
2013	M.A. – Communication Studies, University of Kansas
2007	M.A. – History of Ideas, University of Texas-Dallas
2004	B.A. – Government and Politics, University of Texas-Dallas

Individual Awards and Recognition

August 2023	Mortar Board Professor of the Month – University of Nebraska-Lincoln
April 2023	Bruce Kendall Faculty Award – Department of Communication Studies, UNL
March 2023	2023 Coach of the Year – Lincoln Douglas Coaches Association
November 2020	Finalist – Top Paper Panel – Argumentation and Forensics Division, NCA
April 2019	Finalist – Top Paper Panel – Argumentation and Forensics Division, CSCA
November 2017	Finalist – Top Student Paper Panel – Argumentation and Forensics Division, NCA
May 2016	Wil Linkugel Departmental Research Award – Communication Studies, Kansas Kim Giffin Departmental Research Award – Communication Studies, Kansas William A. Conboy Outstanding Graduate Student Award – Communication Studies, Kansas
November 2015	Finalist – Top Student Paper Panel – Argumentation and Forensics Division, NCA

Debate Team – Accomplishments

2024	<p>4th Place – Debate Team Sweepstakes 18 National tournament qualifications 1 debater tied for 3rd place (Semifinalist) 1 debater tied for 5th place (Quarterfinalist) 5 debaters tied for 17th place (Double-Octafinalists) 327-248 Team win/loss record (62.3%)</p>
2023	<p>National Champion – Debate Team Sweepstakes Individual National Champion – Debate (Nicholas Wallenburg) Top All American Debater of the Year (Nicholas Wallenburg) 15 National tournament qualifications 2 Top-10 Speakers 2 Debaters tied for 9th place (Octafinalists) 4 Debaters tied for 17th place (Double-Octafinalists) 298-244 Team win/loss record (54.78%)</p>
2022	<p>National Champion – Debate Team Sweepstakes 10 National tournament qualifications 2 Top-10 Speakers 1 Debater tied for 3rd place (Semifinalist) 1 Debater tied for 5th place (Quarterfinalist) 2 Debaters tied for 9th place (Octafinalists) 2 Debaters tied for 17th place (Double-Octafinalists) 219-195 Team win/loss record (52.90%)</p>
2021	<p>2nd place – Debate Team Sweepstakes 10 National tournament qualifications 2 Debaters tied for 5th place (Quarterfinalists) 2 Debaters tied for 17th place (Double-Octafinalists) 1 Debater tied for 3rd place – Novice Division (Semifinalist) 248-221 Team win/loss record (52.88%)</p>
2020	<p>Nationals Cancelled due to COVID-19 10 National tournament qualifications 237-152 Team win/loss record (60.31%)</p>
2019	<p>4th place Debate Team Sweepstakes 8 National tournament qualifications 1 Debater tied for 3rd place (Semifinalist) 2 Debaters tied for 17th place (Double-Octafinalists) Individual National Champion – Novice Debate (Nicholas McConnell) 176-155 Team win/loss record (53.17%)</p>

Debate Team – Media Recognition

Nebraska Today. (19 April 2023). Back-to-back: Husker Debate takes second national title.

<https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/back-to-back-husker-debate-takes-second-national-title/>.

D'Agostino, A. (19 April 2023). UNL speech and debate team wins second straight national title. *KLKN-TV*,

<https://www.klknv.com/unl-speech-and-debate-team-wins-second-straight-national-title/>.

Duncan, A. (20 April 2022). Huskers bring home national championship in debate. *Nebraska Today*, 4-20-2022,

<https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/huskers-bring-home-national-championship-in-debate/>.

Kamrowski, L. (20 April 2022). 'Unbelievably special': UNL Speech and Debate Team wins national championship. *KMTV 3*

News Now Omaha, <https://www.3newsnow.com/news/local-news/unbelievably-special-unl-speech-and-debate-team-wins-national-championship>.

Omaha World Herald. (20 April 2022). UNL debate team wins national championship. https://omaha.com/news/state-and-regional/unl-debate-team-wins-national-championship/article_737fc15a-c0b5-11ec-bf55-936c3913b0c0.html.

Omaha World Herald. (20 April 2022). UNL debate team wins national championship. https://omaha.com/news/state-and-regional/unl-debate-team-wins-national-championship/article_737fc15a-c0b5-11ec-bf55-936c3913b0c0.html.

Bernt, S. (19 April 2022). UNL debate team wins first-ever national championship. *1011 NOW*,

<https://www.1011now.com/2022/04/20/unl-debate-team-wins-first-ever-national-championship/>.

Gayman, D. (21 February 2022). Huskers participate in global debate experience. *Nebraska Today*,

<https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/huskers-participate-in-global-debate-experience/>.

Dykstra, T. (21 November 2019). "UNL Speech and Debate Team works to improve individually and as a whole. *Daily*

Nebraskan, https://www.dailynebraskan.com/news/unl-speech-and-debate-team-works-to-improve-individually-and-as-a-whole/article_55ca810a-0c02-11ea-9905-5735fef6471c.html.

Debate Team – Expert and Guest Appearances

Youtube. (2023-2024). *Debate Sensei NFA LD Season 1 and 2*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GL1vmOSivyE>.

Lampman, B. (2022). UNL communications professor says democracy needs empathy. *Nebraska News Service*, September 15,

2022. <https://nebraskanewsservice.net/stories-covering-elections-voting-rights-politics-civic-engagement/unl-communications-professor-says-democracy-needs-empathy/>.

Meyer, M. (2020). Local experts weigh in on outcome of first Presidential debate. *KLKN Lincoln*. September 30, 2020.

<https://www.klknv.com/local-experts-weigh-in-on-outcome-of-first-presidential-debate/>.

Debate Team – Online International Debates

Gayman, D. (2022). Huskers participate in global debate experience. *Nebraska Today*. February 21, 2022.

<https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/huskers-participate-in-global-debate-experience/>

Link - <https://www.youtube.com/live/b336Hb8drqU?si=qVD5RWiVSQG5y0Wk>

British Tour 2021 – Hosted by the Committee for International Dialogue and Debate, National Communication Association -

<https://youtu.be/rKI2Xsjl1VU?si=wLPoUvnCSunhkcsG>

Courses Taught at UNL

COMM 400	Rhetorical Theory	2 Semesters	Lecture and discussion format. Survey of theories and grounded theoretical approaches to rhetoric. Writing focus. Term paper. Most recently taught Fall 2024.
COMM 333	Rhetoric of the American Presidency	3 Semesters	Lecture and discussion format. Survey of the American Presidency through the lens of rhetorical methods. Survey of rhetorical approaches to the presidency. Writing focus. Term paper. Most recently taught Fall 2024.
COMM 202	Research Methods in Rhetorical Criticism	5 Semesters	Lecture and discussion format. Survey of methods specific to rhetorical criticism in communication studies. Writing focus. Term paper. Most recently taught Spring 2025.
COMM 312	Argumentation	1 Semester	Lecture and discussion format. Survey of argumentation theories and practices, classical and contemporary. Discussion and praxis focus. Semester long project and paper. Most recently taught Spring 2023.
COMM 212	Debate	3 Semesters	Faculty director for 212. Discussion and practicum format. Small groups and teams. Focused on the study of debate research and practices for novice and amateur debaters at the collegiate level. Practicum focus. Evaluated in class debates. Most recently taught Fall 2021.
COMM 898	Special Topics: The Rhetorical Presidency	1 Semester	Graduate seminar. Survey of developments of rhetorical presidency theory and the presidency within the field of rhetoric. Discussion focus. Class paper. Most recently taught Spring 2021.
COMM 209	Public Speaking	7 Semesters	Faculty director for 209. Practicum and discussion format. Focus on the practices of public speaking using communication and rhetorical theory. Practicum focused. In-class speeches. Most recently taught Spring 2025.
COMM 220	Public Advocacy and Civic Engagement	4 Semesters	Small group and discussion format. Focus on small groups working to apply communication and rhetorical theories to the practices of advocacy and civic life. Practicum and group focused. Group project. Most recently taught Spring 2022.

Service

Committee Memberships – National Organizations

February 2025	Tabulation Staff – Judge Placement	Texas Open Debate Tournament
April 2022 – Present	National tournament staff	National Forensic Association
November 2021 – 2023	District 3 Representative	Cross Examination Debate Association
November 2021 – 2022	Secretary/Treasurer	Argumentation and Forensics Division
		National Communication Association
May 2021 – 2024	National Council Member	National Forensic Association
May 2021 – 2024	Lincoln Douglas Committee Chair	National Forensic Association
May 2020 – 2021	Lincoln Douglas Committee Member	National Forensic Association
November 2019 – 2020	By-Laws Committee Member	Argumentation and Forensics Division
		National Communication Association

Invited Lectures – College and University

August 9 and 13, 2024	Peer Mentor and First-Year Arts and Sciences Students	Leadership and college life lecture to the Emerging Leaders group and all First-Year college scholarship students
August 9, 2023	Public Speaking for Peer Mentors	Emerging Leaders and First Husker peer mentor group
August 11, 2022	Public Speaking for Peer Mentors	Emerging Leaders and First Husker peer mentor group
September 21, 2021	Civil discussion in the classroom	Teaching Assistant Training Office of Graduate Studies
August 11, 2021	Public Speaking for Peer Mentors	Emerging Leaders and First Husker peer mentor group
September 29, 2020	Public Speaking for Peer Mentors	Emerging Leaders and First Husker peer mentor group

Invited Lectures – Community

October 2024	Nebraska Debate Conference	Co-Director and Keynote Speaker
October 2023	Nebraska Debate Conference	Artificial Intelligence and Debate: Debating in College
October 2022	Nebraska Debate Conference	Topic Lecture – Varsity
		Debating in College
		Ethics and Evidence Use in Debate

Committee Memberships – University

December 2018 – 2019	Member	Academic Credentialing in Science Communication Committee
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Committee Memberships – Communication Studies Department

August 2019 – Present	Member	Undergraduate Committee
September 2022 – 2023	Member	Awards Committee
September 2020 – 2021	Member	Faculty Grievance Committee

Peer Reviewer

May 2023 – Present	Political Science Quarterly	
February 2023 – Present	Rowman & Littlefield Publishing	
April 2023 – Present	National Forensic Journal	National Forensic Association
February 2021 – Present	Argumentation and Advocacy	
May 2018 – Present	Western Journal of Communication	
April 2018 – Present	Argumentation and Forensics Division	National Communication Association
April 2018 – Present	Public Address Division	National Communication Association

Publications

Book Chapters

- Rowland, R. C., Kirk, J. W., & Eisenstaedt, M. (2022). Public Address in a Time of Crisis. In J. A. Kuypers (Ed.) *Public Communication in the Time of COVID-19: Perspectives from the Communication Discipline on the Pandemic*, Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Kirk, J. W. (2021). Local Symbols as Grounds for Policy Change in Mass Shooting Eulogies. In D. Hample (Ed.) *Local Theories of Argument*, Routledge.
- Kirk, J. W. (2018). Mitt Romney at Hofstra: Surface Arguments and Substantive Failure. In E. Hinck (Ed.) *Televised Presidential Debates in a Changing Media Environment, Volume 1*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 185-202.

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

- Kirk, J. W. (2016). Mitt Romney in Denver: “Obamacare” as ideological enthymeme. *Journal of Argumentation in Context*, 5, 227-248.

Other publications

- Kirk, J.W. (2024). Book review: *The World is our Stage: The Global Rhetorical Presidency and the Cold War*, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, doi: 10.1093/psquar/qqad143.
- Kirk, J. W. (2018). Barack Obama’s Mass Shooting Eulogies: Tucson, Newtown, and Charleston as moral guideposts for a nation in crisis (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession No. 10813762)
- Kirk, J. W. (2015). Mitt Romney and Ideological Enthymeme in Denver: ‘Obamacare’ and its Functions. In Garssen, B.J., Godden, D., Mitchell, G. & Snoeck Henkemans, A. F. (Eds.). *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation*. Amsterdam: Sic Sat, 679-689.
- Kirk, J. W. (2013). Ideology and Argument: Mitt Romney and the GOP in the 2012 Election (Master’s Thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession No. 1545702)

Recent Presentations

- Form and Feeling in the Wierdo Swarm. National Communication Association. November 2024.
- Debate and its Transformative Potential for Students. Keynote address at the Nebraska Debate Conference. October 2024.
- Debate at the University of Nebraska. Colloquium, Communication Studies Department. December 6, 2023.
- Debating in College. Nebraska Debate Conference. October 2023. Marion High School.
- Artificial Intelligence and Debate: From practice to research. October 2023. Marion High School.
- Using Evidence and Research in an Ethical Manner. Nebraska Debate Conference. October 2022. Marion High School.
- Debating in College. Nebraska Debate Conference. October 2022. Marion High School.
- NATO Cooperation: Varsity Topic Lecture. Nebraska Debate Conference. October 2022. Marion High School.
- A Proposed Extension of the Time Format for NFA-LD Debate. Top Paper Panel, Argumentation and Forensics Division. National Communication Association, Indianapolis, November 19-22, 2020.
- Obama argues for peace at Hiroshima. 6th Tokyo Conference on Argumentation, August 2020, Chiba, Japan.
- Obama in Charleston: Eulogistic jeremiad and the limits of persuasive appeals. National Communication Association, Baltimore, November 14-17, 2019.
- Local Symbols as Grounds for Policy Change in Mass Shooting Eulogies. Alta Argumentation Conference, Alta, Utah, August 1-4, 2019.
- Newtown and Obama's Deliberative Eulogy: The limits of rhetoric in a context of extreme polarization. Top Paper Panel, Argumentation and Forensics Division. Central States Communication Association, Omaha, April 2019.
- Barack Obama and Eulogy: value affirmation as argument for gun control. Department Colloquium, February 6, 2019.
- Value affirmation as argument: President Obama's major gun violence eulogies. 9th International Society for the Study of Argumentation Conference, Amsterdam, July 3-6, 2018.
- Tucson: Obama's first significant mass shooting eulogy. Southwestern Communication Association Conference, Phoenix, AZ, April 7, 2018.
- Logically Incomplete but Persuasive Appeals to Ideology in the Second Presidential Debate of 2012. Top Student Papers Panel in Argumentation and Forensics. National Communication Association, Dallas, November 16-19, 2017.
- Lessons from the early years of debate at UT-Dallas. National Communication Association, Dallas, November 16-19, 2017.
- Argument Hacking: How Artificial Intelligence undermines Argumentative Certainty. Alta Argumentation Conference, Alta, Utah, July 20-23, 2017.
- Argumentation as Life. What is Life? Conference, Portland, Oregon, April 6-8, 2017.
- Cincinnatus in the Making - George Washington is Eulogized. Rhetoric Society of America, Atlanta, May 26-29, 2016.
- Mitt Romney in Early Primary Debates: The Argument from Authority. Top Student Papers Panel in Argumentation and Forensics, National Communication Association, Las Vegas, November 19-22, 2015.
- John Neal and Zarathustra: A Burkean Interlude. Central States Communication Association, Madison, April 15-19, 2015.

Washington's Farewell: Dissonant Definition and Foreign Policy. Central States Communication Association, Madison, April 15-19, 2015.

The Fourth Persona and Rhetorical Hermeneutics: V for Vendetta, Lana Wachowski, and Transgender Identity. National Communication Association, Chicago, November 20-23, 2014.

Oslo 1994: Framing Conflict as Opportunity for Cooperation. National Communication Association, Chicago, November 20-23, 2014.

Mitt Romney and ideological enthymeme in Denver: 'Obamacare' and its functions. International Society for the Study of Argumentation, Amsterdam, July 1-4, 2014.