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Hello Coaches, Competitors, and Judges!

Welcome to the 7th season of the OATS (Online Asynchronous Tournament Series). Last year over 90 teams competed at the six regular season tournaments (on average about 50 teams per tournament), and we look forward to seeing so many of our friends again this season.

The OATS financial situation continues to be strong, so we are happy to announce that we are able to maintain the tournament series fee to \$200 for the 26-27 season. We will maintain a \$10/uncovered slot fee, and we will continue the fee waivers for student-run teams or those experiencing financial hardship. Look for a financial report from the 2025-2026 season on the Outspoken Culture website.

We will use multiple communication tools throughout the season. Outspoken Culture will continue using is an accounting software called Zoho Books. You will receive receipts through Zoho Books, so you may need to check your junk email box to locate receipts for payments. You can also expect emails to coaches and judges on Monday evening as well as additional email and social media communication throughout each tournament week.

The dates for video submission for the OATS include:

Mon, Oct 5	Mon, Oct 26	Mon, Nov 16	Mon, Dec 7	Mon, Jan 25	Mon, Feb 22
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Forensics is still in a period of growth and change following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. One way we can purposefully create more equitable spaces is through research at tournaments. We invite you to submit research proposals to the tournament staff to gather data from participants. Please see the research invitation policy on the [Outspoken Culture website](#) if you are interested.

We look forward to continuing to support student advocacy, accessibility, and health/wellness this 26-27 Season. Full information is available on the OATS Invite (available on Speechwire and the [Outspoken Culture website](#)). If you have questions feel free to contact Julie Walker by phone (call or text 706-844-2773) or email (julie.walker@smsu.edu).

Sincerely,

Julie Walker
Executive Director, Outspoken Culture
OATS Director

TL:DR Details

- ≡ Tournaments will be fully asynchronous, including finals
- ≡ Entries and video links are due to Speechwire on **Monday @ 7 p.m. CST**
- ≡ Content warnings are encouraged to give adequate warning to judges/competitors
- ≡ We encourage coaches to enter accommodation notifications in the Content Warning/Topics area
- ≡ Preliminary rounds will be judged from Tuesday through Thursday @ 4 p.m. CST; Final rounds will be judged from Thursday 6 p.m. through Friday @ 2 p.m. CST; **an official alternative schedule for Semifinals is posted and will be used as needed**
- ≡ Postings will go live on Thursdays at 6 p.m. CST (or ASAP depending on ballot completion)
- ≡ All 11 categories will be offered per [ASC/OATS guidelines](#)
- ≡ LP Category students will only be required to submit one video entry
- ≡ **Extemp category entries will have four question options focused on various levels of Bloom's Taxonomy**
- ≡ The **\$200 Series Fee** pays for all "covered-slot" entries for **all** OATS tournaments*
- ≡ Uncovered slots will incur an additional \$10 fee
- ≡ Payments accepted by Venmo, PayPal, Zelle, or by check
- ≡ The dates for video submission for the OATS include:
- ≡ Those interested in conducting research at the OATS should look at the Outspoken Culture website for more information
- ≡ **Any use of AI in the judging process is strictly prohibited**

Mon, Oct 5	Mon, Oct 26	Mon, Nov 16	Mon, Dec 7	Mon, Jan 25	Mon, Feb 22
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*Outstanding bills from the 25-26 OATS/ASC tournaments will prevent participation in the 26-27 season until the bills are paid.

Fully Asynchronous Tournament Week Schedule (Finals Only)

Wed. prior @ noon CST:	LP Prompts released on Speechwire
Monday @ 7 p.m. CST:	Entries and videos due to Speechwire
Monday @ 9 p.m. CST:	Fees will be assessed and distributed to teams
Monday @ 9 p.m. CST:	Judge dance cards go live on Speechwire
Thursday @ 4 p.m. CST:	Preliminary Round judging feedback/scores due
Thursday @ 6 p.m. CST:	Final Rounds are Posted on Speechwire and on the OATS Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/groups/oatsforensics
Friday @ 2 p.m. CST:	Final Round judging feedback/scores due
Friday @ 4 p.m. CST:	Live awards ceremony stream on OATS Facebook page
Friday @ Evening:	Feedback released to coaches via Speechwire

Fully Asynchronous Tournament Week Schedule (Semifinals and Finals based on Number of Entries)

Wed. prior @ noon CST:	LP Prompts released on Speechwire
Monday @ 7 p.m. CST:	Entries and videos due to Speechwire
Monday @ 9 p.m. CST:	Fees will be assessed and distributed to teams
Monday @ 9 p.m. CST:	Judge dance cards go live on Speechwire
Thursday @ 4 p.m. CST:	Preliminary Round judging feedback/scores due
Thursday @ 6 p.m. CST:	Semifinals and Final Rounds are Posted on Speechwire and on the OATS Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/groups/oatsforensics
Friday @ 9 a.m. CST:	Semifinal Round judging feedback/scores due
Friday @ 10 a.m. CST:	Remaining Final Round ballots released, posted on Speechwire and Facebook
Friday @ 2 p.m. CST:	Final Round judging feedback/scores due
Friday @ 4 p.m. CST:	Live awards ceremony stream on OATS Facebook page
Friday @ Evening:	Feedback released to coaches via Speechwire

Entries and Links Due to Speechwire by Monday of Tournament Week @ 7 p.m. CST

OATS tournaments will be hosted exclusively on Speechwire. All entries must be submitted by 7 p.m. CST on Monday of the tournament week. Fees will be assessed by 9 p.m. CST that evening. The entry must include the video for the student competing in the event, including both required videos for LP competitors.

In the occurrence where videos are not viewable by 8 p.m. CST on Monday evening, the tournament may grant an emergency extension until 8 a.m. CST the following morning. If the video is not viewable by that time, the slot will be dropped (fees will remain as assessed the previous day).

Novice Competitors

Teams are encouraged to denote novices when registering for the tournament. For the purposes of the OATS, novice competitors include students who have not competed in intercollegiate speech competitions prior to the current speech season.

Video Submission

We require all video submission links be put forward through some sort of streaming platform like YouTube. Set the video to “unlisted” for the duration of the tournament. Following judging, we want students to have control over the visibility of the performances, so students may turn the videos to “private” or delete the videos from the platform after the awards ceremony on Friday.

We ask that each submitted performance video recording has not been entered into a previous asynchronous tournament. We believe teams will act honorably and submit a fresh, unique performance video made exclusively for that tournament. **If unique circumstances are involved, please contact the tournament staff.**

Content Warnings

To continue work done regionally and nationally, we will continue providing a space to input content warnings for pieces. If a student’s performance includes sensitive topic areas they anticipate may be triggering for audience members or judges, we ask you to enter those topics into the content warning space on Speechwire at the time you submit your entries AND in the video description of the recording itself (e.g., in the title, video description). Students do not have access to the same information judges have, so adding the content warning to the video itself means while students view final round video links, they will have access to the content warnings.

Integrity Pledge

One of the biggest things we miss from asynchronous tournaments is students watching other performances. OATS tournaments will allow individuals to watch final round videos after signing an Integrity Pledge. The Integrity Pledge declares that the individual watching the video will act in an ethical manner. After signing the Pledge, individuals will receive video links to the final rounds when finals are posted. A link to the Integrity Pledge will be posted on Speechwire and sent to coaches. A new Pledge must be signed for each tournament.

Judge Integrity Pledge

Coaches and students value high-quality feedback. Therefore, we request all judges complete the Judge Integrity Pledge prior to completing judging responsibilities for the tournament. The Judge Integrity Pledge must be signed once during the OATS season.

Judging

Judges will complete preliminary round evaluations from Tuesday morning through 4 p.m. CST Thursday. Judges will complete final round evaluations from 6 p.m. CST Thursday through 2 p.m. CST Friday. All ballots and scores must be completed by the deadlines, or schools will be charged a dropped/no show judge fee. Each event will be reviewed by at least three (3) judges (in accordance with AFA qualification bylaws).

Any use of AI in the judging process is strictly prohibited. If the tournament staff feels there is sufficient evidence, the offending judge will be banned from the current and all future OATS, ASC, and Outspoken Culture-hosted tournaments. If tournament staff determines AI was used in the judging process during the tournament, a \$50 dropped judge fee will be assessed to the team.

Dropped Judge Fee

The dropped/no show judge fee is \$50. No drop fees will be assigned to judges utilizing the open door policy.

Single Team Affiliation

Unless there is an extreme circumstance, judges will not be allowed to judge for more than one team at a tournament. Judges are also not allowed to judge on behalf of a team AND to serve as a hired judge for the tournament. While the asynchronous tournament mechanism allows for this to happen, will not permit this to occur without an outstanding reason.

Hired Judging Staff for OATS Tournaments

OATS tournament hosts will provide judges for the tournament. Judges for OATS tournament will consist primarily of forensic alums and friends of the program. If a notable percentage of judges originate from an unexpected origin (e.g., a large contingent of graduate teaching assistants with limited speech experience), the tournament staff will alert participating teams. Individuals interested in serving as a hired judge for the OATS should contact tournament staff.

Late Adds and Drops

No slot adds will be allowed after the event registration closes. Considering the asynchronous format, we don't anticipate any drops or changes for Individual events, as the complete video will be uploaded with the slot registration by Monday at 7:00 p.m. CST (including LP).

Costs and Payment Options*

\$200 Series Entry (paid 1 time)	1 judge covers 6 slots	\$10 per uncovered entry slot
\$50 per dropped judge	Payments accepted through Venmo, PayPal, or by check	
Venmo: @outspokenculture PayPal: outspokenculture@gmail.com		Check: Outspoken Culture Attn: Julie Walker 609 South 1st Street Marshall, MN 56258

***If you have outstanding fees from a previous season, you must pay these outstanding fees before you can register for the 26-27 season.**

Student Run teams or teams facing financial difficulties should email the tournament director to discuss waiving fees for the season.

11 Categories Offered

11 categories will be offered using [ASC/OATS guidelines for competition](#). Videos must not be edited to enhance visual or audio quality for a competitive advantage; videos must be one take without "special effects". Audiences may be present during the filming of performances.

Limited Preparation

Prompts for LP will be posted on Speechwire at noon CST on the Friday before the tournament entry deadline. For instance, if entries to a tournament are due Monday, October 26, the LP Prompts will be released Wednesday, October 21 at noon CST.

Recording Videos

Students will submit one video. This change reflects the larger community trends in required LP video submissions for asynchronous entries. Impromptu prompts will be quotations from marginalized groups. Extemp competitors will receive 4 potential questions; each question will be written based on Bloom's Taxonomy, so the student will attempt to 1) Explain, 2) Analyze, 3) Recommend, or 4) Predict.

Preparation Time

We trust all students and coaches to adhere to Limited Prep guidelines and ethical competition choices for preparation. Extemp prep does not need to be included in the performance video. However, please include prep time in Impromptu videos (this can make starting the video camera easier for students, and assessing time allocation possible for judging).

Video Recording Errors

While uncommon, occasionally a student's recorded video for an LP category faces technical difficulty (e.g., sound doesn't work, video cuts off halfway through, etc). Unlike in other categories where a student could re-record the performance, that option is not available for LP students as re-recording the same speech negate the educational value of the genre. If such a technical difficulty occurs, please contact the tournament staff immediately. The student will be provided an opportunity to record with a different prompt provided by the tournament. While this is not the ideal situation, we wish to focus on the student's educational opportunities.

Tournament Awards

OATS will livestream awards ceremony on the OATS Facebook page at 4 p.m. CST on Friday of tournament week: <https://www.facebook.com/OATSforensics> Sweeps awards are earned using the following point system:

Prelim Sweeps Points		Finals Sweeps Points	
1 st Place: 3 points	*non-advancing semi-finalists will earn 2 points	1 st Place: 10 points	4 th Place: 4 points
2 nd Place: 2 points		2 nd Place: 8 points	5 th Place: 3 points
3 rd Place: 1 point		3 rd Place: 6 points	6 th Place: 2 points

*An OATS tournament will go to semi-finals is in the event when a category exceeds 50 entries.

The awards ceremony will honor

- ≡ The top non-advancing novice in each category (where applicable)
- ≡ Final round competitors
- ≡ Top 5 competitors in individual sweeps
- ≡ Top 5 teams in team sweeps

Name Pronunciation

Being called by your correctly pronounced name creates an inclusive, welcoming, respectful space. To aid judges and awards readers, please provide student name pronunciation through Speechwire.

Accessibility

Nationally, the forensic community (students, coaches, and judges) have called for safer tournaments where student and judge wellness is built into the tournament structures. At OATS tournaments, we hope to provide more accessible spaces, even in the online format.

Entering Accommodations in Speechwire

OATS staff are grateful for the open and clear communication coaches have with us regarding accommodation notifications for students. While we do share these notifications with judges, we wish to further increase communication clarity with judges as they fill out ballots. To that end, we invite coaches to enter student accommodation notifications in the CW section (or the "topics") section during registration. This will ensure judges receive the accommodation notification directly at the time of judging the round.

This is a new practice at the OATS, so please feel free to share feedback with tab staff on ways we can continue to improve accessibility.

Open Door Policy

OATS tournament staff acknowledge the art of performance may be a healing process and/or an opportunity to speak on important, personal topics. As a performer, it is impossible to know all the ways in which content or a performance may unintentionally harm or trigger members of your audience. To better serve the wellness of the forensic community, we will be using an open door practice for this tournament.

Judges will be evaluating potentially triggering performances within their home spaces. This means we need to take even more steps to protect their well-being. We strongly urge teams to include content warnings, and if a judge feels concerned about the triggering nature of performances in the assigned round, tournament staff will adjust the judging requirements.

Student-Run Team Hosting Fundraiser Opportunity

Student-run teams face different challenges than teams with coaches and staff. One major issue can be finding and maintaining funding. In an effort to support these students, OATS is offering a chance to co-host tournaments as a \$500 fundraiser for student-run teams. Please see the Outspoken Culture website for more details: <https://www.outspokenculture.org/oats/student-run-team-fundraiser>

Research at the OATS

Researchers wishing to conduct data collection at an OATS tournament should contact tournaments staff. More information is available at <https://www.outspokenculture.org/oats/research-at-oats-and-asc>