Advanced English: Rhetoric, Communication & Truth

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This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 and C2 levels. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to present and discuss the best of rhetoric in English and to inspire students to take ownership of the ancient techniques it showcases. The course also helps students to communicate clearly, accurately, and - when necessary - innovatively, overcoming misinformation in a post-truth world.

Course Description

In an era of fake news and troubled democracies, a good knowledge of the art of rhetoric has never been more useful.

We will learn from the professionals. For example, we will see how contemporary political figures like Barack Obama have employed - to great effect - a rhetorical toolkit that goes all the way back to Ancient Greece. We will study some of the finest rhetoric that the English language has to offer, ranging from Shakespeare to Churchill, and from John F. Kennedy to Martin Luther King. We will also study and apply ideas from a range of authors from Aristotle to Orwell, learning both about the timeless principles of clear and effective communication and the pitfalls of trying to pin down and communicate the truth.

The teacher has first-hand experience of rhetoric as a journalist, copyeditor and speechwriter.

Organisation

Activities will cover the four language skills:

- Speaking: active participation in the rich class discussions that often arise in this course will help determine your grade. Students will also perform a short speech of their own.
- Writing: students will compose a speech promoting a cause or idea they care about. Other tasks will include writing an essay and composing a set of original metaphors.
- Listening: the teacher proposes an active approach to studying key speeches, challenging students to listen out for key content for subsequent discussion, and to sum up a speech in a simple headline. Students will also learn to appreciate the techniques that successful orators use to deliver their speeches.
• Reading: students will study key texts including George Orwell’s seminal essay 'Politics and the English Language'. We will also read and discuss important extracts from a range of authors and study the rhetorical gems of Shakespeare, notably from the play Julius Caesar.