Advanced English: Oral Skills and Debating Theme-based Language Course

Stephane Ravera

Academic year 2019-2020 - Language Department - Spring semester.

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

This is a 12-week course that uses debating as a way of deepening understanding and use of the English language. The course is meant for students of the C1 and C2 levels of the CEFR.

It has three main purposes:
- Introducing students to various forms of debating.
- Helping students develop public speaking fluency and accuracy as well as various oratorical skills.
- Widening students' knowledge and appreciation of complex, multifaceted issues.

Ultimately, the course aims to enable students to join a debating society or take part in a conference.

Course Description

In the first six weeks of the class, students will be introduced to the adversarial debating practice. Using graduated exercises and debate simulations, they will develop their public speaking and interactive communication skills, learn how to argue their points convincingly, cooperate in a debating team and interact efficiently in an adversarial context.

In the next six weeks, students will be introduced to various forms of multi-sided debating in various fields – society, politics and diplomacy. Emphasis will be laid on debating as a cooperative rather than an adversarial venture. Through style exercises about viewpoint, students will develop role-playing techniques in order to position themselves in relation to each other. Exercises will include impersonating a side in a conference.

In this course, students will tackle complex issues for which thorough research and preparation are essential.

Organization

Activities will cover the five language activities:
- Spoken production.
- Spoken interaction.
• Writing.
• Listening.
• Reading.

While the debating practice will focus on speaking (including delivery, enunciation and expressive intonation), the preparation and research will include reading (press articles and speeches but also fiction excerpts), listening (videos of debates, news programs and documentaries), and even some writing (notes, essay, article).