Advanced English: Reading Popular Culture - James Bond, a Flourishing Icon of a Declining Empire

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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

British Secret Service Agent James Bond 007, the creation of the novelist Ian Fleming, has been waving the Union Jack over the last six decades, first in novels, then in cinemas and eventually everywhere. But what has happened to “Queen and Country” since then? Isn’t there an obvious discrepancy between the fictitious representation of the kingdom and a less glittery reality? What does the future hold for 007 in Brexit Britain?

This 12-week course examines the franchise in all its forms as a means of improving student understanding and use of English.

The course has three main objectives:
• Exploring the film franchise.
• Facilitating analysis of cinematic, fiction and non-fiction texts.
• Expanding appreciation of James Bond films through detailed analysis of screenplay writing.

Course description

Classes will focus on the worldwide fame of the ongoing James Bond phenomenon, which will be approached for its artistic, literary and mostly cultural values. In the first weeks, students will be introduced to critical tools which will serve throughout the semester. Together we will read extracts from Ian Fleming novels as well as watch extracts from the films. The course will converge on the latest instalment of the Bond film franchise, No Time To Die, and will be organised along a series of headings, which include the following:
• Marketing, cinema, and the place of 007 in collective imagination.
• Gender, class, and ethnicity.
• Popular culture and escapism.
• History, politics, and anachronisms.
• Spy fiction, spy cinema and spy drama.
This course is designed to encourage all students to explore the world of Ian Fleming’s character through exercises and oral presentations defined at the beginning of the semester. For instance, two students will be asked to read one of the twelve Bond novels, and then lead the in-class discussion on the subject and involve all the students under the guidance of the teacher. Preparation will therefore require watching films, reading assigned novels, film reviews and academic papers. The students will be given three assignments which will range from essay, review, text analysis and creating a short spy film screenplay or scene.

Organisation

This course is, first and foremost, intended as a language course. In other words, students will be expected to improve the five skills of communication (writing, speaking, listening, writing and interacting). We will endeavour to make it as lively as possible and possibly share the fun of reading and watching the adventures of the one M calls “a sexist misogynist dinosaur, a relic of the Cold War.”