



OXFORD ADVANCED PRE-SESSIONAL COURSE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Rhetoric

Course Content

Today, with political institutions increasingly closely connected to media organisations, studying the ancient art of persuasion has become more important than ever.

This course aims to teach students about the art of persuasion and the skills employed by the orator; this will be achieved both through the examination of the mechanics of rhetoric and by studying examples of celebrated speeches throughout history.

The course begins by examining the classical schools of rhetoric, particularly in Athens around the time of Plato and Aristotle. Focusing on Plato's critique of the Sophists and Aristotle's detailed analysis of rhetoric, the tone and arrangement of speeches from this time provides a good foundation for the other parts of the course. Students will also spend a good deal of time studying the key elements of persuasive language and rhetorical ornamentation.

Moving into the modern era, the course then examines philosophical reasoning, argumentation and its impact upon renowned political speeches from the time of Cranmer's execution in Oxford through into the 21st century.

By examining the works of philosophers such as Hume, Mill and Nietzsche, students will get to appreciate the links between philosophy, politics and communication.

Week 1: The nature of rhetoric and the three species of classical speech

Week 2: The five parts of Classical speech and Gorgias' 'Encomium of Helen'

Week 3: Plato vs. the Sophists: spin doctors in the ancient world

Week 4: Cicero: master of rhetoric

Week 5: Philosophical reasoning and rhetoric

Week 6: Political rhetoric from Reformation to revolution

Week 7: Reason, polemic and war

Week 8: Rhetoric in a post-factual world



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Course Objectives

- To familiarise students with the nature of rhetoric and develop an appreciation of persuasive language and its impact upon speech making.
- Through the analysis of philosophical thought and political speeches, students will have the opportunity to gain valuable insight into the significance of the art of rhetoric and its importance to politics, philosophy and communication studies.
- To enable students develop a keen appreciation of how effective persuasion is as a tool in speech writing.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should:

- have an appreciation of the key elements of persuasive language and rhetorical ornamentation
- be in a position to put forward a point of view with clarity and incisiveness
- have demonstrably improved their deliberative and judicial skills

Introductory Reading

Aristotle (2006) *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by G.A. Kennedy. 2nd edn, New York, OUP.

Kennedy, G.A. (1994) *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, Princeton, PUP.

Lanham, R.A., *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* 2nd rev. edn, Berkeley, UCP.

Leith, S. (2012) *You Talkin' to Me: Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama*, London, Profile Books.

MacArthur, B. (2012) *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches*, London, Penguin Books.

Toye R. (2013) *Rhetoric: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, OUP.

Lynn, S. (2010) *Rhetoric and Composition*, Cambridge, CUP