



## Transatlantic Rhetoric: Public Speech and Anglo-American Writing 1750-1913

Dr. Tom Wright | tom.wright@sussex.ac.uk

What is 'rhetoric', and why was it so important for cultural and literary life during the long nineteenth-century in Britain and America? How can we begin to analyse public speaking as writing, and what is its relationship to culture and society?

This module addresses these questions by exploring the cultural history of persuasive public speech between the American Revolution and the turn of the twentieth century, and the role it played in the development of cultural forms. Each week we will look at a pair of one or more speeches from either side of the Atlantic, from across a range of genres including parliamentary oratory, radical political speechmaking, sermons, courtroom statements and comic lectures.

By training ourselves in the methods of rhetorical analysis we will develop an understanding of how to comprehend the meanings and craft of public speech. By placing speechmaking back into broader literary and cultural history, we will begin to see rhetoric and voice as central themes in the history of Anglo-American writing.

### 1. Reading

This module involves the intensive study of short primary texts, all of which are contained in the module reader, available from the Sussex print service, and in pdf format on the Study Direct site.

There are two recommended secondary texts for this module: 1) Sam Leith, *You Talkin' To Me: Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama* (Profile Books); 2) Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (Penguin or Oxford Classics). Particularly relevant will be the glossaries of rhetorical terms of the type contained in Leith, and available via the University of Kentucky website at: <http://mcl.as.uky.edu/glossary-rhetorical-terms>. Other recommended readings and a range of online resources are contained on the Study Direct site.

### 2. Assessment

The module is assessed by a 1500 close reading essay from a selected list of tasks, due in week 7, and a 3000 essay of a topic of your choice due in week 1 of the Assessment period.

### 3. Presentations

Each seminar will involve short individual or pair presentations. Rather than contextual or biographical summaries of that week's readings, you will be required to offer close reading commentaries on one or more of the primary texts, focusing on the ideas and language in specific sections or moments that you find interesting or problematic. You will also be required to offer a series of questions to facilitate class discussion. A schedule of randomly allotted presentations and further information on what is required will be issues on the first session of term.

#### **4. Office Hours**

Please feel free to email me with any questions or come to my office hours on Tuesdays 11-12 and Thursdays 11-12 in Arts B340. Alternative times are available by appointment.

#### **5. Reading Schedule**

Week 1: The Classical Inheritance

Demosthenes, 'The Third Phillipic' (Athens, 324 AD)

Marcus Tullius Cicero, 'First Oration Against Catiline' (Rome, 63BC)

Week 2: American Independence

Edmund Burke, 'Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies' (London, 1775)

Thomas Jefferson et al., 'The Unanimous Declaration of the United States of America' (Philadelphia, 1776)

Week 3: Voicing Nationalism

Patrick Henry, 'Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death' (Richmond, Virginia, 1775)

Wolfe Tone, 'Speech from the Dock', (Dublin, 1798)

Robert Emmett, 'Speech From the Dock' (Dublin, 1803)

Week 4: Debating Slavery

William Wilberforce, 'Resolutions Respecting the Slave Trade', (London, 1789)

John Calhoun, 'Slavery, A Positive Good', (Washington DC, 1837)

Angelina Grimke, 'Speech at Pennsylvania Hall' (Philadelphia, 1838)

Week 5: Native American Testimony

Petalesharo: 'Speech of the Pawnee Chiefs' (Washington DC, 1821)

William Apess, 'Eulogy for King Phillip' (Boston, 1836)

Week 6: Public Lectures and Public Morality

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', (Boston, 1841)

John Ruskin, 'Traffic' (Bradford, England, 1864)

Reading Week

Week 8: Calls for Emancipation

Sojourner Truth, 'Speech to the Women's Rights Convention' (Akron, Ohio, 1851)

Frederick Douglass, 'What to the Slave is July 4<sup>th</sup>?' (Rochester, New York, 1852)

Week 9: War and Disunion

John Bright, 'Angel of Death' (London, 1855)

Abraham Lincoln, 'A House Divided', (Springfield, Illinois, 1858)

Abraham Lincoln, 'The Gettysburg Address' (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1863)

Abraham Lincoln, 'Second Inaugural', (Washington DC, 1865)

Week 10: Literary Performers

Mark Twain, 'The Sandwich Islands' (San Francisco, 1868)

Oscar Wilde, 'Lecture to Art Students', (Boston, 1881)

Week 11: Civil Rights

William Gladstone, 'Government of Ireland Bill', (London, 1886)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 'Solitude of Self' (Washington DC, 1892)

Week 12: Radical Women

Lucy Parsons, 'The Principles of Anarchism' (Chicago, 1886)

Emmeline Pankhurst, 'Freedom or Death' (Hartford, CT, 1913)