

# NAST 471: Rhetoric: Great American Political Speeches

**Time:** Wednesdays, 4:05 – 6:55 p.m.

**Room:** Education Building, Room 613

**Instructors:** Adam Daifallah [adam.daifallah@mcgill.ca](mailto:adam.daifallah@mcgill.ca) Tel.: 514-316-7089  
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**Office hours:** By appointment with instructor in Leacock Building, Room 526

Email correspondence is preferred. Please allow 24 hours for a response. In case a more rapid response is required, students may try to contact the instructors via phone.

## Course Description and Objectives:

America is perhaps the only country in the world dedicated to a proposition: “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.” Great speeches helped create America, and the rhetoric of leaders continues to shape it today. Students in NAST 471 will survey the great speeches found in the Library of America’s two volume set *American Speeches: Political Rhetoric* (and others too). In doing so, they will aim to learn more than the history of American rhetoric – they will themselves develop their skills at composing short essays and speeches.

The course’s approach is interdisciplinary, combining aspects of history, political science, and comparative literature. Above and beyond reading the texts, analyzing their composition, comparing them and understanding their context, students will submit compositions regularly.

The course’s dual aim is to cultivate an understanding of American political rhetoric and a modest ability to engage in it. Occasional guest lecturers from the world of print and politics will share trade secrets with the students.

## Required Texts:

Students must purchase the following books (available on Amazon.com, Paragraphe or at the McGill Bookstore):

*The King’s English*, Henry Watson Fowler, (purchase strongly recommended, though the text is also available at <http://www.bartleby.com/116/>)

*American Speeches: Political Oratory from the Revolution to the Civil War*, ed. Ted Widmer, Library of America

*American Speeches: Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to Bill Clinton*, ed. Ted Widmer, Library of America

*The Federalist Papers*, ed. Charles Kesler, Signet Classics

Additional/substitute readings will be posted on WebCT, emailed or distributed in class by instructors.

**Mark Breakdown:**

Weekly Assignments	60%
Final Exam	30%
Participation	10%

*Weekly Assignments* will be in the form of short essays and speeches modeled on the examples studied in the course readings. There will be five (5) weekly assignments throughout the semester. Grading will be on the basis of each student's best four (4) out of five (5) submitted works (15% each for a total of 60%). The instructors will work closely with the students to help them develop their writing style throughout the semester. Assignments must be submitted **by paper copy** at the beginning of class.

*Final Exam* will be a standard analytical essay requiring students to draw upon and synthesize the material covered and knowledge learned about rhetoric throughout the semester. The topic will be given out during the last class and students will have seven (7) days to complete the exam. A standard cover page and page enumeration is mandatory. The submission date for the Final Exam is **Wednesday, December 7, 2011 at 4:00 p.m.**, after which students will be penalized **5% per day**. Hard copy submissions only to the Political Science Department office, 414 Leacock, Attention: Adam Daifallah.

*Participation* will consist of student engagement in weekly discussions of assigned texts and course materials. Showing up for every class but never speaking will not result in a strong participation grade. Consistent failure to participate or to attend class will be penalized (5% of the final grade will automatically be deducted from students who accumulate more than four (4) unsubstantiated absences throughout the semester).

**McGill Statement on Academic Integrity:**

McGill University values academic integrity. As a McGill student, you are responsible for knowing the rules and regulations concerning academic honesty, which can be found in [The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). Perhaps more important, it is also your responsibility to help maintain the academic integrity of the University.

Cheating or plagiarizing by even one student hurts all students, because anything that undermines the evaluation process undermines the value of McGill's degrees. Therefore, carefully considered steps are taken to prevent students from cheating or plagiarizing and to catch those who do.

Unfortunately, some students still resort to dishonesty, but any McGill student caught cheating or plagiarizing faces potentially serious consequences including, but not limited to, the possibility of conduct probation and a failure in the course; and such sanctions form a permanent part of the student's disciplinary record.

Some students try to justify cheating or plagiarism by claiming that they are pressured to outperform their classmates in order to succeed. There are two problems with this argument:

First, pressure to get good grades may explain the motivation to cheat, but it cannot justify actions that undermine the academic integrity of the University, and thereby debase the grades and degrees that students are striving for.

Second, McGill does not have a policy of “weeding out” a percentage of students. Indeed, we pride ourselves on the very high quality of our incoming students. We would like everyone who is accepted to McGill to succeed academically and to graduate with a degree. In addition, there is no policy in either Arts or Science to grade students by how they rank in a class. Therefore, focus on mastering your course material, not on competing with your classmates.

### **Schedule by subject**

Sept. 7	Introduction
Sep. 14	Modes of Oratory: Ancient & Modern
Sept. 21	Writing an op-ed ( <i>Assignment 1</i> )
Sept. 28	Writing a speech
Oct. 5	Washington & Franklin ( <i>Assignment 2</i> )
Oct. 12	The Federalist ( <i>Assignment 3</i> )
Oct. 19	The Rhetoric of Freedom, Part I: Thomas Jefferson
Oct. 26	The Rhetoric of Freedom, Part II: Slavery, Lincoln & the Civil War
Nov. 2	Women’s Rights & the Progressive Era: TR & Woodrow Wilson ( <i>Assignment 4</i> )
Nov. 9	The Second World War, Part I: FDR
Nov. 16	The Second World War, Part II: Churchill & the Generals ( <i>Assignment 5</i> )
Nov. 23	The Contemporary Era I: Eisenhower, JFK, LBJ, Nixon
Nov. 30	The Contemporary Era II: Reagan to the present/Summation

*Office hours are an integral part of the class as the professors will provide one-on-one feedback to the students in order to improve their compositional skills. All meetings will be by appointment. The professors will be available for a minimum of 3 hours per week.*

### **Weekly Readings**

#### **Sept. 7-28      Conceptual Framework**

The King’s English, Entire

#### **Oct. 5            Washington & Franklin**

American Speeches, Vol. 1. George Washington, Speech to Officers of the Continental Army, p. 22

American Speeches, Vol. 1 George Washington, First Inaugural Address, p. 32

George Washington, “Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior,”

<http://www.foundationsmag.com/civility.html>

George Washington, "Sixth Annual," <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/union/state6.html>  
American Speeches, Vol. 1 Benjamin Franklin, Speech at the Conclusion of the Constitutional Convention, p. 27  
Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, Selections

**Oct. 12      The Federalist**

Hamilton, Madison, Jay, *The Federalist*, Selections

**Oct. 19      The Rhetoric of Freedom I: Thomas Jefferson**

American Speeches, Vol. 1 Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, p. 50  
Declaration of Independence, <http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/doi/text.html>  
Second Inaugural Address, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3491>  
Special Message to Congress on the Burr Conspiracy,  
<http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3497>

**Oct. 26      The Rhetoric of Freedom II: Slavery, Lincoln & the Civil War**

American Speeches, Vol. 1 Abraham Lincoln "House Divided" Speech, p. 634  
American Speeches, Vol. 1 Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, p. 707  
American Speeches, Vol. 1 Abraham Lincoln, Address at Gettysburg, p. 732  
Second Inaugural Address,  
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/abrahamlincolnsecondinauguraladdress.htm>  
Abraham Lincoln, *Lyceum Speech*  
Abraham Lincoln & Frederick Douglas, *Debate at Ottawa*

**Nov. 2      Women's Rights & the Progressive Era: T. Roosevelt & Woodrow Wilson**

American Speeches, Vol. 2 Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, p. 150  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Theodore Roosevelt, *The New Nationalism*, p. 213  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Woodrow Wilson, Address to the Senate on the League of Nations, p. 314  
Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rights of the People to Rule*,  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1125>  
Theodore Roosevelt, *Who is a Progressive?*  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1199>  
Woodrow Wilson, *What is Progress?*  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=942>

**Nov. 9      The Second World War I: Franklin D. Roosevelt**

American Speeches, Vol. 2 FDR, Speech to the Democratic Convention, p. 373  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 FDR, Eight Annual Address to Congress ("Four freedoms"), p. 437

American Speeches, Vol. 2 FDR, Address to Congress on War with Japan, p. 447  
[Campaign speech at Madison Square Garden](#) (October 31, 1936)  
[Campaign Dinner Address to Teamsters](#) (“Fala Speech”), September 23, 1944. Washington, DC

**Nov. 16                      The Second World War II: Churchill & the Generals**

American Speeches, Vol. 2 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address to the Allied Expeditionary Forces, p. 453  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 George S. Patton, Speech to Third Army Troops, p. 449  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Harry S Truman, Statement on the Atomic Bomb, p. 454  
[Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat](#) - First Speech to the House of Commons as Prime Minister, May 13, 1940  
[Be Ye Men of Valour](#) - First Broadcast on BBC as Prime Minister; May 19, 1940  
[We Shall Fight on the Beaches](#) - House of Commons, June 4, 1940  
[Their Finest Hour](#) - House of Commons, June 18, 1940  
[You Do Your Worst -- And We Will Do Our Best](#) - 14 July 1941, House of Commons  
[Never Give In, Never, Never, Never](#) - 29 October 1941, Harrow School  
[You Do Your Worst -- And We Will Do Our Best](#) - 14 July 1941, House of Common  
[Sinews of the peace](#) - March 5, 1946, Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri

**Nov. 23                      The Contemporary Era I: Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon**

American Speeches, Vol. 2 Richard Nixon, Checkers Speech, p. 495  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Second Inaugural Address, p. 520  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Lyndon B. Johnson, Address to Congress on Voting Rights, p. 623  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Richard Nixon, Remarks on Leaving the White House, p. 700

**Nov. 30                      The Contemporary Era II: Reagan to the present**

American Speeches, Vol. 2 Ronald Reagan, Speech on Behalf of Barry Goldwater, p. 604  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Ronald Reagan, Address at Pointe-du-Hoc, p. 736  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation on the Challenger Disaster, p. 754  
American Speeches, Vol. 2 Bill Clinton, Speech at Mason Temple, p. 763