

The Crisis of Rhetoric: Renewing Political Speech and Speechwriting

Workshop 1: The State of Political Speech

The British public distrust politicians and the way they talk. Surveys show not only that the public think politicians are liars who do not share their best interests, but also that their speech alienates citizens from their politicians and from politics. This is nothing less than a crisis of British political rhetoric.

A new research network aims to do something about this. It will combine and consolidate the best research into political rhetoric (from Classicists, Historians, Linguists, Political Scientists and more) in order to develop a better understanding of the crisis of British political speech and to propose possible remedies.

The first workshop concerns the perspective of practitioners: politicians, speechwriters, civil servants and journalists. How do they think about and experience political speech and argument? What do they think makes a great (or awful) speech? How do they go about writing or delivering a speech? What do they think has gone wrong and how can it be put right? What do they want academics to investigate further?

Schedule

9.30 Arrival, Registration, Coffee

10.00 Introduction to the Network (Henriette van der Blom and Alan Finlayson)

10.15 Session 1: The State of Speech Today
(Remarks from Philip Collins) followed by Q&A and discussion.

11.30 Coffee

11.45 Session 2: The Minister's Experience

Q&A between Tony McNulty (former minister in the Department of Transport and the Home Office) and Prof. Alan Finlayson

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Session 3: Writing Speeches

Roundtable with Marc Stears (speechwriter for Ed Miliband), Gabriel Milland (speechwriter for Michael Gove), and Simon Holder, Senior Campaign Manager at the Cabinet Office.

15.15 Coffee

15.30 Session 4: Outside perspectives on the Westminster Style

Roundtable with Guy Doza (speechwriter for MEPs and MSPs), Ross Gunby (Hansard), Brian Jenner (British Speechwriters Guild)

16.30 End of workshop