

CLOSE-READING COURSE · SIX SESSIONS

The Presidential Speech

Rhetoric, craft, and history of the great American speeches

A six-session close-reading of six of the finest American speeches — their craft, rhetorical devices, and historical context. We read them the way we read a poem: what are the sentences doing? Which devices are in play? Why is the speech shaped the way it is for its moment?

SIX REPRESENTATIVE SESSIONS

1. Session 1 — Washington's Farewell Address (1796): the founding template
2. Session 2 — Lincoln's Second Inaugural (1865): 701 sacred words
3. Session 3 — FDR's First Inaugural (1933): the only thing we have to fear
4. Session 4 — Kennedy's Inaugural (1961): antithesis at its finest
5. Session 5 — Dr. King, 'I Have a Dream' (1963): the American sermon
6. Session 6 — Reagan on the Challenger (1986): the elegy in 650 words

FORMATS · ALL CAN BE ADAPTED TO YOUR CALENDAR

- Full series:** The full set of sessions (see above)
- Workshop:** Shorter version, shaped to the venue's calendar
- Single talk:** One 60–90 minute lecture on a chosen theme
- Delivery:** In person, in the Philadelphia region

INSTRUCTOR · JAMES F. MULHERN

Kirkus-starred novelist · Oxford Writing Fellow · Professor Emeritus of English
Give Them Unquiet Dreams — Kirkus Best Book of 2019. Pushcart Prize nomination. Founder, Silver Current Press.

TO BOOK OR ASK QUESTIONS

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