

Title of case study

Delivering Undergraduate Political Speeches: Creating confident communicators

Staff Lead

Dr Andrew Scott Roe-Crines

School/ Department

Department of Politics

Faculty

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences

Contact Details

a.s.crines@liverpool.ac.uk

Name of course and module (if applicable) case study took place within

POLI252 Political Communication and Public Speaking

Please briefly describe the activity undertaken for the case study

The aim of this module evaluates the communication skills of 35 enrolled undergraduate students by providing students with the practical skills needed to write and deliver a political speech. Students pick a relevant political topic which they research and then deliver a speech to their peers. The module sets the scene for the tasks in lectures by allowing students to write anecdotes, engage in political debates, and talk about the skills needed to ensure an audience responds positively to their speech. The speeches were then delivered in the seminar space to a supportive audience. The text of the speech was uploaded onto Turnitin for feedback based on how the skills learned were translated into their delivery.

How was the activity implemented?

The students were provided with a comprehensive breakdown of the marking criteria for the delivery of the speech to ensure they knew which areas they were graded on. It included the inclusion of an anecdote/joke at the start, a clear statement of purpose, articulate political values, outline a clear proposed policy, engaging with the audience, clarity of the argument, short and understandable sentences, cited evidence, strong conclusion. Students practiced these over the course of the module to ensure they had the skills needed for the speech when delivered.

Has this activity improved programme provision and student experience, if so how?

Students really enjoyed taking this module because it was practical, it explained how and why specific skills were effective in communication, and also enjoyed taking part in the seminar debates and activities. These activities included a model Parliament debate, writing and delivering short speeches, expressing their creativity, and learning skills that can be used outside of the module such as clarity of expression. This gives students more confidence to express their views, which many have done whilst on the module. It has enabled students to go beyond the traditional forms of assessment in an enjoyable and entertaining way.

Did you experience any challenges in implementation, if so how did you overcome these?

As this is a new module the prime challenge was demonstrating to students early on that the practical skills were intended for use in seminars and lectures. The student voice is a key part of this module, which they were not expecting to be expressed during the sessions in the way it is. To overcome this I invited student thoughts and ideas at every stage of the learning to ensure they had the confidence to express themselves in both a clear and informed manner. I am delighted that all students responded well to this and have helped make it one of the most enjoyable modules I've ever delivered.

Which Liverpool University Hallmarks and Attributes does this case study relate to?

Research-connected Teaching	X
Active Learning	X
Authentic Assessment	X
Confidence	X
Digital Fluency	X
Global Citizenship	X

How does this case study relate to the Hallmarks and Attributes you have selected?

The content of the module is informed by recent research on how political actors communicate and the practical skills they use. This is related to the rhetorical theory which stems throughout this sub-discipline of political science. Students are also always active in the sessions. They apply the theory in their own debates, discussions, and speeches. For example, the use of pathos (emotion) in rhetoric was used in a task where students wrote and delivered a short story in the seminars. They were funny, personal, and allowed them to see the value of emotional language in political communication.

The assessments test their skills at personal reflection (task 1) and communication skills (task 2). Both of these assessments are authentic because they are practical and ensure they see the value of the learned skills in how they are assessed. The debates and speeches have given the students confidence to express themselves in a way they may not normally do in other modules. This is the only module in the department where students deliver a speech they have written on an issue they care about. This provides students with the confidence to argue why it is significant and how it affects them personally. For example, one student delivered a speech on the politics of feminine hygiene in British political society. It is a personal issue for her which this assessment has opened a door to her personal expression to other students.

The digital fluency element is in how students research the content of their speeches. They have 100% autonomy over the content, so it requires them to be active researchers in constructing the speech and so use digital archives such as the British Political Speech archive.

How could this case study be transferred to other disciplines?

It is my belief that this activity can be transferred by allowing students to deliver a substantial speech on an issue that they feel is relevant to them. Each of the speeches for my module are based on topics that each of the students care about and have the confidence to argue for. By using this approach, it is possible for other modules across the University to provide students with a similar opportunity to allow students to conduct academic research on an issue they feel is vital to society and worthy of an audience.

If someone else were to implement the activity within your case study what advice would you give them?

The key advice I would give others would be to ensure students see the value of these communicative theories as practical skills. The purpose is to provide students with an opportunity to talk about an issue they have the confidence to talk about. It is about ensuring students drive the assessment topic, and that we give them the skills needed to do that in a clear, confident, and entertaining way so students can convince others of the importance of the issue.

I'd also recommend putting together a Marking Matrix which is shown to students in advance so they know what to prepare for.



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