The Wittenberg School of Rhetoric

Wednesday 8, Thursday 9, Friday 10 April 2026
@ The Leucorea

What kind of students will benefit most from this study vacation?

The optimum number of students on this course will be 20 – 25 with at least three supporting adults. They will all be resident on the same campus with all meals provided by the Leucorea canteen.

The opportunity to perform will draw students who are naturally expressive and self-assured. There is not much point sending students who will refuse to stand up in front of the group. The most confident and outspoken will not necessarily be the brightest academically, but we don't see that as a problem.

The students will be required to show courage. They will not be accustomed to standing up in front of their peers. They will learn to overcome their fears by doing something they are afraid of. We will also be teaching them to give each other sensitive evaluation.

The atmosphere will not resemble the formal classroom. They will learn to help each other. As Shakespeare put it: 'No profit grows where is no pleasure taken'.

Why should students enrol?

This study vacation is built on the premiss that education is a process of drawing out and putting to use the talents and abilities which are already present in the person to be educated.

Students should enrol in this programme because it introduces them to the principle of learning by doing and improving through practice and criticism.

The ability to communicate without self-consciousness in person is a vital skill in the digital world.

This course has been inspired by a variety of self-development workshops.

Many of the trainers have been members of Toastmasters International.

The founder of Toastmasters, Ralph C. Smedley, enumerated the benefits of training in speech as follows:

- It leads to the discovery of hidden abilities, bringing these latent talents into use, and thus enriching the individual's life.
- It broadens the person's conception of how to live with people.
- It helps in the integration of personality.
- It brings out for use the leadership traits and abilities, and thus helps to prepare the individual to be a leader.
- It opens the way to more creative and constructive living for the person who takes full advantage of the opportunities offered.

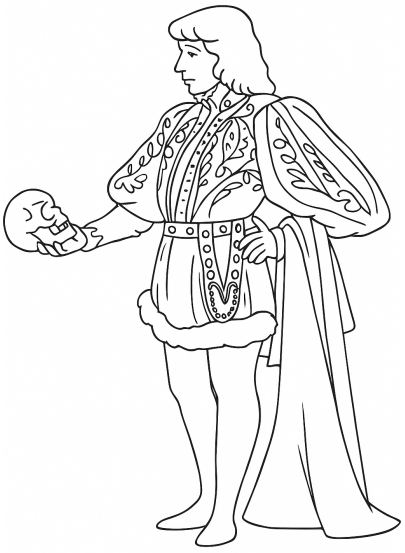
What the students must come with...

- The students need to have familiarised themselves with Shakespeare's Hamlet either by reading it, seeing the play or watching a film version.

- They need to have memorised a 60-second extract (130 words) from the play. They will be expected to perform that extract in front of their peers in Wittenberg.

- They should read Dr Max Atkinson's book *Lend Me Your Ears* which outlines the basic principles of public speaking.

- They must write a 600-word personal introduction outlining their life story so far, including their achievements and setbacks.



What the students will leave with…

- They will have had at least 15-minutes 'stage time' standing up in front of their peers, dealing with the stress of being at the centre of attention. They will be taught how to deal with nerves and self-consciousness.

- They will have experience of playing a role within a group meeting. They will understand the importance of turn taking, speaking to time, using appropriate language and offering sensitive evaluation.

- They will have a basic toolkit for writing a speech. They will learn how to use Dr Max Atkinson's methodology of three-part lists, rhetorical questions and contrasts. They will have had a chance to experiment with these techniques and understand their effectiveness.

- They will be introduced to new personal habits: having their own commonplace book to support their creativity, learning to see their lives as stories and the uses of writing to maintain good mental health.

- They will understand that Shakespeare's Hamlet dramatises the religious and intellectual conflicts of the Reformation. They will be shown how the tragedy is constructed by pitting Christian values against the newly-discovered Classical learning, Catholicism and Protestantism and the life of the Court in Elsinore versus the life of the mind in Wittenberg.

- They will have a grasp of what the study of rhetoric entailed, why it was taught, who it was taught to, and what consequences it had for society.

- They will be aware that rhetoric was a means of analysing speech, writing speech and generating new ideas. They will be shown how AI uses rhetorical processes to generate its answers.

- They will have certificates of achievement and some of them will win prizes.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

The high street in Wittenberg is pedestrianised. It takes ten-minutes to walk from one end to the other, taking in all the churches and museums.

Tuesday 7 April

From 2pm
Check-in opens at the Leucorea
Visitors can occupy their rooms.

7.00pm
Evening meal
Dinner in the canteen.

8.00pm
Welcome Session
Students introduce themselves by standing up in front of their peers. They will be interviewed by three teachers.

Wednesday 8 April

8.00am
Breakfast

9.00am
Introduction to writing a speech
with Guy Doza

Guy will outline how oral communication is different from written communication. He will show the students the benefits of speaking from notes and ways to prepare to speak without notes. He will explain how the students can translate their messages into the language of public speaking.

11.30am
Break

12.00pm
Introduction to impromptu speaking
with Brian Jenner

Brian will offer techniques and advice for speaking without any preparation. He will show the students how to create a structure in advance, how to stall for time and how to deal with nerves.

1.00pm
Lunch

2.00pm
Introduction to evaluation
with Corinne Wilhelm

The students will be expected to give each other feedback on how to improve their public speaking. Corinne will explain how to structure positive feedback, combining praise with attention to where things might be improved followed by more praise.

3.00pm
Visit to the Melancthon Museum

The students will visit the house of Luther's understudy Melancthon. They can find out about Luther. They can view Melancthon's rhetoric books and view pictures of Biblical scenes by Lucas Cranach.

After the tour of the small museum, we can go into the herb garden and invite the students to perform their Hamlet monologues. If appropriate we can do some fencing demonstrations with Renaissance expert, **Stefan Merker**, who is based in Berlin. We can then draw out the connections between Hamlet, fencing and rhetoric.

5.30pm
Return to Leucorea

Overnight preparation: Five members of the group will have to prepare a five-minute presentation to give in front of the group the next day, the others will be allocated roles like chairman, ah counter and general evaluator.

7.00pm
Evening meal
Dinner in the canteen.

Thursday 9 April

8.00am
Breakfast

9.00am
First Group Meeting

We will host the first group session of impromptu speaking, prepared speeches and evaluation.

The meeting will have an introduction by a chair, ten impromptu speaking slots, five formal speaking slots, we will have seven evaluators a general evaluator.

There will also be a grammarian and an um and ah counter.

The audience will vote by secret ballot on who will be the best impromptu speaker, the best speaker and the best evaluator. Certificates will be awarded.

11.30am
Break

12.00pm
Introduction to Rhetoric
with Guy Doza

Guy will give an introduction to the five canons of rhetoric, he will explain the persuasive power of ethos, pathos and logos and also outline the difference between forensic, epideictic and deliberative rhetoric.

1.00pm
Lunch

2.00pm
Lecture: Aristotle and Rhetoric
with Dr Jörg Schulte-Altedorneburg

3.00pm
Visit to the Reformation Research Library

The students will walk to the Reformation Research Library for a talk from **Dr Caecilia-Désirée Heil** on the European Reformation.

It will include viewing manuscripts from the 15th century showing the rhetoric exercises that students did, the commonplace books they kept and examples of their creative work, like writing arguments in favour of 'to be or not to be'.

5.00pm
Return to Leucorea

Overnight five members of the group will have to prepare a five minute presentation to give in front of the group the next day, the others will be allocated roles like chairman, ah counter and general evaluator.

7.30pm
Formal Dinner

Dress: smart. Includes improv speaking contest after dinner.

Friday 10 April

9.00am
Second Group Meeting

We will host the second group session of impromptu speaking, prepared speeches and evaluation. All pupils will play a different role to the one they played on the first day.

The meeting will have an introduction by a chair, ten impromptu speaking slots, five formal speaking slots, we will have seven evaluators a general evaluator.

There will also be a grammarian and an um and ah counter.

The audience will vote by secret ballot on who will be the best impromptu speaker, the best speaker and the best evaluator. Certificates will be awarded.

11.30am
Break
(Check out of bedrooms and return keys)

12.00pm
Closing speeches by
Guy Doza, Brian Jenner and Corinne Wilhelm

12.30pm
End of Conference
Optional lunch in Wittenberg town centre. Return to Berlin.

Costs

Estimate @ €1200 per student includes teaching, museum visits, lectures, three nights in the Leucorea, three evening meals, three breakfasts and two lunches.

If you are a school or a student and you would like to register your interest please email: **info@europeanspeechwriters.org**