

• I- Civilisation US: Course objectives

- A. *Improve and refine upon students' competence and skill in "commentaire de texte de civilisation"*
- B. *Provide some access to reflections on the nature of freedom and liberty, to encourage thinking about the topics in the abstract as well as in the context of US history and culture (not to mention other countries' histories and cultures, including those of France)*
- C. *Provide knowledge and information about US history that will contribute to writing more convincing because better-informed "commentaires de texte" and dissertations in civilization, with special emphasis on the ways that the notion of freedom has been used by Americans, particularly major political figures, as they try to reach their various goals*
 1. Provide a few examples of the interaction / interface between US music and song, on the one hand, and the political and social construct of freedom on the other
 - among other things, music provides an example of the use of "art" to pursue political and social goals (Uncle Tom's Cabin is a novel, i.e., a work of literary art, but it has/had an explicitly social objective to oursue)
- D. *Provide some thoughts on the rhetorical mechanisms speakers and writers use to make their discourse more convincing*
 1. One of the objectives of political discourse is to bring listeners and readers to share the speaker / writer's point of view
 - a. speaker may be trying to change audience's opinion, or at least persuade/ convince audience to do something
 - i.
 - b. but very often trying to provide new expression to already shared ideas / opinions
 - i. cf. FDR 8 Dec.
 - c. One way of doing this is to start from explicitly common allusions & references
 - i. to frequently-occurring themes & tropes (war, religion, business, finance, birth, death)
 - a) WJBatChi, MLKatWDC, ALGbg
 - ii. to patriotic history / culture
 - a) AL1Inaug: mystic chords, Gbg, MLKatWDC, BOatWDC
 - iii. in US: fesm
 - a) antebellum debates over relative powers & status of states & fgvt
 - iv. in US - distrust of government
 - a) abolitionists, slave-owners, GeoWallace, RR, neo-cons
 - v. in US: freedom/liberty
 - a) GWFw, abolitionists, slave-owners, ALpassim, MLKpassim, GeoWallace, RR, GWB
 - d. One way of doing this is to bring listener / reader to anticipate arguments and points
 - e. One way of doing this is to provide linguistic cues and clues to the speaker's construction of meaning
 - i. these may be grammatical/syntactic (e.g., chiasmus, use of pronouns, demonstratives, etc.)
 - ii. these may be phonetic (e.g., rhyme, alliteration, etc.)
 - f. many of these mechanisms and devices involve or even revolve around making the listener/reader feel clever/intelligent in having recognized

linguistic patterns, and therefore feeling that s/he shares insider knowledge and insight(fulness) w/ the speaker

- g. practically every rhetorical device is really effective and really works when addressed to an audience of believers, preaching to the converted / choir
 - i. a significant part of a "civ" document (which in some ways arguably reveals similarities between civ docs and lit ones) is giving voice to an idea or ideas - formulating and expressing in terms it is hoped will be memorable and persuasive a concept or notion that the audience may/does already share and agree with
 - ii. but the speeches that use the devices are often addressed not (only) to the immediate audience, but also to a more distant one
- 2. important considerations to keep in mind
 - a. context
 - i. place (capital, major city, congress or legislature, association or learned society...)
 - ii. (immediately) preceding events
 - iii. period
 - a) might include technological situation (i.e., means of transport, communication: a writer w/ internet access does not use the same rhetorical tools as one who has to wait for newspapers sent by ox cart...)
 - b. what does the speaker/writer want to do
 - c. who is audience
 - i. immediate,
 - ii. more distant

• II• **Course content: the meaning of freedom**

- III• **Students will have noticed that one of their objectives should be to convince their reader (i.e., the teacher grading the paper), that is, that the student is in a position not too far distant from that of the author of the document being analyzed.**