

FREE CPD




SESSION ORGANISED BY THE ELT COUNCIL

Critical Media Literacy: Discerning Signal from Noise in a Post-Truth World



ABSTRACT

Algorithmic media systems (traditional and social media, smartphone applications, chatbots) increasingly shape mass perceptions of reality, leveraging human vulnerabilities, engineering behavioural patterns and belief systems while undermining our capacity to respond effectively. It feels as if what we call reality is increasingly simulated, with staged responses, political theatre and real human tragedies all intertwined in a 24/7 news cycle. The role of education in this is yet another casualty where the same devices that help us increase our productivity and connect with those we care about also hijack and fragment attention, hack attachment and disable our learners' capacity to sustain focus and learn well. This session consists of two parts: (1) on the origins and nature of the post-truth world, and (2) on the hidden dynamics that govern it, with a special focus on the relationship between language and cognition. We will follow the pioneers of media theory in the lineage of Marshall McLuhan ('The medium is the message.'), unpacking the "tools of the trade" of the media world and discuss different ways in which manipulating language can shape emotions, values, opinions and choices. Lastly, we will compare different media epochs—from alphabet to print to digital technologies and "AI"—to recognise how understanding the past media technologies and their psychosocial implications can empower us, as educators and conscious citizens, to navigate the times where facts become weapons and plausibility replaces truth.

 **16th May 2026**
 **08:30 – 13:30**
 **Salini Resort, Salina Bay, St Paul's Bay, NXR9030, Malta**
Mode of Delivery: Face-to-face
Duration: 4 hours



ADAM WIDAWSKI

Born in Poland, Adam Widawski is a linguistic philosopher of history, science and religion with twenty-five years of international experience in cross-curricular teaching and learning. In 2005, Widawski (aged 23) moved to England. While studying music for media under Nikola Kodjabashia (BBC, The Royal National Theatre, London) and audio production under Ray Hendriksen (Queen, Brian Eno) at dBs Institute in Devon, Widawski founded and fronted an underground metal band (2008–2012). Their self-produced debut *Temoignages de la Gnose Terrestre* (Testimonies of Terrestrial Gnosis) was released by Arachnophobia Records in 2015. In the same year, Widawski completed his PGCE in Adult Education at the UCL Institute of Education in London and has been teaching and tutoring ever since. After reading Hegel, Nietzsche (the value of truth) and Heidegger (truth and poetry in Plato's *Politeia*) under Prof. Kenneth Gemes (ex-Harvard, Yale) and Dr Andrew Huddleston (ex-Princeton, Warwick), Adam completed his Master's thesis on the relationship between technology and human autonomy in late Heidegger (University of London, 2019). Since 2020, as a free scholar, he has delved into a deep study of propaganda, ideological subversion and algorithmic media systems, approaching these through the lenses of anthropology, cyberpsychology, cognitive-behavioural sciences, theology and military intelligence to better navigate a world where truth is drowned out in a sea of noise. After publishing articles on these topics, Widawski received a Warm Data training scholarship from the International Bateson Institute in Sweden, which he subsequently completed (London, 2023). In his transdisciplinary research, he has worked with scientists, academics, artists, technologists and C-suite experts to help address emerging crises across areas such as cognitive security (MindShield Institute), ethical decision-making under uncertainty (interview with Prof. Gigerenzer of the Max Planck Centre for Human Development, January 2025), behavioural policy for mental health (guest expert at EU Policy Lab, Brussels, June 2025) and existential risks of "artificial intelligence" (speaker at the global AGI Summit in Istanbul, October 2025). All of Widawski's independent research to date has been self-funded through his work as an EFL teacher (EC Malta), private online tutor (A Level and GCSE in Philosophy, Religious Studies and Music), and, most recently, as a methodologist-translator for HR pioneers in Authentic Leadership, BizYou from Warsaw, Poland. The motto guiding Adam's work comes from the philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein: "To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life."

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