

Psychoanalysis and The Visual

K20.1468

Silver, Room 401

New York University, Gallatin School of Individualized Study

Spring 2020

Wednesdays, 12:30 to 3:15 Pm

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Office hours: Thursdays and Fridays, by appt.

Sign up on my google calendar,

link in my email signature

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SEMINAR

At least since Freud's "Dream Book," psychoanalysis has taught us that psychic life is thoroughly steeped in images. This course will pursue the implications of Jacques Lacan's theory of the subject, which elaborates and complicates Freud's thinking with respect to the ways in which psychic experience and visibility are intertwined. By examining a range of psychoanalytic texts alongside several films and photographs, we will undertake an extended consideration of Lacan's proposition that the "I" comes into being through the subject's identification with his or her mirror image. Lacan theorized that very early in life the human subject experiences a "jubilant" identification with his own mirror reflection that fills up the sense of non-being or lack from which we all suffer and with which we each must choose how to live. The "ego" that each of us takes to be ourselves is, in fact, an other (an image) founded on a delusion of mastery. As a consequence of this primary identification, the subject is in his very being faced with the inclination to see the world in the image of his ego in what Lacan describes as an epistemological stance of colonization and formal stagnation, and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen describes as an annihilative and assimilative way of being.

Thus, being a subject is a tricky state of affairs. At the very core of our psychic being we tend towards aggressivity. But lack can be lived with in various ways and according various ethical ideals. This course will pursue the very serious implication of the psychoanalytic proposition that we are founded on and in a relationship to our own self-image and, at the same time, fundamentally empty, lacking, in fact each of us no one, nowhere—"Hollow men, stuffed men," as T.S. Eliot famously wrote. This dilemma is ultimately a problem for sociality itself, for we learn to relate to others by way of how we relate to our selves, our primordial other.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This class is intended to give you an understanding of aspects of psychoanalytic theory (with a focus on Lacan and Freud) that theorize the nature of subjectivity, visibility, and their intertwining. Along the way, this course will also help you understand the nature and importance of close reading, both of written texts and images, and hopefully make you a more skilled practitioner of it.

WORK REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Course expectations are as follows: 30% participation, 30% mid-term paper, and 40% final paper. The mid-term and final papers will each be approximately 6-8 double-spaced pages. Note: More than 3 absences is excessive and can result in a failing grade if you do not have a reasonable excuse ("Reasonable" shall be determined by me). Not completing either or both of the papers will result in an "F." There are also required film screenings in this course; students must attend group screenings unless other arrangements are made with me.

Class participation:

Attendance: 10%

In-class contribution and engagement: 10%

Short and Fast papers (2): 5% each

Short and Fast Papers: In addition to attendance and general class engagement, student participation grade will also reflect work on 2 short papers, assigned unannounced at the end of class and due that night/the next morning by 2 am. These papers will be assigned on THREE occasion throughout the semester. You must chose to complete TWO of them.

IN-CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND PROHIBITIONS

- It is absolutely essential that you always bring your reading materials with you to class. I prefer that you bring hard copies because I believe it is easier to take notes, mark up, and read closely with pen in hand. If you are accustomed to and prefer marking up your readings on a screen, please alert me to this early on in the semester.
- Laptops and all handheld electronic devices are a distraction for many people, and I ask you to put them away before class begins. I find that these objects tend to interfere with students' abilities to engage with the other people in the room. If you have a situation that requires you to be reachable by phone, please let me know in advance. Some people take notes on their computers in an undistracted way or for other good reasons. If you have a desire or reason to use a laptop to take class notes in class, please discuss with me early in the semester or if the need arises.
- **Please note** that At Gallatin, all students are asked to become familiar with and use one of three established citation styles: Chicago, MLA, or APA. Within the context of this class, I suggest that you use Chicago style or if you prefer, MLA. I will review the basics of Chicago style with you and on your papers I will expect you to use one or the other correctly and consistently.

For guidance on how to use Chicago, MLA, and APA as well as other useful tips on writing, please refer to purdueowl.com.

- **Please also note** Gallatin's policy on academic integrity:

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin

School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

• **Finally, please note:** If you have a disability or a personal circumstance that will affect your learning in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities ([212-998-4980](tel:212-998-4980) or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Basic Books edition)
- James Baldwin and Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (Vintage)

All other course readings are available on our classes site.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 29 Introduction

“I” THE (MIS)RECOGNIZED SUBJECT

February 5 Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” p. 1-7.

Jonathan Scott Lee, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 1-30.

February 12 “The Mirror Stage,” Continuation of discussion.

Lacan, “Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis,” P. 8-29.

February 19 Required in-class group screening of *North by Northwest*.

February 26 Discussion of *North By Northwest*.

March 4 Finish discussion of *North By Northwest* and

Franz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," p. 109-140.

Erica Burman, "Fanon's Lacan and the Traumatogenic Child:
Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Dynamics of Colonialism and
Racism," p. 77-101.

Mon, March 9 Mid-Term Paper Due

THE UNCONSCIOUS AND ITS IMAGE-LIFE

March 11 Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 128-252, 311-660.

March 18 ***Spring Break, No Class***

L'ODIOSOAMATO—THE HATEFULLY-LOVED DOUBLE

March 25 Finish discussion of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

And Borch-Jacobsen, "Dreams Are Completely Egoistic," in *The
Freudian Subject*, p. 10-52.

April 1 Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and
White Paranoia," p. 15-22.

Screen George Holliday's video of Rodney King Beating (1991)

THE ME and THE "NOT-ME"

April 8 Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," p. 113-138.

Donald Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional
Phenomena—A Study of the First Not-Me Possession," P. 229-242.

April 15 Donald Moss, "Introduction," *Hating in the First Person Plural*,
xvii-xxxiv.

Date TBD Required Group Screening of *I Am Not Your Negro*.

April 22 Discussion of *I Am Not Your Negro*.

Read entire text version of *I Am Not Your Negro*.

James Baldwin, "The White Man's Guilt," p. 722-727.

ATTACHMENT, VISIBILITY, and BLINDNESS

April 29 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,"
p. 85-126.

Judith Butler, "Introduction," *The Psychic Life of Power*,
p. 2-30.

Date TBD Required Group screening of *Capturing the Friedmans*.

May 6 Continuation of discussion of Butler and discussion of
Capturing the Friedmans.

May 12 Final Paper Due