

Professor Kornbluh

kornbluh@uic.edu

Office: 2015 UH

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00am-12:50pm; (most) Fridays 2:00-3:00pm; **and by appointment**

English 507 Fall 2012

Grant Hall 204

W 2:00-5:00pm

Theory, Rhetoric, Aesthetics

Sex, Society, and Other Relations that do not exist

Jacques Lacan's notorious pronouncement "il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel" (there is no sexual relation) fundamentally measures the gap between the real and relation, between primordial antagonism and imaginary or symbolic suture. As the discourse of sexual difference, psychoanalysis formidably punctuates 'the political' as neither sphere nor substance, but as a site or stuff of antagonism or void, underscoring that every social formation, in installing provisional bonds across this void, is sutured by libido. Probing the possible parallels in the non-existence of the sexual relation, the social relation, and the Other, this seminar explores the trans-individual status of the psychoanalytic subject, the distinctively psychoanalytic notion of law, and diverse contemporary approaches to ideology and enjoyment.

Requirements

- Active seminar participation, including careful completion of assigned reading, and consistent, thoughtful contribution to discussion
- Discussion Facilitation during one seminar session
- Response Paper (3-5 pgs) due Wednesday 10 October
- Seminar Paper (12-15pgs) due Monday 10 December

Guidelines

Readings and Discussion: This is an intensive seminar, with a heavy reading load of complex texts. No prior knowledge of the subject is required, and our mood will be open exploration rather than expert critique, but students should understand the necessary commitment.

Discussion Facilitation: On your assigned day, please come to seminar prepared to pose a range of questions to your colleagues over the course of the 3 hour meeting. Questions should be prompted by your interpretation of the text(s) and may be narrowly focused on tracking the progress of an author's argument or broadly focused on the consequences of a given argument; feel free to ask comprehension questions; comparing or contrasting to previous week's readings is encouraged. Possible points of broad interest: How does each text formulate its key terms? How does it refine, complicate, or contradict the formulations we have encountered in previous weeks? What passages in each text seem particularly knotty, particularly clear, particularly important? What is the subject? How is the subject not the individual? What is the unconscious? What is desire? What is

negation, the negative, absence, or void? What is the social? What is the political? How does the subject relate to social structures? What is law? What is antagonism? What is ideology? What is psychoanalysis? What ontology of the political does it entail? Does it entail a politics? Does psychoanalytic political theory have an aesthetic?

Response Paper: Around the midterm, students will be asked to compose a brief response to the material encountered to date. The papers should represent your best efforts to integrate the psychoanalytic ideas about subjectivity and the symbolic advanced in the first half of the term. Responses may take the form of summarizing crucial ideas, of criticizing crucial ideas from another framework, of anticipating the political theories that will be elaborated in the second half of the semester, or of articulating crucial ideas with literature. This is a short exercise with the goal of punctuating your interests as you move towards conceiving a final paper.

Seminar Paper: By the second week in November, you will most likely want to make an appointment to consult with me about your final paper topic. Papers should respond to the theoretical issues raised by the seminar either on their own terms (say, exploring the points of tension between competing conceptions of antagonism in Mouffe and Marx, or introducing critical sources not on our syllabus to critique / engage with those on our syllabus) OR in relation to a primary literary work of your choosing (say, resonating *The Pale King* with psychoanalytic political theory). Papers should reflect / incorporate research conducted using the MLA database. The last session of the seminar is reserved for presentations of paper abstracts (approx. 2-3 pages) and final celebrations.

Required Texts (at the UIC Bookstore)

Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Totem and Taboo, Civilization and Its Discontents*

Jacques Lacan, *Seminar 11, Seminar 20, Ecrits* (Bruce Fink translation)

Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*

Optional Texts (for those with interests in psychoanalysis / those who prefer buying to printing the course PDFs)

Lacan, *Seminar 17*

Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative, Less than Nothing*

Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*

Adrian Johnston, *Zizek's Ontology*

Molly Anne Rothenberg, *The Excessive Subject*

Alenka Zupancic, *Ethics of the Real*

Recommended Texts listed at end of syllabus

Schedule of Readings

29 Aug

The Split Subject

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Chapters 2, 6

Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes"

 "Repression"

 "The Unconscious"

 "Negation"

5 Sep

The Subject as / of Language

Lacan, "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious" *Ecrits* 412-444

Seminar 11: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Chapters 1-5

Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 35-48

Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness* Chapter 2

12 Sep

The Subject of Drive

Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*^[SEP]

Lacan, *Seminar 11*, Chapters 10-15

Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman* Chapter 1

Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* 27-32

The Ticklish Subject 290-306

19 Sep

The Subversion of the Subject

Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire"^[SEP] *Ecrits* 671-702

Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Chapters 3-6

Tarrying with the Negative, Chapters 1-2

Adrian Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology*, 1-66

26 Sep

There Is No Sexual Relation

Suzanne Barnard, Introduction to Reading Seminar 20

Lacan, *Seminar 20: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, Chapters 1-7

3 Oct

Jouissance Does Not Exist

Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 98-128

 "Knowledge and Jouissance"

Žižek, *Less than Nothing* Chapter 11

Johnston, "The Unbearable Burden of Libidinal Liberation"

 "The Critique of Pure Enjoyment"

10 Oct

The Real, or, Signifying Nothing

Lacan, *Seminar 3: The Psychoses*, Chapters 14-15

Tom Eyers, *Lacan and the Concept of the Real* Chapter 5

Copjec, *Read My Desire* Chapter 5

Zizek, "The Real of Sexual Difference"

RESPONSE PAPERS DUE

17 Oct

Society Does Not Exist

Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Claude Levi Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship* Chapters 1-2

"Do Dual Organizations Exist?"

24 Oct

Antagonism

Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political* Chapter 3

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* Chapter 3

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

Badiou, "One Divides Into Two"

****ATTEND LECTURE BY JODI DEAN 27 OCT****

31 Oct

The Law

Freud, *Totem and Taboo*

Juliet Flower McCannell, *The Regime of the Brother* Chapters 1-2

Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 313-334

Mladen Dolar, "Freud and the Political"

7 Nov

Pas Tout Law

Lacan, "Kant With Sade" *Ecrits* 645-670

Alenka Zupancic, *Ethics of the Real*, 1-42, 140-169

Russell Grigg, *Lacan, Language, and Philosophy* Chapters 6-8

Tracy McNulty, "The Event of the Letter: Two Approaches to the Law and its Real"

14 Nov

Nothing Exists

GWF Hegel, *Science of Logic* Chapter 1

Zizek, *Less Than Nothing* Chapter 1

Zizek, *Tarrying With the Negative* Chapter 4

21 Nov

The Subject of Politics

Lacan, *Seminar 17: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Chapters 7-8, 12-13

Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, Parts I and IV^[SEP]

Molly Anne Rothenberg, *The Excessive Subject* 1-56

28 Nov

Psychoanalytic Politics

Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* introduction

Kiarina Kordela, "Political Metaphysics"

Todd McGowan and Paul Eisenstein, *Rupture* introduction

Zizek, "How to Begin From the Beginning"

5 Dec

Final Thoughts

Seminar Paper Abstract presentations

Celebrations TBD

*

Recommended Texts (especially for final paper research)

Bruno Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*

Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness*

Justin Clemens, *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis*

Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire, Imagine There's No Woman*

Jodi Dean, *Zizek's Politics, The Communist Horizon* (available mid October)

Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands*

Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*

Dylan Evans, *A Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*

Tom Eyers, *Lacan and the Concept of the Real* (available mid October)

Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject, Lacan to the Letter*

Kiarina Kordela, *Surplus*

Todd McGowan, *The End of Dissatisfaction?, The Real Gaze*

Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess*

Molly Anne Rothenberg, *Perversion and the Social Relation*

Eric Santner, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, The Royal Remains*

Yannis Stavrakakis, *The Lacanian Left*

Zizek, with Ernesto Laclau and Judith Butler, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*

Zizek, with Eric Santner and Kenneth Reinhard, *The Neighbor*