

MLL 493 - IS: Introduction to Lacanian Theory

**Course description:**

Lacan's work is often met with critiques of extreme difficulty if not incomprehensibility. This course, which is adapted from a seminar offered at the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California (Dr. Wolff-Berstein, 2015), serves as an introduction to reading that body of work. Students will examine certain of Lacan's *Écrits* and excerpts from his seminars, as well as secondary sources to gain a general framework for approaching Lacanian theory in the future. This course is not meant to be an exhaustive overview of Lacanian theory by any means, but is rather a humble approach to Lacan's long and complex oeuvre. While Lacan's work has been used in various fields, this class will retain a mostly clinical perspective. This course is designed to be an interactive independent study, where each student is expected to write weekly "memos" (~250-word reading responses to be posted to a forum; out-of-class discussion on the forum constitutes this course's "fourth instruction hour"). All participants (students and instructor), will, in rotation, lead class discussions, providing a brief introduction to the readings, and a series of prepared discussion questions. Students will also be expected to write two papers for the course: a midterm essay (4-6 pages) and a final essay (8-10 pages). These papers can be extensions of the memos, or they can relate to fields outside psychoanalysis (e.g., feminism, political theory, literary theory, film theory, etc.).

**Breakdown of final grade:**

Attendance and participation: 35%  
Memos (all completed memos receive full credit): 15%  
Student-led discussion(s): 10%  
Midterm essay: 15%  
Final essay: 25%

**Texts (excerpts will be provided by the instructor):**

Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*  
---. *Seminar III, the Psychoses*  
---. *Seminar XI, the Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*

Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan*  
Joël Dor & Judith Feher Gurewich, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan*  
Richard Feldstein et al., *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*  
Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*  
---. *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*  
Patricia Gherovici, *Transgender Psychoanalysis*  
Alexandre Leupin, *Lacan Today*  
Dany Nobus, *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis*  
Dany Nobus (ed.), *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*

## CALENDAR

### 1. Introduction to the Course (Jan. 21)

### 2. General Introduction to Lacan's Work (Jan. 28)

- Fink, Bruce, "Lacanian Technique in the 'Direction of the Cure'," *Lacan to the Letter*, pp. 1-22
- Leupin, Alexandre, "The Structure of the Subject," *Lacan Today*, pp. 1-23.

### 3. The Mirror Stage and The Register of the Imaginary I (Feb. 4)

- Lacan, Jacques, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," *Ecrits*, pp. 3-9
- Lacan, Jacques, "Note on the Child" *Autres écrits*, pp. 373-4

### 4. The Mirror Stage and The Register of the Imaginary II

- Bowie, Malcolm, "Inventing The I," (1991) *Lacan*, pp. 17-43
- Dor, Joel, "The Mirror Stage and the Oedipus Complex," *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan*, pp. 93-110

### 5. The Symbolic, The Structure of Language, Castration and the Emergence of Desire I

- Bowie, Malcolm, "Language and the Unconscious," *Lacan*, pp. 44-87

### 6. The Symbolic, The Structure of Language, Castration and the Emergence of Desire II

- Soler, Colette, "The Symbolic Order I and II," *Reading Seminars I and II*, pp. 39-55

### 7. The Real, Jouissance and the *objet a* I

- Nobus, Dany, "From Kantian Ethics to Mystical Experience: An Exploration of Jouissance," *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, (1999), pp. 1-28.

### 8. The Real, Jouissance and the *objet a* II

- Fink, Bruce, "Hors texte—Knowledge and Jouissance: A Commentary on Seminar XX," *Lacan to the Letter*, pp. 141-66

### 9. The Real, Jouissance and the *objet a* III

- Bowie, Malcolm, "Symbolic, Imaginary, Real ...and True," *Lacan*, pp. 88-121

### 10. The Transgender Body and the Sinthome

- Gherovici, Patricia, "Introduction," "Transamerica," and "Depathologizing Trans," *Transgender Psychoanalysis*, pp. 1-26
- Gherovici, Patricia, "Sexual Difference: From Symptom to Sinthome," *Clinical Encounters with Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Practice and Queer Theory*, pp. 369-82

### 11. The Lacanian Clinic, The Direction of the Cure and the Analyst's Desire I

- Lacan, Jacques, "The Presence of the Analyst," *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 123-135

### 12. The Lacanian Clinic III

- Fink, Bruce, "Interpreting," *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, pp. 74-100
- Soler, Colette, "Time and Interpretation" & "Transference," *Reading Seminars I and II*, pp. 56-66

### 13. The Clinical Structures I, Neurosis and Psychosis

- Lacan, Jacques, "The Hysteric's Question," *The Psychoses*, pp.161-183

### 14. The Clinical Structures II, Perversion

- Miller, Jacques-Alain, "On Perversion," *Reading Seminars I and II*, pp. 306-20

## DEPARTMENT AND COLLEGE STATEMENTS

### **MLL Departmental Attendance Policy**

In accordance with College regulations governing class attendance as published in the current Course Catalog (under "Conduct of Courses"), we permit one absence per weekly class meeting per semester. This means that in a course which meets five times a week five absences per semester are allowed, in a course which meets four times a week four absences per semester are allowed, etc. This departmental policy is not meant to be substituted for the attendance rules established by the Faculty specifically for first-year students and students on Conditional Enrollment (cf. the Course Catalog, "Conduct of Courses"). For the effect that excessive absences have on the "Participation" component your final grade, see "Course Requirements" in this syllabus (above).

The MLL Department urges you not to absent yourself unnecessarily from your classes. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to know what was covered in that particular class period and what additional assignments, if any, were given, as you are responsible for both.

### **Academic Honesty**

At Kenyon College we expect all students, at all times, to submit work that represents our highest standards of academic integrity. It is the responsibility of each student to learn and practice the proper ways of documenting and acknowledging those whose ideas and words they have drawn upon (see Academic Honesty and Questions of Plagiarism in the Course Catalog). Ignorance and carelessness are not excuses for academic dishonesty.

### **Accessibilities Accommodations**

Note: if you have a disability that affects the completion of any of the above requirements, please contact Director of Student Accessibility and Support Services Ruthann Daniel-Harteis, at phone number 740-427-5453 or via e-mail at [danielharteis1@kenyon.edu](mailto:danielharteis1@kenyon.edu); she will advise you on obtaining appropriate accommodations or assistance. I will gladly make adjustments to meet your particular needs, as long as they have first been recommended by Ms Daniel-Harteis's office.

### **Title IX**

As a member of the Kenyon College faculty, I am concerned about the well-being and development of students outside of class, and am available to discuss any concerns with you. However, you need to know that faculty members are legally obligated to share certain kinds of information with the College's Civil Rights & Title IX coordinator. This is in order to ensure that every student's safety and welfare is addressed. These mandatory disclosures include, but are not limited to, reports of discrimination or harassment due to a protected characteristic; sexual harassment; sexual assault; relational/domestic violence; and stalking.

## Land Acknowledgement Statement

Kenyon College acknowledges that the lands on which we live, work, celebrate, and heal are the ancestral homelands of the Miami, Lenape, Wyandotte, and Shawnee peoples, among others. The disputed Treaty of Greenville (1795) and the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from this region allowed for the founding of the College in the early 1800s. As a community, we are committed to confronting this dark past while also embracing through education and outreach the many Indigenous communities that continue to thrive in Ohio.