

Psychoanaliterature: Psychoanalysis, Literature and All That Lies in Between

B.A. Seminar 132.1.0414
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Mondays, 14-16; Building 90, Room 136
2023-2024

Course description & objectives:

In 1993, the cover of Time magazine rhetorically asked, “Is Freud Dead?” Though the answer at the time appeared to be an unequivocal “yes,” in this course we will suggest that Freud is making a comeback in the US and the Anglophone world. Psychoanalysis exploded into North American culture with Freud’s lectures at Clark University in 1909. According to the traditional narrative, the theory then reached its peak during the 1940s-1950s, and waned in the 1960s with the resurgence of psychopharmaceutical resources for mental illness, and the rise of post-colonial theory, the Civil Rights Movement, and Second Wave Feminism. In this course, however, we will follow the exciting renewed dialogue that takes place in the last two decades between Freudian tradition and American culture, specifically in the realm of literature. We will follow creative projects that intensely engage with psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytic writings that examine the nature of creativity today. First, we will first follow the central strands of psychoanalysis that have developed out of Freud’s theory, and their contribution to literary interpretation and production. Then, we will engage with 21st century literary works who enter into dialogue with psychoanalysis via experimental forms such as the graphic novel and autotheory, and analyze the surprising mixture of queer with psychoanalytic thought. If this is all possible in the name of psychoanalyses then perhaps, As Newsweek suggested in 2006, Freud is not dead?

Course requirements:

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed up to six unexcused absences during the year, including *tkufat ha-shinuyim*. Any additional absence will affect your grade. If you need to be absent (in person or via Zoom) for more than six classes due to a personal emergency, please get in touch with me in advance about possible arrangements. You are responsible for material you miss during an absence.

Participate productively in class discussions. Please come prepared to discuss your take of the text in class. Participation is an incredibly important aspect of this course, which will frequently involve class discussions. If you are nervous about participating and/or public speaking in general, please contact me as soon as possible – we can brainstorm ways to make you feel more comfortable in class and consider alternative methods of participation.

Deliver one ~10 minute oral presentation during the final lessons of the semester. Your presentation should focus on the literary text and theoretical materials with which you plan to engage in your seminar paper. Please also prepare a PPT slide show to accompany your presentation.

Submit four short assignments throughout the year. These assignments are all geared toward your seminar paper. Their aim is to help you in planning, conceptualizing, and writing the paper. Make sure you submit them on time; late submission will affect your grade.

Write a final essay (~15 pages for *seminar*).

Sources: In your papers, you must document each and every source you consult as we do not tolerate plagiarism. You will find a number of resources on Moodle; use them to understand the issues we discuss, and ask questions whenever anything is not entirely clear to you.

***Due to the circumstances surrounding the academic year, allowances will be made in case of special circumstances, such as Reserve Duty (*milluim*) or other affairs relating to the war. If you are impacted by such circumstances, please promptly inform me so that we can provide appropriate accommodations. Your well-being and academic progress are important to me.**

Grade Distribution:

Participation 10%
4 assignments: 20%
Oral Presentation: 20%
Final paper (15-20 pages): 50%

* Please approach me early in the semester to **inform me of any special requirements** you may have.

Course Schedule and Reading

Fall Semester

1. Introduction (1.1)

- Psychoanalysis and literature: allies or rivals?

2. Freudian psychoanalysis (8.1)

- Stephen A. Mitchell & Margaret Black, "Sigmund Freud and the Classical Psychoanalytic Tradition," in *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, Basic Books, 2016, pp. 1-22
- Freud video
- Optional: Richard M. Gottlieb, "Classical Psychoanalysis: Past and Present," in *Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, American Psychiatric Publishing, 2011, pp. 155-171

3. Freudian Literary Interpretation (15.1)

- Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva: A Pompeiiian Fancy* (1902)

4. Freudian Literary Interpretation (22.1)

- Sigmund Freud, "Delusion and Dream in Jensen's *Gradiva*" (1907)
- Vera J. Camden, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 1-21
- Drive Theory Video

5. Ego Psychology (29.1)

- Stephen A. Mitchell & Margaret Black, “Ego Psychology,” in *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, Basic Books, 2016, pp. 23-60
- Ego and Self Psychology video

6. Self Psychology (5.2)

- David Terman, “Self Psychology,” in *Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, American Psychiatric Publishing, 2011, pp. 199-211
- Thomas Mann, “Death in Venice” (1912) – first half

7. Self Psychology and Literature (12.2)

- Thomas Mann, “Death in Venice” (1912) – final half
- Heinz Kohut, “Death in Venice by Thomas Mann: A Story about the Disintegration of Artistic Sublimation,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 26, 1957, pp.206-228

8. Melanie Klein & Wilfred Bion (19.2)

- Ronald Britton, “Klein and Bion,” in *Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, American Psychiatric Publishing, 2011, pp. 185-199
- Selections from Wilfred Bion, *War Memoirs 1917-1919*, Routledge, 1997

9. Object Relations Theory (26.2)

- Lewis Aron and Maria Lechich, “Relational Psychoanalysis,” in *Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, American Psychiatric Publishing, 2011, pp. 211-225
- Object Relations video

10. Object Relations Theory & literature (4.3)

- Donald Winnicott, “The Location of Cultural Experience” (1967)

11. Students Presentations (11.3)

Spring Semester

1. Relational Psychoanalytic Literary Interpretation

- Thomas and Benjamin Ogden, *The Analyst's Ear and the Critic's Eye* (Selection; 2013)
- Podcast Episode II: Interview with B. Ogden

2. Autotheory & psychoanaliterature I

- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (2015)
- Podcast Episode III: Interview with Nelson

3. Autotheory & psychoanaliterature II

- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (2015)

4. Winnicott is Back I

- Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?* (2012)
- clip from Bechdel's speech and reading at Eat, Drink & Be Literary (2014)

5. Theory or Literature? (I)

- Emma Lieber, *The Writing Cure* (2020)

6. Theory or Literature? (II)

- Jamieson Webster, *The Life and Death of Psychoanalysis: On Unconscious Desire and its Sublimation* (2011)

7. Psychoanalysts writing fiction I

- Wilfred Bion, selection from *A Memoir of the Future* (1975)

8. Psychoanalysts writing fiction II

- Thomas Ogden, *The Parts Left Out* (2013)

9. Writers imagining psychoanalysis

- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love* (2000)

10. Students Presentations

11. Students Presentations