

Dreaming and Thinking

Dr. Sharon Sliwinski
[A Course]

Course Description

Freud often insisted that, at bottom, dreams are simply a particular form of thinking made possible by the conditions of sleep. We will take this insight as the central theme of our course. Here dream will be understood both as a specific mental event *and* as a form of thinking, which is to say we will be exploring the terrain of dream-life but also investigating the nature of this “other form” of thinking and what it offers for ethics, politics, and social thought. As Derrida once proposed, while reflecting on one of Benjamin’s dreams, we must dare to take dream seriously, to care for what it let’s us think about, especially when it let’s us think about the “possibility of the impossible” and what would have to be done to think differently, to think *thinking* differently.

Course Texts

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008)

Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 2006)

Part Barker, *Regeneration*, (London: Penguin, 1991)

Course Readings (provided)

Walter Benjamin, “Paris, Capital of the 19th Century” + Exchange with Theodor Adorno on “Paris” essay

Jacques Derrida, “Fichus: The Frankfurt Address” in *Paper Machine*, Trans. Rachel Bowlby, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005)

Thomas Ogden, “This Art of Psychoanalysis” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 85 (2004): 857–77

Antonio Ferro, “Transformations in dreaming and characters in the psychoanalytic field” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 90 (2009): 209–230

Jean-François Lyotard, “The Dream-work does not think” In *Discourse Figure*, Trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)

Assignments

1. Questions (10 x 2.5) 25%

For each class, prepare a written question. To give your question a home and a trajectory, introduce your query with a few sentences. Then try to elaborate your question by reflecting on what your inquiry is grappling with, what your question wants, or what kind of relationship you are bridging with the reading. This small piece of work should be no more than one page, typed, and double-spaced. Your questions may become the basis of class discussion – in other words, you may be asked to share your work.

2. Apothegm

Apothegm is derived from a Greek verb that means *to speak out*. Each student will give a short, in-class apothegm at least once over the course of the term. On the week you are scheduled to speak, pick a short quotation or term from the assigned reading and prepare a brief discussion about the passage or term's significance. Include the passage or term as the heading to your discussion and bring copies to distribute to the class. The idea of this assignment is to work closely with the text, unfolding and reflecting upon the significance of the passage you have chosen. You might wish to choose a passage or phrase that you believe to be the crux of the author's argument. Or you might choose to focus on an obscure passage in order to speculate on the significance of this outlying idea. I encourage you to choose something that you do not immediately understand, but which somehow strikes you. Depending on your choice, you may wish to use the quotation as a way to try to paraphrase or summarize the author's argument. Or you may wish to deconstruct the logic at work in the passage. Or you may wish to link the quotation to another reading from our course. Frame your work with a few questions. Your discussion should be no more than 3 pages in length.

3. Abstract 10% - due April 8th

Prepare an abstract for a conference paper. Imagine submitting this abstract to a conference call on "Dreaming & Thinking" with the course material serving as the basis for the description of the conference. The abstract should outline your proposed paper's argument, including the specific concepts, theoretical tools, and any objects, texts, or events you intend to examine. Your abstract should implicitly justify the significance of your paper. In other words, you are trying to convince the conference convenors of the importance of your proposed study. Aim for about 500 words in length. We will be discussing the abstracts and proposed papers on the last day of class.

4. Conference Paper 40% -- due one week after class

You are required to write one conference length paper. The paper should be a concise inquiry into some aspect of our course. Start by returning to the weeks' readings that pertain to the topic you have chosen. I encourage you to be modest in your inquiry, focusing on a very specific problem or theme drawn from one of the readings. While you are welcome to draw upon outside material, the focus of the paper should critically engage one or more of the issues or themes we have worked with in the course. Your essay should take a very specific point of view, but spend time defining the geography of the problem being considered, for whom it is a problem, and the issues such thinking might raise for you and others. The conference paper should be approximately 10 pages in length – no longer, in other words, than twenty minutes read aloud.

Notes from Senate: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf