Course title:
“Anti-Psychoanalyses”: A (Short and Incomplete) History of Confluences and Conflicts

This course fits into Group A (aesthetics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, language theory) given its primary focus on psychoanalytic theory and secondary focus on other areas of cultural criticism (language theory, gender studies, Marxist theory, etc.), as well as on the assimilation of psychoanalytic concerns into film and other media products.

Course description:
Over the course of the twentieth century, psychoanalytic theory became influential enough to make an indelible mark on other areas of theory and criticism, literature, visual arts, and – increasingly – also popular culture. In so doing, it destabilized and restructured substantial tenets of these cultural categories and was itself substantially transformed by those encounters. This course highlights several major twentieth-century points of contact, as well as points of conflict of this nature, and ends by analyzing a number of more recent trends of (perhaps) major impact on emerging twenty-first-century socio-cultural phenomena.

We start by analyzing some early divergent approaches within psychoanalytic theory, trying to explain, for instance, the apparent contradiction, in Freud’s writings, between some astoundingly progressive and some remarkably obtuse claims concerning, first and foremost, sexuality and gender. We examine some of Melanie Klein’s major claims from the same perspective. We then turn, for a week, to two major mythical figures (Narcissus and Oedipus) assigned major explanatory roles in psychoanalytic theory, searching for clues concerning, on the one hand, the power and attractiveness of psychoanalytical explanatory models, and on the other, the radical strangeness (and deeply reactionary character) of some of their foundational claims. After a quick detour through German Expressionism, Surrealism, and film noir as major aesthetic traditions that have engaged, early on, with psychoanalytic ideas, we spend some time discussing Lacan’s claim to be interpreting Freud “à la lettre” as a major example of a radical reformulation of the Freudian approach – one that qualifies, in fact, as “anti-psychoanalytical” in relation to several defining elements of Freudian orthodoxy. We then examine critiques of psychoanalysis by Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Irigaray, and de Lauretis, who saw Freudian psychoanalysis (and, to some extent, later theorizations, as well) as fundamentally aimed at regulating the social body despite any claims to prioritize individual well-being. (Deleuze and Guattari specifically defined their approach as working against psychoanalysis as currently understood and practiced and titled one of their major collaborative works Anti-Œdipe. On the other hand, Guattari and Irigaray, for instance, practiced psychoanalysis themselves for some time. One of our points of discussion will be, for their critique as for those advanced by others, which psychoanalyses they are writing against – since, by this point, we are already dealing with some markedly divergent strains.) Finally, we discuss Žižek’s psychoanalytic approach as a rather peculiar reformulation of Lacanian thought, and then Copjec’s examination of the ethical claims of psychoanalysis, including their relevance today. The last week of our course is dedicated to critical takes on psychoanalytic theory and practice in contemporary media products, as well as to a discussion of therapeutic approaches more widely used in the last decades – potentially the starting point for another course to be offered in the near future.
On the way, we might notice that a lot of things generally seen as similar might actually be substantially different, and that many consecrated oppositions might be misrepresentations of compatible claims. The history of psychoanalytic theory is filled with confluences and conflicts that are easier to assess in hindsight, and whose analysis may prove of high political relevance in today’s context of radical contestations and redefinitions of what constitutes “health,” “well-being,” and “happiness.”

Main topics covered and provisional list of readings:

Week 1:
**Mental health and well-being before Freud**

Week 2:
**Major Freudian concepts: The Oedipal triangle, sexual objects and aims, neurosis, trauma**
**Melanie Klein: Aggression and the two “positions”**

Week 3
**Narcissus and Oedipus: A second look**

Week 4
**Psychoanalysis in early film**
Viewing of clips from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene 1920), *Nosferatu* (Murnau 1922), *M* (Lang 1931); *Un chien andalou* (Buñuel and Dalí, 1929); *The Big Sleep* (Hawks, 1946); *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960)
Readings: Excerpts from Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*; articles on Expressionism, Surrealism, and *film noir* TBA.

Week 5
**Lacan: Freud à la lettre, or the “phallic function,” the “formulae of sexuation,” and “feminine jouissance”**
Readings: Excerpts from Lacan’s seminars VII (*Ethics of Psychoanalysis*), X (*Anxiety*), and XX (*On Feminine Sexuality*).

Week 6
**Foucault: The confessional and the therapy session**
Readings: Excerpts from *The History of Sexuality* and *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. 
Week 7:
Derrida: Resistances of/to psychoanalysis
Readings: Excerpts from Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis* and *The Postcard*

Week 8
Deleuze and Guattari’s “anti-psychoanalysis”: The Oedipal triangle as a parental paranoid projection; flows and interruptions; planes of consistency; machines
Readings: Excerpts from *Anti-Oedipus*

Week 9
Irigaray on physicality, abstraction, “verticality,” and gender
De Lauretis on the socio-historical gender machine
Readings: Excerpts from Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman, This Sex Which Is Not One*, and *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*; de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* and *Freud’s Drive*

Week 10
Žižek: *Lacan à l’envers*
Readings: Excerpts from *Tarrying with the Negative* and *The Puppet and the Dwarf*

Week 11
Copjec: Psychoanalysis and Ethics
Readings: Excerpts from *Read My Desire* and *Imagine There’s No Woman*

Week 12
The “orthopsychic” subject then and now; symptom alleviation and healing; “health,” “well-being,” and “happiness”
Readings TBA. Short list of recent films/ TV shows for discussion to be prepared in agreement with the students by the end of Week 6 (based on common interests).