

“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."

Readings: All available online (Western Library/ OWL)

Some readings are available online through the Western Library website. All the other readings will be made available on OWL (scans, etc.).

Complete information regarding the readings for Weeks 1-3 (page numbers, links, etc.) has been provided below. An updated syllabus with the page numbers, links, etc. for the rest of the term will be provided on OWL in Week 1.

Please note that some of the readings listed are **optional**. Depending on how much time you can dedicate to this course and how interested you are in specific topics, you can read the optional materials or not. I wanted you to have additional materials available in case you want to explore certain topics more. I will briefly introduce content from the optional readings in class, but our discussions will focus primarily on the required readings.

Method of Evaluation & Marks Distribution:

Short Essay (20%): A short formal discussion of a theoretical/ literary/ media text discussed in our course. If you choose a literary/ media text, your essay should focus on the ways in which the text in question reflects on major psychoanalytic notions that had gained cultural traction around the time of its production. 2000-3000 words. Due by Oct. 20.

Seminar Presentation (25%): A 15-minute oral presentation on a theoretical topic covered in our course, followed by a 15-minute question period (the presenter will have to respond to questions/ comments from classmates & the professor). Seminar presentations can be scheduled, in consultation with me, on any week starting with Week 2. There can be no more than two presentations per week, so you should select your presentation date early.

Research Essay (45%): A formal research essay that engages critically with several relevant research sources in order to offer an original contribution to a theoretical/ critical debate related to one of our course topics. 4000-7000 words. Due by December 1.

Participation in class discussions (10%). You are expected to participate in class discussions each week. Please inform me if you are unable to attend a class. If you miss more than two classes without good reason (limited to medical or compassionate reasons) you risk a substantial deduction to your participation grade.

A detailed description of the essays and the seminar presentation will be provided at the start of the term (on OWL). The essays and your presentation notes/ .ppt should be uploaded on OWL.

Academic Accommodations

The University policy regarding accommodations for medical illness can be found here:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf

Accommodations on compassionate grounds (defined as death or serious illness in the family) will be granted by the Centre Director and instructor in consultation.

Incompletes must be approved by the Director (or by the student's home department) in consultation with the instructor. The policy can be obtained from the Centre Office. If an incomplete is granted, a date will be determined for submission of outstanding work, after which the full penalty will apply.

Academic Offences

As part of university policy, we are required to stress that scholastic offences (including but not limited to plagiarism) are taken seriously. For more information, please consult the Academic Handbook, Appeals, Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

WEEKLY TOPICS and READINGS:

Week 1: Mental health and well-being before Freud

Readings: Excerpts from Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*; Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*

- von Krafft-Ebing: Available online (UWO Library) – .pdf of required excerpts provided on OWL – Read the following: Preface to 1st edition (v-vii); Preface to 10th edition (ix); Publishers' preface to 10th edition (xi); Part I (1-25), II (26-42). OPTIONAL Part V (472-582).
- Freud, *Three Essays*: Translation by James Strachey available online (UWO Library), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007130196?> – Read the following: Preface to the Second Edition + Third + Fourth (xvi-xviii); The Sexual Aberrations (1-38); Infantile Sexuality (39-72).

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

Readings: Excerpts from Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and (optional) *Civilization and Its Discontents*; Klein, *The Psycho-analysis of Children* and (optional) *Love, Guilt, and Reparation*

- Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: Translated by James Strachey, 1950, available online (UWO Library), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000656800?> – Read parts I-III (1-26) and VI (58-84).
- Klein, *The Psycho-analysis of Children*. Translation by Alix Strachey, 1975 edition, available online (UWO Library), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000020082?> – Read Part I Ch. 6 & 7 (95-122) and Part II Ch.8 (123-148)
- OPTIONAL: Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, .pdf (scan) provided on OWL – Read Chapters 6 & 7
- OPTIONAL: Klein, *Love, Guilt, and Reparation* – .pdf (scan) provided on OWL

Week 3: Narcissus and Oedipus: A second look

Readings: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*: “Echo and Narcissus”; Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*. Excerpts from Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* and *On Narcissism*; Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*.

- Ovid, Sophocles: .pdf (scan) on OWL (the poem is short; read the highlighted portions from the play)
- Freud, *On Narcissism*, Translated by James Strachey, .pdf on OWL (approx. 30 pages)
- Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* – Read Part I Ch. 4 The Dialectic of Civilization (78-105); Part II Ch. 7 Phantasy and Utopia & Ch. 8 The Images of Orpheus and Narcissus (140-171)
- OPTIONAL Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, Translated by James Strachey, 1955 edition. Available online (UWO Library), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015001394421> – Read Ch. V section B, The Material and Sources of Dreams – Infantile Material as Source of Dreams (165-188), Ch. VI The Dream Work sections A & B, Condensation and Displacement (279-309)

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 & 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).