

School of Human Studies
Ambedkar University Delhi
Course Outline

Course Code: SHS201722

Title: Reading Freud

Type of Course: Discipline Core Course

Cohort for which it is compulsory: MA Psychology (Psychosocial Clinical Studies)

Cohort for which it is elective: None

No of Credits: 4

Semester and Year Offered: 2nd Semester (Winter Semester 2018)

Course Coordinator and Team: Anshumita Pandey, Anup Dhar, Ashok Nagpal, Rachana Johri

Email of course coordinator: anshumita@aud.ac.in

Pre-requisites: None

Aim:

Freud provides the foundation for much of what gets to be called clinical psychology and psychotherapy in the modern context, either directly through further elaborations of his work or indirectly as critique. His clinical insights are closely aligned with a critique of society. In foregrounding the irrational, the child and the body, Freud provides a backdrop through which to examine modernity and its project of rationality. Additionally, the development of the case study as a nuanced rendering of psychic history of a single person remains one of the hallmarks of Freudian writing and provides a new window through which to imagine the idea of research. Traversing such routes, the course aims to provide to the student a theoretical introduction to the human psyche as revealed through the subversive insights of Sigmund Freud. The course explores psychoanalysis as a school of thought by tracing (and circumscribing) its seminal ideas in the writings of Sigmund Freud. His corpus and a close reading of Freud in the original is the mainstay of the course. This close reading aims to familiarize students with the dynamics and processes of the psyche as well as the unique Freudian metapsychology which situates psyche, soma and society in an inseparable triad.

Brief description of modules/ Main modules: The course introduces students to the original writings of Freud. A brief biographical and historical sketch allows the student to explore some philosophical, contextual and life historical themes that led to the birth of psychoanalysis and informed Freud as a thinker. Students are then familiarized with the idea of reading a text as we locating in reading a form of engaged practice. We proceed by delving into the unique vocabulary of Freudian metapsychology where a list of selected papers from Freud's corpus (the exact readings may vary from year to year) lays the foundation to the reception and understanding of the human psyche. An attempt throughout, as one reads (with) Freud, as one learns to read (with) Freud is to trace the unconscious, its manifestations and its dynamics – a theme that runs as a constant and is constantly re-incarnated in Freud's writing. It is through these repeated returns that Freud constructs for us the Unconscious as a particular kind of object, as an 'object of inquiry' as it ceases to be *adjectival* and becomes *substantive*.

1. 'The Freudian moment'

The invention of psychoanalysis realizes a preconception that has been around for thousands of years says Christopher Bollas in *The Freudian Moment*. Taking our cue here, we learn to *place* Freud. The opening unit allows the student to meet Freud – the person and the thinker – rooted in the socio-cultural climate of 19th Century Vienna and the intellectual currents that characterized the same. The student gets a glimpse of the conditions and predispositions (both personal and social) within which Freud's thought came to fruition and thus the contexts that marked the birth of originary text(s) in psychoanalysis.

2. On Reading

How have we thought about the act of reading? Have we thought about it? What is interpretation? Can reading/interpreting plunge us into conflict? A conflict of interpretations? Can moments of such impasse be converted into avenues of reading? Do we need a theory of readability? Given the crucial emphasis on 'reading' in *Reading Freud*, at the very outset the student is oriented into the active, involving act that reading is and how at all times, depending on how she encounters and engages with the text, is constructing it for herself. In this spirit, the unit introduces the possible routes into the text: entry point, symptomatic, contrapuntal and deconstructive, each opening up a different relation to the text, to the author, to the author as text.

3. Hysteria as symptom, Hysteria as discourse:

We begin our excursion into Freudian metapsychology with a reading of selections from *Studies in Hysteria*. Hysteria opens up for the student both clinical and critical routes to the study of the human subject. We see Freud already grappling with many themes like sexuality, unconscious, the nature of memory and dreams – precocious kernels of thought that will keep getting re-formulated and elaborated in his later writings. As we pursue both a gendered and a traumatic aetiology of hysteria, the foregrounding of a signifying

and saturated body inaugurates questions of desire, pleasure and fantasy, what it means *to own* a body and the fallibility of paternal law with this supreme form of expression constituting a radical interrogation. These themes can further be traced in Freud's essays on sexuality for a fuller statement.

4. Dreams and the Writing Pad: A Mis-en-scene

If hysteria alerts us to the 'petrified signs' of speech, with dreams and Freud's *Traumdeutung* we open up the mystic writing of the psyche. So originary a production that it's 'models shall borrow not from spoken language or verbal form, nor even from phonetic writing but from a script which is never subject to, never exterior or posterior to, the spoken word', says Derrida. Selections from *Interpreting Dreams* allows the student to explore *the setting* and *the text* of dreaming along with Freud.

5. From Freud's Clinic:

A close reading of some of Freud's case studies takes the student straight into his clinic, his meticulous observations and the method in his work even as one can locate moments where he falters. Dora, Wolfman or Schreber become figures Freud is constantly in conversation with.

6. Theorizing Loss:

Readings like *Mourning and Melancholia*, *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through*, *Splitting of the Ego*, *Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis* allow one to witness subtle portraits of the psyche – melancholic, capable of endless splitting, caught between the twin wishes to avow and disavow, at times foreclosed. We see the play of absence/presence, inscription/erasure that create the Freudian unconscious with deferral and repetition creating the possibility of integration and re-inscription.

7. Freudian Metapsychology :

We complete a journey of Freud's corpus with readings like *The Unconscious*, *The Ego and the Id*, *The Mystic Writing Pad*. From questions pertaining to the filling of sensory content with meaning, questions exploring the nature of plurivocal communication to those of the apparatus we must conceive of in order to represent psychical writing, these readings allow a fuller statement and grasp of the **System Unconscious**.

Assessment Details with weights:

1. In class written assessment – 40% (First week March)
2. End term writing (paper/ in class reflective writing) – 40% (End April)
3. Attendance and class participation – 20% (through the semester)

Reading List:

- Mannoni, O. (1971) Freud: The Theory of the Unconscious. Pantheon Books: London
- Bollas, C. (2007) The Freudian Moment. Karnac Books: London
- Brickman, C. (2003) Aboriginal Populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis. Columbia University Press: New York
- Breuer, J. & Freud, S. (1893-95), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), Studies in Hysteria: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume II. Vintage Books: London
- Breuer, J. & Freud, S. (1900-01), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), The Interpretation of Dreams: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volumes IV & V. Vintage Books: London
- Breuer, J. & Freud, S. (1901-05), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), Three essays on the theory of sexuality: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1911-13), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), Remembering, Repeating and Working Through: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1914-16), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), The Unconscious: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1914-16), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), Mourning and Melancholia: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1923 -25), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), The Ego and the Id: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1923-25), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1923-25), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), Neurosis and Psychosis: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1923-25), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), Loss of reality in Neurosis and Psychosis: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX. Vintage Books: London
- Freud, S. (1925-26), Strachey, J. ed. (2001), An Autobiographical Study: The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XX. Vintage Books: London
- Phillips, A. ed. (2006), Sigmund Freud: The Penguin Freud Reader. Penguin Books: London
- Bronfen, E. (1998), The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its discontents. Princeton University Press: New Jersey
- Dhar AK. (2009-10), Samiksa Volume 60. Journal of The Indian Psychoanalytical Society: Kolkata.

- Althusser, L. & Balibar, E. (1970), Introduction: Reading Capital. NLB
- Derrida, J. (1967), Freud and the Scene of Writing: Writing and Difference. University of Chicago Press.
- Felman, S. (2003), Writing and Madness. Stanford University Press.
- Erikson, E. (1964). The First Psychoanalyst: Insight and Responsibility. WW Norton: New York
- Huston, J (1962) Freud: The Secret Passion. Universal Pictures: United States