Since the height of his fame in 1960s France, the ideas of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan have had an enduring influence on disciplines ranging from philosophy and cultural studies to anthropology and literary criticism, to say nothing of his continued impact upon psychoanalytic practice. Despite his importance, the status of Lacan's published texts remains ambiguous. What became Lacan's magnum opus, his 'Écrits' published in French in 1966, found its inception largely in spoken presentations, rendering its title self-consciously ironic. His weekly seminar, running from 1953 until just prior to his death in 1981, saw Lacan dazzle his audience with provocative commentary on more or less the entirety of the Western intellectual tradition, from Greek mythology, to German idealism, to contemporary developments in theoretical mathematics, all with the aim of providing Freudianism with a firm theoretical foundation. And yet, the seminars as we have them today have been significantly standardized and edited by Lacan's son-in-law, Jacques-Alain Miller, raising questions of authorship, of textual (in)stability and of the limits of translation that Lacan himself often posed.

In this course, we will return to the often-labyrinthine texts of Lacan, with the aim of holding open rather than precipitously burying these multiple ambiguities. We will explore Lacan's conflicted relation to philosophy, his complicated engagement with Freud, and his innovative practice of reading, with the aim of getting a sense of how his project evolved over time in response to questions returned to with an obsessive urgency: how are we to characterize the relation of language to the real? How did Freud's theorization of the unconscious both disrupt and incorporate the philosophical tradition? What is the relationship between the unconscious and broader social and political pressures? Is there such a thing as a stable sexual identity?

**Required Books (all in paperback):**