PSYC673: Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice
Spring 2015
Dr Derek Hook

Place: 202 Rockwell Hall

Times: Mondays: 12.00 – 2.40

Office hours: By appointment

Email: hookd@duq.edu


COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

Lacanian psychoanalysis has (a not unjustified) reputation for being opaque, overly-theoretical, and beyond the realm of viable everyday clinical application. In some respects this is due to Lacan's own much-derided baroque style, and for the formalism that typifies the way he chose to represent his ideas (take for example his 'mathemes', his use of formulas derived from topology, mathematic and linguistics). This reputation is also partly due to how Lacan's ideas have been disseminated in the English-speaking world, that is, through literary scholars, and students of critical social theory, for whom the realm of the clinic remains typically a secondary to goals of literary interpretation or political theorization. This course is based on the premise that although frequently frustrating and difficult, Lacan's work means nothing at all unless it - eventually, after some struggle - lends itself to clinical praxis. This, after all, is the domain that Lacan pledged his allegiance to, and the first and most appropriate setting for the application and extension of his ideas.

Here then emerges one of the key objectives of the course: to facilitate a constant movement from Lacanian theory to the clinical arena, and back again. Or, more simply put: to render Lacanian theory practicable. This is by no means to discount other (socio-political, popular cultural) realms of application. Such expansions and applications of Lacanian theory are to be welcomed, and certainly will be explored. They will however remain linked always to the clinic and the objective of how Lacan's ideas might function in such a setting.

A further objective of the course thus comes into view: that of not-knowing of struggling -and at times no doubt, failing - with Lacan's texts. An interesting 'learning-objective' indeed: to be frustrated by prescribed texts, to fail to know what is being said. The apparent unintelligibility of Lacan's texts, the state of not-knowing they induce in his readers, is itself - so it is often maintained - a kind of clinical training, a disabling of
the imaginary propensity to know, to recognise, to think we understand. The course as such requires a commitment to working with Lacanian texts, and a willingness to undergo the 'negative capability' of being lost within and by them. Differently put: a course objective lies with being able to treat the texts – and very possibly, our own relations to them – as analysable, as coded analytical material that draws us into the vortex of trying to interpret what we do not and perhaps cannot 'know'. The challenge thus prescribed, of being open to what one does not know, may also be framed in an ethical way, as the need to not assimilate others to one's self, to the categories and understanding of one's own ego.

The week-by-week themes of the course are designed to introduce students to many of the rudimentary concepts of Lacanian theory and clinical practice. Although a set of basic readings have been prescribed for each week, this reading list has been supplemented by a more extensive list (divided into introductory, recommended and more advanced readings) which students are encouraged to explore. By providing such a range of readings, the course hopes to support students engaging Lacan at a number of different levels, and from a variety of different interests and backgrounds. The recommended readings should not be taken as in themselves sufficient, as an excuse to avoid the pleasure of struggling with the impenetrability of Lacan's prose.

**STRUCTURE OF SEMINARS:**

50 min lecture + 10 min break

20 min for discussion/student presentations

30 min follow-up lecture + 10 min break

40 min for discussion of clinical and practical applications

**ASSESSMENT:**

Each student will be required to present a 20 minute discussion paper related to one of the week-by-week course topics.

Students will be assessed by a final exam, and by two (+- 10 page) papers. All topics should be agreed upon by Derek. These papers will have two key agendas: introducing a key Lacanian concept (in a well-defined and qualified way) and linking the concept to an existing clinical or socio-political problematic. The aim is that such papers work as teaching aids for your peers and – as stated in the foregoing course objectives - to make Lacanian ideas effectively practicable.

The first of the papers is due on Week 5 of the course, the second is due on Week 10.

**Grading Scale:**
A = 92-100; A- = 90-91; B+ = 88-89; B = 82-87; B- = 80-81; C+ = 78-79; C = 70-77; D = 60-69; F = below 60.

WEEK-BY-WEEK BREAKDOWN OF TOPICS AND BASIC READINGS:

WEEK 1: THE IMAGINARY


WEEK 2: THE FREUDIAN DREAM-WORK


WEEK 3: FULL VERSUS EMPTY SPEECH: LACAN’S L-SCHEMA


WEEK 4: FUNCTION AND FIELD OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE


WEEK 5: THE AGENCY OF THE LETTER, OR, WHAT IS THE LACANIAN UNCONSCIOUS?


**WEEK 6: LACANIAN CLINICAL TECHNIQUE**


**WEEK 7: JOUISSANCE**


**WEEKS 8-9: FORECLOSURE AND PSYCHOSIS**


**WEEK 10: HYSTERIA**


**WEEK 11: OBSESSIONAL NEUROSIS**


**WEEKS 12: THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE PHALLUS**


**WEEK 13: SEXUATION**


APPENDIX: LIST OF ADDITIONAL READINGS:

WEEK 1: THE IMAGINARY

Introductory reading

Recommended reading

Advanced reading

WEEK 2: THE FREUDIAN DREAM-WORK

Introductory reading

Recommended reading


Advanced reading


**WEEK 3: FULL VERSUS EMPTY SPEECH: LACAN'S L-SCHEMA**

Introductory reading


Recommended reading


Advanced reading


**WEEK 4: FUNCTION AND FIELD OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE**

Introductory reading

**Recommended reading**


**Advanced reading**

De Kesel, M. (2014). Subject of language: Reading the function and field of language and speech in psychoanalysis. (Draft manuscript).


**WEEK 5: THE AGENCY OF THE LETTER, OR, WHAT IS THE LACANIAN UNCONSCIOUS?**

**Introductory reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Advanced reading**


**WEEK 6: LACANIAN CLINICAL TECHNIQUE**

**Introductory reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Advanced reading**


**WEEK 7: JOUISSANCE**

**Introductory reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Advanced reading**


**WEEKS 8-9: FORECLOSURE AND PSYCHOSIS**

**Introductory reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Advanced reading**


**WEEK 10: HYSTERIA**

**Introductory reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Advanced reading**

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**WEEK 11: OBSESSATIONAL NEUROSISS**

**Introductory reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Advanced reading**


WEEKS 12: THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE PHALLUS

Introductory reading
Frosh, S. (1994). Sexual difference: Masculinity and psychoanalysis. (Chapter 4: 'Masculine mastery and fantasy, or the meaning of the phallus').

Recommended reading

Advanced reading

WEEK 13: SEXUATION

Introductory reading
Frosh, S. (1994). Sexual difference: Masculinity and psychoanalysis. (Chapter 4: ‘Masculine mastery and fantasy, or the meaning of the phallus’).

**Recommended reading**

**Advanced reading**