Course Description

Psychoanalytic theory attempts to understand and articulate the processes by which we become human social beings acculturated into a system of meanings, prohibitions and identities. In this course we will be focusing specifically on the acculturation of gender identities and how gender differences are understood, produced, reproduced and sometimes challenged in psychoanalytic theories as well as cultural products.

We begin by studying the frequently frustrating and often fascinating work that Sigmund Freud produced on women and sexuality. We will also consider critiques of and engagements with Freud’s work by women Freudians, feminist theorists and critical race theorists. From here we turn to Jacques Lacan who is often heralded as exemplifying a postmodern break with Freudian theory by focusing on the Symbolic dimensions of acculturation and re-theorizing the subject. Lacan’s work has proven critical for several strands of feminist and queer theory, as well as film/screen theory, post-structuralism and some strands of Marxism. We will look at his influences in the work of several French feminist theorists including Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Monique Wittig. We will conclude the semester by exploring performance theory, film theory and theories of spectatorship.

This course seeks to provide you with a rigorous theoretical foundation in key psychoanalytic texts as well as critical engagements with these texts that have enabled feminists to think critically about how gender is produced and reproduced in society. Many of the course readings highlight the power and political potential of play, creativity and fantasy. This will be a major theme we will refer to throughout the semester.

Throughout the semester I will be helping you historicize the work we read by considering the socio-cultural context of its production. We will also be considering the ways psychoanalytic concepts have been appropriated by producers of mass culture where they are consumed by mass audiences. We will consider how these ideas “run amok” in the dominant cultural imaginary affecting how we understand ourselves, each other and the world. To this end we will not be limiting our inquiry of women, sex and psyche to theory, but will also explore literary works, cinematic representations, and other cultural objects where ideas about women’s psyche make an appearance.
**Course Texts**

Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. *Freud on Women: A Reader*

Lacan, Jacques. *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*

Wittig, Monique. *Les Guerilleres*

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*

Some readings are also available on e-reserve and blackboard.

E-reserve password: *psyche*

ALL READINGS MUST BE PRINTED OUT AND BROUGHT TO CLASS!!!!!!! I WILL BE CHECKING AND COMING TO CLASS PREPARED IS PART OF YOUR PARTICIPATION GRADE.

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**Course Expectations/Requirements**

The things you need to do to be successful, include reading, thinking, writing and participating. Pretty standard…

**Reading**

You MUST keep up with the reading. Every class reading builds on the last class reading. If you fall behind you will have a very difficult time playing catch up. I have designed the course to follow a specific arch in the theorization of gender and sexuality. If you don’t read Freud you will not understand Lacan and Butler will make you cry. I don’t want you to cry!

**Thinking**

These texts are difficult. One of the most exciting things about psychoanalytic theory is that it forces us to think and to think differently. To “get” Freud you need to let go of the things you think you know about him. Let these theorists surprise you. When something you read does not immediately make sense do not dismiss it. Pause and try to figure out why it makes sense to the author. Read for comprehension first- critique comes later. Many of these ideas will be new to you. This can be frustrating and uncomfortable. Try to understand this course as an experiment in getting comfortable with being uncomfortable, with not being sure you are right, and with trying to grapple with ideas that can rarely be empirically proven. To that end, we will think about what counts as evidence, what makes someone an expert, what knowledge can do in the world and how knowledge, expertise and what counts as evidence relate to power.

**Writing**

The best way to work through the texts we are reading is to write about them in your own words. You will be responsible for writing responses to the readings as well as for in-class writing assignments. I expect critical engagement at all times. The writing process places you in the position of meaning interpreter (of someone else’s work) and meaning producer (of your own
work and ideas). We will be considering what it means to read, interpret, write and produce knowledge throughout the semester.

Participating

Talking through ideas can be as useful as writing about them. This class will consist of lecture and discussion. Part of your engaged participation requires that you read and come to class prepared to listen to my lectures, ask questions about my lectures, critique my lectures, and produce your own mini-lectures within the class. Discussion is a critical part of the learning process. Use the classroom as a space to test your ideas, interpretations, and critiques. Ask questions and answer them. You should try to let go of your intellectual inhibitions and see this class as a space to push yourself to think differently and work towards articulating ideas that may not be fully formed.

Rules of Engagement

We should be thinking about how we listen and how we speak throughout the semester. To this end I want you to treat your peers like you would/should treat me during discussion. Listen to them, consider their ideas, and ask them questions about how they are reading texts. You will also be asked questions about how you are interpreting texts. This is how we engage with one another. We will treat each other with respect, disagree and agree critically, understand that we are all trying to understand difficult reading material.

Grading

Class Participation/Activities 20%

You will be evaluated based on your active participation in class. This will include participation in discussions, in-class writing assignments, and group activities. I really evaluate participation!!

Response Papers 40%

You will be expected to produce 10 critical responses to the readings. These will be fairly brief (2-3 page) responses that focus on a key idea from the assigned text or texts. After you explain the key idea you are focusing your response on you should respond to this idea. Be critical. What does this idea help you understand? What about it confuses you? Does it resonate with, challenge, or expand on other ideas we have encountered?

These are due at the beginning of the class that the readings will be discussed in. They must be typed, double space, 12 font. No late papers will be accepted.

Final Paper 40%

You will produce one 6-8 page paper that works through and sustains an analysis/critique of one theorist or idea that we have read/discussed this semester. Details will follow.
Web Resources

Introductory Guide to Critical Theory (click on link for psychoanalysis)
http://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/

Lacan Dot Com
http://lacan.com/

Biography on Freud
http://www.sparknotes.com/biography/freud/summary.html

Women and Gender Studies at George Mason

The Women and Gender Studies program offers an interdisciplinary minor to undergraduate students. This is a 21-credit minor that works well with most majors and can be structured to fit your interests. “Representations of Women” provides a good overview of the topics studied. Feminist scholarship has influenced many disciplines and the minor provides students with the tools necessary to engage with issues of gender, race, sexuality and class in various texts and contexts.

The Women and Gender Studies Center is located in the Johnson Center, Room 240K. The Women and Gender Studies Center organizes a variety of lectures, workshops, and other activities relevant to campus life throughout the academic year. They also have a collection of over 1000 books relevant to Gender Studies, which students may check out with their George Mason ID card.

You can learn more about the Women and Gender Studies Minor and the Women’s Center at:
http://www.gmu.edu/acadexcel fingex.html

Reading Schedule

** Recommended texts are not required reading, but are meant to augment the assigned readings and are likely to be helpful starting points for your final paper.

** The professor may change course readings at her discretion.

June 8 (Tuesday) Introduction to the Course

Introductions, syllabus overview, key words and ideas.

Lecture on Freud’s Structural Theory of the Psyche. Taken from “On Narcissism,” “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” and “The Ego and the Id."

June 10 (Thursday) Freud – Power: Narration and Interpretation

Sigmund Freud “Repression” e-reserve

Sigmund Freud “The Unconscious” e-reserve
Sigmund Freud Selections from “Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria” (69-89)

Dianne Hunter “Hysteria, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism” e-reserve

In class viewing *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Recommended:

Sigmund Freud “Hysterical Phantasies and Their Relation to Bisexuality” (146- 152)

June 15 (Tuesday) Freud – Theorizing Sexuality: What kind of deviant are you?

Sigmund Freud *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (89-145)

Paul Robinson “Freud and Homosexuality” (91-97) e-reserve

June 17 (Thursday) – Freud on Women/Women on Freud

Sigmund Freud “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex” (294- 304) and “Femininity” (342-363)

Nancy Chodorow “The Psychodynamics of the Family” e-reserve

Hortense Spillers “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammer Book”

Recommended:

Anne McClintock excerpts from “Massa and Maids: Power and Desire in the Imperial Metropolis” (87 -95) e-reserve

Carol Gilligan “Woman’s Place in Man’s Life Cycle” e-reserve

June 22 (Tuesday) Klein – Childs Play

Deborah P. Britzman “Poor Little Oedipus: On the Pleasures and Disappointments of Sexual Enlightenment” e-reserve

Melanie Klein “Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex” and “A Study of Envy and Gratitude” blackboard

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick “Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes” e-reserve

Recommended:

Juliet Mitchell “Melanie Klein: Her Psychoanalytic Heritage” blackboard

June 24 (Thursday) Lacan

Jacques Lacan *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge* (Jouissance 1-14, The Function of the Written 26-37, Love and the Signifier 38-50)
Angela Carter “Flesh and the Mirror” in *Burning Your Boats* e-reserve

**June 29 (Tuesday) Lacan**

Jacques Lacan *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge* (God and Woman’s Jouissance 64-78, A Love Letter 78-89, Knowledge and Truth 90-103)

Jeanette Winterson “The Poetics of Sex” in *The World and Other Places* e-reserve

Nin Andrews “Notes on the Orgasm” e-reserve

**July 1 (Thursday) When the Goods Got Together**

“Introduction III: Contexts of the New French Feminisms” e-reserve

Helene Cixous “Sorties” e-reserve

Julia Kristeva “Woman Can Never Be Defined” e-reserve

Luce Irigaray “When the Goods Get Together” e-reserve

Monique Wittig *Les Guerilleres* (try to read to 44 – finish for Thursday)

**July 6 (Tuesday) Imagine That (The Politics of Fantasy)**

Monique Wittig *Les Guerilleres*

**July 8 (Thursday) Butler- On Becoming Gendered**

Part 1 “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” *Gender Trouble* (3-44)

In-class *Lilies*

**July 13 (Tuesday) Butler- The Heterosexual Matrix**

Part 2 “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix” *Gender Trouble* (45-100)

**July 15 (Thursday) Butler- Play and Subversion**

Part 3 “Subversive Bodily Acts” *Gender Trouble* (101-180)

In-class *Paris is Burning*

**July 20 (Tuesday) Performativity and Identification: Race/Gender/Sexuality (drag?)**

Conclusion “From Parody to Politics” *Gender Trouble* (181-190)

Eric Lott “Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Black Face Minstrelsy” e-reserve
Ann Pellegrini “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)” e-reserve

E. Patrick Johnson “Manifest Faggotry: Queering Masculinity in African American Culture.” e-reserve

In-Class *Without You I’m Nothing*

**July 22 (Thursday) Good Looking (Spectatorship)**

Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” e-reserve

E. Ann Kaplan “Is the Gaze Male?” e-reserve

Manthia Diawara “Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance” e-reserve

bell hooks “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” e-reserve

Recommended:

Jacqueline Stewart “‘Negroes Laughing at Themselves’? Back Spectatorship and the Performance of Urban Modernity” in *Migrating to the Movies*

Mary Anne Doane “Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator” in *Writing on the Body*