Lacan’s “Discourse of the University” (c. 1968)

“While [psychoanalysis] was originally the name of a particular therapeutic method, it has now also become the name of a science – the science of unconscious mental processes.” – Freud, *An Autobiographical Study* (1925)

The scientific status of psychoanalysis has been a concern of partisans and critics of the Freudian Field from its inception. Freudians have sought to prove their practice a science so as to guarantee its therapeutic relevance and institutional security. (Given the parlous state of psychoanalysis in most of the Anglophone world, they have not been very successful of late.) Lacanians, no less aspiring to relevance and security in other regards, have asserted that Freud’s discovery disrupted the foundations of modern science, revealing its foreclosure of a radical split (*Spaltung*) in the subject that is inadmissible to scientific reason. Critics of psychoanalysis have sought to discredit it by attacking its scientific claims (in the narrowest sense) and, more generally, by ignoring its possible consequences for a philosophy of mind.

The very concept of a “science of unconscious mental processes” presents significant difficulties. The subject of such a science is by definition incommensurate with the undivided, self-transparent witness presupposed by modern scientific rationalism and
empiricism. (And yet, Lacan insists, the psychoanalytic subject can only be the subject of science...) Unconscious determinisms, as Freud and Lacan showed, may be formalized, but their operations are of a different order than those of determinisms of the physical world, and must be addressed according to other measures of cause and effect. Even narrowly-divided opponents in debates about psychoanalysis’s scientific validity or character seem often to be talking about different versions of “science” – a difference, some critics have argued, that psychoanalysis anticipates.

This course will engage basic problems of scientific reason before and after Freud. If psychoanalysis is a science, what kind of science might it be? And if psychoanalysis troubles our understanding of what science is or should be, then what are the consequences of this for a scientific psychoanalysis?

Course readings will include primary texts by Freud and Lacan, texts in the history and philosophy of science (Aristotle, Godfrey-Smith, Kuhn, Popper), and investigations of psychoanalysis sympathetic and hostile to its scientific projects (Crews, Fink, Ginzburg, Glynos and Stavrakakis, Grünbaum, Holland, Milner, Plotnitsky, Roudinesco, Rudnytsky, Sokal and Bricmont, Solms, Verhaeghe). Graded requirements include a seminar presentation on one of the assigned readings, a prospectus of and annotated bibliography for a research paper, and the final version of the paper, of 15–20 pages in length.

**Required texts to purchase**

These texts are available for purchase at Goerings Book Store, 1717 NW 1st Avenue (voice: 377-3703).


**Required or recommended reserve readings**

These texts are held on online reserve (Ares) at UF’s George A. Smathers Libraries <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>, or are available at the URLs noted below.


**Other resources**

As the semester progresses, I will post information about texts or resources discussed in class, but not among the assigned readings, to an “Other resources” web page, at <http://www.english.ufl.edu/~tharpold/courses/spring08/eng6016/resources.html>. You should review this page from time to time for suggestions regarding supplemental readings, pointers to online research materials, etc.
Attendance, assignments, & grading

Attendance & lateness. The texts we will read are complex, subtle, and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with all required reading assignments and come to class prepared and on time. Moreover, our discussions in class will often include review of materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. After two absences, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class that you miss. I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work for the course. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency, you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 25 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special classroom access, seating, or other needs because of disability, please do not hesitate to bring those to my attention, so that I may make appropriate accommodations for them.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting, or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances, you must notify me of this conflict in advance so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

The use of computers and other electronic devices in class. Students may use laptop computers and other portable electronic devices in class for the purposes of taking notes during class discussion or for in-class presentations. WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, etc., unrelated to class activities is inappropriate and will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit the use of all electronic devices in class by individual students and/or the class as a whole. Cell phones, pagers, and other communication devices may not be used during class meetings, and must be turned off at the start of class.

Assignments & grading. Your final grade will be determined by your performance on three assignments:

- Seminar presentation on one of the assigned readings: 20%
- Prospectus & annotated bibliography for final paper: 20%
- Final paper (15–20 pages): 60%
Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

- **A**  90–100  
- **B+**  87–89  
- **B**  80–86  
- **C**  70–76

If you do not complete an assignment, you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you’ve been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may turn in an assignment late without penalty only if you have a written medical excuse for the day of the class meeting from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in a legal proceeding, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family.

**Format, topics, & due dates of writing assignments.** Written assignments must be submitted on paper and follow guidelines on format and citation methods that I will distribute in class. You must submit two copies of every assignment. I will keep one copy, and return the other to you, marked with my comments and corrections.

**Seminar presentations.** I will post a sign-up sheet for seminar presentations before the second meeting of the course, and the schedule of presentations will be fixed upon by that meeting. The presentations, of preference only one and no more than two per class meeting, will begin on February 4.

**Research paper prospectuses.** Students’ prospectuses and annotated bibliographies for their research papers must be distributed to the class as a whole prior to the March 24 meeting. That meeting will be devoted to a discussion of the papers.

**Research papers.** Completed final papers are due a week after the final meeting of the course, on April 28, by 5 PM.

**Policy on academic honesty**

The University community’s policies and methods regarding academic honesty are clearly spelled out in the Academic Honesty Guidelines. The Guidelines are printed in full in the current Undergraduate Catalog, and are available online from the Office of Student Judicial Affairs home page of the Dean of Students Office WWW site, at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
• Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.

• False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. This may include a reduced or failing grade for the course as a whole or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Course calendar

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Reading</th>
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| Jan 7 | Course introduction  
Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*  
| Jan 14 | Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, chs. I, II, III |
| Jan 21 | No class meeting (Martin Luther King Day) |
| Jan 28 | Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality*  
Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* |
| Feb 4 | Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*  
Freud, “The Claims of Psycho-analysis to Scientific Interest” |
| Feb 11 | Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, chs. IV & V  
Ginzburg, “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm” |
| Feb 18 | Popper, “Demarcation”  
Popper, “Conjectures and Refutations” |
| Feb 25 | Freud, “Project for a Scientific Psychology”  
Solms, “An Example of Neuro-Psychoanalytic Research: Korsakoff’s Syndrome”  
Solms, “The Interpretation of Dreams and the Neurosciences” |
Mar 3  
Grünbaum, “Is Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic Edifice Relevant to the 21st Century?”  
Holland, “Psychoanalysis as Science” (both versions and responses)  
Rudnytsky, “Psychoanalysis and the Dream of Consilience”

Mar 10  
**No class meeting (Spring Break)**

Mar 17  
Aristotle, *Physics*, Book II  
Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*

Mar 24  
*In-class discussions of research paper prospectuses*

Mar 31  
Fink, “The Real Cause of Repetition”  
Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, chs. VI & VII  
Verhaeghe, “Causality in Science and Psychoanalysis”

Apr 7  
Milner, “Lacan and the Ideal of Science”

Apr 14  
Glynos and Stavrakakis, “Postures and Impostures”  
Plotnitsky, “Versions of the Irrational”  
Sokal and Bricmont, “Jacques Lacan”

Apr 21  
**Final class meeting**  
*Course review*

Apr 28  
**Research papers due (5 PM)**