ENG 6016: “Psychology & Literature: Against Adaptation (Re-reading Lacan)”

Professor Terry Harpold
Summer 2006
M & W, 3:30–6:15 PM (periods 6–7)
Turlington 4112

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Course description

This course is occasioned by the publication in early 2006 of Bruce Fink’s complete English translation of Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits*. For more than a quarter century, *Écrits: A Selection*, Alan Sheridan’s 1977 translation of selected essays from Lacan’s most important published work has been among the most widely-read texts of twentieth-century critical thought, despite its obvious and often consequential misrepresentations of Lacan’s original texts. Fink (re)translated those essays in 2002 for a new edition of *Écrits: A Selection*. This first complete edition of *Écrits* in English presents English-speaking readers with an opportunity to revisit familiar Lacanian territories and to strike out into others, less well-known.

The course title is taken from that of Philippe Van Haute’s masterful close reading of Lacan’s essay “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious.” “Subversion” is one of most dense and challenging of Lacan’s shorter written texts. It is also one of the most significant. Based on Lacan’s Seminar V (“Les Formations de l’inconscient,” 1957–58), “Subversion” marks a turn in Lacan’s teaching, from his emphasis in the 1950s on orders of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the dependence of psychic structure on operations of language, to his development in the 1960s of the concepts of the objet petit a, the real, and the fantasy. At the centers of the Seminar and the essay are the famous (or infamous, if you prefer) Graphs of Desire. These strange, compelling loops and sigles represent the most elaborate of Lacan’s early attempts to codify and transmit his teachings via graphic and para-mathematical objects.

“Subversion” is arguably the culmination of many of the theoretical trajectories sketched out in *Écrits*. We will rely on Van Haute’s lucid and insightful book to guide our way through the fascinating, sometimes baffling defiles of this evocative, essential essay.

Readings for the course will include an eclectic selection of essays from Fink’s new translation, including several that appear there for the first time in English, and all of Van Haute’s *Against Adaptation*. Dylan Evans’s *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* will serve as an valuable guide to Lacan’s technical idiom. We will also read selections from Peter Gay’s edited collection, *The Freud Reader* (Norton, 1995). Graded assignments include two in-class presentations and two 8-page précis/commentaries on essays from *Écrits*.

Required texts

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


This text is available on electronic reserve (ERes) at UF’s George A. Smathers Libraries <http://eres.uflib.ufl.edu>.


**Recommended texts**


This text is available on electronic reserve (ERes) at UF’s George A. Smathers Libraries <http://eres.uflib.ufl.edu>.


**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. This is, moreover, a seminar class; we will spend most of our time in class reading and discussing texts closely and precisely. 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 are ready if an 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 well in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

**The use of computers and other electronic devices in class**

Students are free to 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, however, 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 the average of four assignments:

- In-class presentation A: 15%
- In-class presentation B: 15%
- Commentary A: 35%
- Commentary B: 35%

Grades are calculated on a numerical scale, as below:

- A 90–100
- B+ 87–89
- C+ 77–79
- B 80–86
- C 70–76

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 a written assignment late without penalty only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious injury occurs in your family. In each of the cases, I will expect you to notify me of the
reason(s) for your absence(s) in a timely manner, and may ask you for written documentation of them.

The presentations & commentaries

In the second week of class, I will distribute a sign-up sheet on which you may indicate your ranked preferences with regard to three of the seven presentation/commentary slots noted in the course calendar, below. I will collate student preferences, and will attempt to assign each student her or his first and second choices from among the slots. (You will write one commentary and give one presentation for each of two slots.) As many as three students may give presentations on the same text. Please note that, barring emergencies or unexpected class cancellations, a presentation and commentary assigned to you must be given on that date. Late commentaries will not be accepted; changes of date for a presentation and commentary may be difficult or impossible to arrange after the first two weeks of the semester.

On the class meeting dates corresponding to the presentation/commentary slots assigned to you, you will be responsible for:

- an 8 page written commentary on / précis of the assigned text for that slot. This text must be distributed to the class 24 hours prior to the class meeting time, either in printed form or (preferably), electronically. The commentary should be designed as a guide and response to the primary text for that class meeting for other students in the course. (Early in the semester, I will review in detail the format and content requirements of these commentaries.)

- an in-class presentation (20–30 minutes) on the assigned text for that slot. You will, in effect, lead the initial class discussion on that date.

In the likely event that one of your presentation/commentary assignments overlaps with that of another student – that is, you are assigned to successive classes in which the same text is our focus of attention – I will request that you collaborate with the other student to design the emphasis of your presentations so as to overlap minimally, while still covering the text with appropriate conciseness and rigor.

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

$S1 \rightarrow S2$

July 3  
Course introduction  
Van Haute, Against Adaptation, “Introduction” & ch. 1

July 5  
Recommended reading: Fink, “The Nature of Unconscious Thought”

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July 10  
Freud, excerpts from “On Beginning the Treatment,” “Observations on Transference-Love” (The Freud Reader)  
Lacan, “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”  
Recommended reading: Fink, Lacan to the Letter, ch. 1
July 12  
Freud, excerpts from *The Ego and the Id* (*The Freud Reader*)
Lacan, “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”
*Recommended reading:* Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, ch. 2

**Presentations/commentaries 1**

July 17  
Freud, excerpts from *The Interpretation of Dreams*,
“Repression,” “The Unconscious” (*The Freud Reader*)
Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”

**Presentations/commentaries 2**

July 19  
**No class meeting**

July 24  
Lacan, “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud”
Lacan, “Metaphor of the Subject”
*Recommended reading:* Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, ch. 3

**Presentations/commentaries 3**

July 26  
Freud, “Negation” (*The Freud Reader*)
Lacan, “Introduction to Jean Hyppolite’s Commentary on Freud’s ‘Verneinung’”
Hyppolite, “A Spoken Commentary on Freud’s ‘Verneinung’”
Lacan, “Response to Jean Hyppolite’s Commentary on Freud’s ‘Verneinung’”

**Presentations/commentaries 4**

July 31  
Freud, “Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes” (*The Freud Reader*)
Lacan, “The Signification of the Phallus”

**Presentations/commentaries 5**
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading/Activity</th>
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| Aug 2 | Van Haute, *Against Adaptation*  
Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject”  
**Presentations/commentaries 6** |
| Aug 7 | Van Haute, *Against Adaptation*  
Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject”  
**Presentations/commentaries 7** |
| Aug 9 | Lacan “Kant with Sade”  
**Final class meeting** |