

Literature and Psychology

COLI 211B Section 01

Science 2, Room G35

Tues. and Thurs. 10:05-11:30 am

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Salvador Dali. *Persistence of Memory*. 1931. [ARTstor](#).

Department of Comparative Literature
Binghamton University
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Office Hours: By appointment
Course Objectives and Description:

Literature . . . and psychology???

To begin, we might ask ourselves what forces are at work in bringing these two, distinct disciplines into contact with one another and, furthermore, why such a combination might occur in a comparative literature course. True, the very notion of a discipline is shaky at best, but our approach will permit us to look at both literature and psychology without forcing the one to subordinate the other. So, we begin with the question: *Why literature and psychology?* - but hopefully our answers will continue to expand beyond the borders of our class-time together and lead us to ask this question of other pairings of thought. It is certain that our answer to the question of the combination of literature and psychology will involve a conception of language and what it *does*. After all, psychoanalysis is founded on the idea of the "talking cure."

One might argue that both psychoanalysis and literary analysis are, in a way, processes because it is in the "doing" of them that they appear. When I read and think about a poem - that is literary analysis. The moments when a patient describes her dreams - this is when analysis occurs. If we pursue this perspective further, we find that we must address the relation between the material and immaterial, for it is in this relation that the process of analysis emerges. This point is even more pertinent for the pairing of two fields of study that do not seem to fit together so easily. Throughout this course, we might ask: What does it mean to be immaterial? Is it or should it be subject to the material? What, in psychoanalysis and literature, constitutes the material and the immaterial? Is the division between the two a clear one? Furthermore, is there a division at all? Considering that Freud's conception of the unconscious complicates the border between waking life and the material world and the dream state and the world of the mind, our discussions of materiality and immateriality will be central to our understanding of what it means to analyze.

This course will have a double focus: the Freudian project of psychoanalysis and various readings of literature. We will not only try to map out Freud's concepts and determine their significance for psychoanalysis both past and present, but also look at the copious literary allusions and methods Freud employs in his texts; we might say that Freud's texts become an object for our literary analysis. Likewise, we will encounter several poems, short stories, plays, and films in order to examine how a psychoanalytic approach to literature progresses; in this sense, we will make our literary texts an object of our psychoanalytic methodology. But is this enough? Are these two ways of approaching Freudian theory and literature adequate to either? Why Freud? These will be the big questions that we will discuss at length throughout the course of our semester together.

This course will place an emphasis on the readings of theoretical texts, therefore it is imperative that students complete assigned readings on time, as it will be difficult to keep up and extremely easy to fall behind. Since this course fulfills the core C requirement, some of its goals will be to familiarize you with some methods of textual interpretation, to show you the value of your literary insights, to improve your writing and documentation skills, and to encourage you to grow in the practice of thinking critically, deeply, and creatively. This class's texts are all thoroughly good reads, but we will take our analysis beyond the surfaces and try to discover just what these literary works and theoretical texts are attempting to tell us about our lives. This is especially important since psychoanalysis has become a powerful force in our contemporary culture. Students will have the opportunity to be creative and explore ideas that interest them and that may relate to their own disciplines.

Students are more than encouraged - they are *required* - to contribute original ideas to the class discussion so that we can practice listening closely to our peers and experience the texts from their perspectives; sharing your interpretations and point of view is a gift that only you can give. However, please remember that your opinion is like your belly button, and that everyone has one. Opinions are not suitable material for graded assignments because the papers should demonstrate a *critical* engagement with a text. Participation constitutes 20% of the final grade, and it is something that each student must

actively work toward. Various artworks and films will be viewed in class in order to expand our understanding of the texts. **Your continued enrollment in this class means that you agree to read and view all required materials.** Students in this course will improve their writing skills by completing assignments on time, participating in class discussions, and meeting with the instructor once during the semester **BEFORE the final paper is due.** Students will have consultations with the instructor after submitting written assignments.

Required Texts:

Freud, Sigmund. Beyond the Pleasure Principle. Trans. and Ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1989.
Freud, Sigmund. On Dreams. Trans. and Ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1989.
Freud, Sigmund. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. Trans. and Ed. James Strachey. N.p.: Basic Books, 2000.
Norris, Frank. McTeague. New York: Signet, 2003.
Shakespeare, William. "Hamlet." Ed. A. R. Braunmuller. New York: Penguin, 2001.
Sophocles. "Antigone." Trans. David Grene. Sophocles I. Ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.
Sophocles. "Oedipus the King." Trans. David Grene. Sophocles I. Ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.

Recommended:

Freud, Sigmund. The Interpretation of Dreams. Trans. and Ed. James Strachey. New York: Avon, 1998.
Freud, Sigmund. Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics. Trans. and Ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1989.

Course Reserves:

Additional materials will be available on blackboard's e-reserve system.

Assignments, Evaluation and Attendance Policies:

In order to practice critical thinking skills, students are required to write a formal, two page presentation paper (that will be presented to the class (8-10 minutes) at an assigned date and on an assigned topic), five 2 ½ - 3 page response papers (lowest grade to be dropped) and a final 4 ½ - 5 page paper (with re-write - I will average the first and second grades for this paper). The presentation should be taken seriously and incorporate visual materials, a thorough textual analysis, and time for questions. All papers will be graded for grammatical precision, integration of text and research, and above all, depth of understanding. Students turn in all of their papers each time they turn in a new paper so that I can see whether or not my comments on the papers are being heeded. If I find myself repeating things I have already told you in a paper, then you will find your grade getting lower and lower. Likewise, if I see a marked attempt to improve each paper, the grade will go higher and higher. Readings for each class must be completed before that class session. Unannounced in-class essays will be frequent, therefore the required readings must always be completed on time - and completed well. If it is clear from the papers that a student is not completing the reading, the participation grade will suffer considerably.

Each student must meet with the instructor once during the semester to receive feedback before writing the 4 ½ - 5 page paper. However, students are encouraged to seek help anytime during appointed office hours. All e-mail correspondence must be as professional as possible (i.e. do not use emoticons) and all e-mails concerning this class need to have COLI 211B in the subject heading. Cell phones, laptops, newspapers (or other reading material not related to this class) and any other gadgets are not permitted in the classroom. Students who fall asleep, text-message, or carry on private conversations with other students in class will be asked to leave the room. We only have a limited amount of time together, so we will make the most of it.

This is a reading and writing intensive class, therefore time management is a crucial skill students must master. Late work is unacceptable. Students are permitted three absences, **no questions asked**. That means I do not want your doctors' notes, your stories about this and that, etc., etc. Four absences will result in a reduction of significant points from the participation grade, and more than four absences may result in failure of the class. **Students who are absent must still submit assignments on time, no exceptions.** Absent students are responsible for finding out *from fellow classmates* what was missed during the class lecture; absent students are responsible for any syllabus changes (i.e. changes in due dates, homework, etc.) that were discussed during the class period. It is the *student's responsibility* to become familiar with Binghamton University policies regarding absences. **Coming to class late three times will be counted as one absence.**

* Participation (attendance, lateness, contributions to class discussion, in-class writing assignments, correspondence, etc.)	20%
* 2 ½ - 3 Page Response Papers (x5 and drop lowest grade)	45%
* 4 ½ - 5 Page Paper + rewrite (two grades averaged together)	20%
* In-class presentation + 2 page analysis (topic to be assigned and approved by me first)	15%

Academic Honesty:

One of the most important values students will learn in this class is respect for the time and labour of other people's thinking. Under no circumstances will plagiarism be tolerated; all cases of plagiarism will be sent to the Dean and result in partial or total failure of the course. Any questions concerning plagiarism may be raised either in class or during the instructor's office hours, but please ask these questions *before* plagiarism becomes an issue.

Students are required to submit all written assignments to the Turnitin folder in blackboard. Failure to submit papers to Turnitin by 10am on the assigned due date listed on the syllabus will result in reduction of 5 points from the paper's grade for each day it is late.

Tentative Schedule (instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time - includes assignation of additional readings):

Week One:

- 1/29 T Introduction to the course
- 1/31 R Writing skills, instructions for papers, review of worksheets, introduction to Freud

Week Two:

- 2/5 T Freud, On Dreams chapters 1-6; House rules
- 2/7 R Freud, On Dreams chapters 7- Finish

Week Three:

- 2/12 T Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams chapter 7 (e-reserve)
- 2/14 R Finish discussion of Freudian dream analysis ****First response paper due****

Week Four:

- 2/19 T Film: "Big Fish"
- 2/21 R Finish "Big Fish"; Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: Preface to the 4th edition, introduction, and Essay 1: "The Sexual Abberations"

Week Five:

- 2/26 T Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: Essay 2: "Infantile Sexuality"
- 2/28 R Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: Essay 3: "The Transformation of Puberty"; Film: "Un Chien Andalou"

Week Six:

3/4 T Sophocles, "Oedipus the King"

****Second response paper due****

3/6 R Sophocles, "Oedipus the King"

Week Seven:

3/11 T Freud, Totem and Taboo chapter 2: "Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence" (e-reserve)

3/13 R Stendhal, "The Cenci" (e-reserve)

Week Eight:

3/18 T Hoffmann, "The Sandman" (e-reserve)

3/20 R Freud, "The Uncanny" (e-reserve)

Week Nine: Spring Break, no classes

Week Ten:

4/1 T Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle chapters 1-4

****Third response paper due****

4/3 R Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle chapters 5-7

Week Eleven:

4/8 T Shakespeare, "Hamlet" Act I Scene i - Act III Scene iv

4/10 R Shakespeare, "Hamlet" Act IV Scene i - Finish

Week Twelve:

4/15 T Sophocles, "Antigone"

****Fourth response paper due****

4/17 R Lacan, "Antigone between Two Deaths"

Week Thirteen:

4/22 T Fink, "The Subject and the Other's Desire"

4/24 R Finish notes on Freud and Lacan

Week Fourteen:

4/29 T Marx, Capital chapter one (e-reserve)

******4.5-5 page paper due******

5/1 R Finish discussion of Capital; McTeague

Week Fifteen:

5/6 T McTeague

5/8 R McTeague

****Fifth response paper due****



Andre Brouillet. *Charcot at the Salpetriere*. 1887. [ARTstor](#).