

School of Arts & Sciences Prospectus fall 2024

Introduction to Psychoanalysis: History, Theory, Practice

ENGL 0052-401 / COML 0052-401

Professor Max Cavitch and Dr. [tbd]

course description and requirements

Psychoanalysis is not only a powerful form of therapy for numerous psychological stresses and disorders, but also a comprehensive way of looking at the world. Psychoanalysis can help all of us understand: 1) the roles that emotions play in all aspects of our lives; 2) the enormous influence of childhood experiences and early development on our later friendships, romantic relationships, sexual experiences, and other personal, familial, cultural, and professional bonds and identities; and 3) the rich and complex meanings of our social and aesthetic experiences (e.g., going to college, playing a sport, reading a book, taking a vacation, having a baby or adopting a dog, creating a company, tending a garden, etc.). The theory and practice of psychoanalysis, from Sigmund Freud to the present day, is based fundamentally on the importance of unconscious processes and the complex ways in which those processes affect our lived experience: in childhood development and family relationships; in our wishes, dreams, and fantasies; in our experiences of work, play, love, sex, trauma, and loss; and in our creative, spiritual, and political strivings.

Because the course aims to link the academic and the clinical, it will be team-taught by an academic faculty member and a practicing psychoanalyst. The course will introduce students to the broad and ever-expanding range of psychoanalytic ideas and techniques, through the reading and discussion of major works by some of its most influential figures, including Freud, Sándor Ferenczi, Melanie Klein, Heinz Kohut, Erik Erikson, D. W. Winnicott, Jacques Lacan, Wilfred Bion, John Bowlby, Stephen Mitchell, Jessica Benjamin, Nancy Chodorow, and Christopher Bollas. We will also read some literary, historical, philosophical, and anthropological works that have special relevance to the psychoanalytic exploration of the human condition. In fact, the course will demonstrate how effectively psychoanalysis bridges a wide variety of disciplines in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences—including recent developments in neuropsychology.

No prior knowledge of psychoanalysis is required, and interested students from all disciplines are warmly welcomed. The reading assignment for the second class meeting will be Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Are You My Mother?*, if you want to get a head-start over Summer Break.

Please note: in addition to the other requirements it satisfies, this course may also be counted toward completion of the Psychoanalytic Studies minor (<http://web.sas.upenn.edu/psys/>). Requirements will include regular quizzes, some in-class group exercises, a mid-term exam, and a final exam.

class structure

Class meetings will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 12:00pm (noon) to 1:15pm, and attendance is mandatory.

There will always be a mixture of lecture and class discussion, and everyone is expected to participate.

In-class participation means 1) coming to class having read all of the assigned material, 2) listening attentively to the instructors and to your fellow students, and 3) speaking up with comments and questions of your own on a regular basis (as class size permits).

In-class participation is not only a requirement of the course, but also a crucial part of studying speaking and listening psychoanalytically.

assignments

For each class meeting, there will be one or more required readings (and a few viewings of short films), which everyone is expected to complete before coming to class.

The frequent, unannounced quizzes will be based on the required readings for that day. Each quiz will have ten straightforward questions—that is, if you complete the required reading attentively, you should have no trouble answering the questions correctly. The types of questions will include multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short-response (i.e., two or three sentences). Quizzes will begin promptly at 12:00pm and will end at 12:05pm (thus, if you are late or absent, you will fail that day’s quiz). There will be no “make-up” quizzes, but, at the end of the semester, your lowest quiz score will be dropped. Students who submit a valid Course Absence Notice (CAN) will not be penalized if there is a quiz that day.

In-class group exercises will vary in nature depending on the material and on class size.

Both the mid-term exam and the final exam will be, like the quizzes, straightforward. Unlike the quizzes, they will be comprehensive and will include some short essay questions in addition to multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short-response questions.

required readings

The required readings will include several inexpensive books for purchase at your preferred online vendor (e.g., Amazon, B&N, Abe, etc.); they will NOT be available at the campus bookstore. The rest of the required readings will be available for downloading and printing. Students must bring a copy of the assigned readings to class with them, whether as printed pages or as pdfs downloaded to your preferred device. If you prefer to use e-copies, your device must have software that allows you to annotate the readings.

student assistance

All students can consult with [Student Financial Services](#) to find out what support they are eligible to receive to cover course costs or other items that ensure their health, safety, and secure learning environment.

The Weingarten Center offers a variety of resources to support all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. All services are free and confidential. To contact the Weingarten Center, call 215-573-9235. The office is located in Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300.

Learning consultations and learning strategies workshops support students in developing more efficient and effective study skills and learning strategies. Learning specialists work with undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to address time and project management, academic reading and writing, note-taking, problem-solving, exam preparation, test-taking, self-regulation, and flexibility.

Undergraduates can also take advantage of free on-campus tutoring for many Penn courses in both drop-in and weekly contract formats. Tutoring may be individual or in small groups. Tutors will assist with applying course information, understanding key concepts, and developing course-specific strategies. Tutoring support is available throughout the term but is best accessed early in the semester. First-time users must meet with a staff member; returning users may submit their requests online.

The University of Pennsylvania is committed to the accessibility of its programs and services. Students with a disability or medical condition can request reasonable accommodations through the Weingarten Center website. Disability Services determines accommodations on an individualized basis through an interactive process, including a meeting with the student and a review of their disability documentation. Students who have approved accommodations are encouraged to notify their faculty members and share their accommodation letters at the start of each semester. Students can contact Disability Services by calling 215-573-9235.

Questions about the course? Email Professor Cavitch at: cavitch@upenn.edu.