

2014

388-01 Freud & Philosophy

E. Paul Colella

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/philosophy_syllabi_fall_2014

Recommended Citation

Colella, E. Paul, "388-01 Freud & Philosophy" (2014). *Philosophy Syllabi Fall 2014*. Paper 7.
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/philosophy_syllabi_fall_2014/7

This Restricted-Access Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Philosophy Syllabi 2014 at Exhibit. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Syllabi Fall 2014 by an authorized administrator of Exhibit. For more information, please contact exhibit@xavier.edu.

PHIL 388 FREUD & PHILOSOPHY

Dr. E. P. Colella Fall 2014



Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.

(“If I cannot move Heaven, I shall stir up the Infernal Regions”)
from Virgil, *Aeneid*, VII, 312

Phillip Rieff begins his excellent study of Freud with the assertion that in psychoanalysis, “Freud found a way of being the philosopher he desired to be, and of applying his philosophy to himself, humanity, the cosmos – to everything, visible and invisible, which as a scientist and physician he observed.”^a Freud’s revolution was by no means confined to psychology. As is the case with other great intellectual innovators like Darwin, Marx, or Galileo, Freud’s ideas stimulate a radical rethinking of some of the deepest assumptions we make about the human condition. This course aims to develop Rieff’s insight through a careful reading and study of some of Freud’s major works. Drawing from the full range of his career in psychoanalysis from the 1890’s to the early 1930’s, we shall investigate the manner in which Freud reworks such fundamental problems of philosophy as human nature, the origin and expression of moral ideals, as well as the nature of social, cultural, and religious experience. Additional topics include the complex nature of consciousness, the possibility of human rationality, the inevitability of aggression and violence in group life, and the status of psychoanalysis as providing scientific knowledge. Freud’s thought is so fundamental to these problems that it easily overflows the disciplinary boundaries of psychology to become a revolutionary world-view, influencing just about every area of human intellectual inquiry.

The image above depicts the Myth of Oedipus solving the Riddle of the Sphinx. That is, the cleverest of men solving the most vexing of riddles. Oedipus goes on to become King of Thebes, unwittingly acting out the horrible prophecy that he would murder his father and marry his mother. His realization that this dreaded fate had actually come to pass leads him to blind himself in guilt, after which he is transformed into something of a talismanic, semi-divine figure. This myth that belongs to an age far more ancient than that of the Homeric poems, exercised a powerful influence over Freud’s scientific imagination, and his closest followers awarded Freud a medal on which this scene was engraved. In their minds, Psychoanalysis had succeeded in solving the riddle of human nature! We shall explore the roots of this myth in *Totem & Taboo*.

^a Phillip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of a Moralist*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p.3.

PLEASE NOTE: Any study of Freud's work necessitates a frank and explicit discussion of topics that deal with the full range of human sexuality.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course will challenge you to think critically and creatively about innovative ideas, and refine your skills at effective communication of your own views on the material. Freud's ideas stand in direct opposition to many of the most deeply rooted assumptions we make about human experience. His revolutionary ideas, originally limited to the field of clinical psychology, have gone on to provoke a wide ranging transformation of other disciplines as well. We are thus challenged to uncover these wider implications and to integrate these insights into the wider field of human experience. This course satisfies the Ethics/Religion and Society Focus Elective university core requirement.

BOOKS:

The following Freud texts are the *REQUIRED* for this course and are presented in the order in which we shall discuss them.

<i>Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis</i>	(1909)
<i>On Dreams</i>	(1901)
<i>Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria</i>	(1905)
<i>Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality</i>	(1905)
<i>Totem & Taboo</i>	(1912-13)
<i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i>	(1920)
<i>The Future of an Illusion</i>	(1927)
<i>Civilization & Its Discontents</i>	(1929)

In addition to these books, I have placed several short selections on the CANVAS website for this course. You will find them under the FILES tab. The list includes:

The Aetiology of Hysteria	(1896)
Letters to Wilhelm Fliess (selected)	(1897)
Screen Memories	(1899)
Creative Writers & Daydreaming	(1907)
Thoughts for the Times on War & Death	(1915)
Instincts & Their Vicissitudes	(1915)
The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex	(1924)
Some Psychological Consequences of the Sexes	(1925)

CLASS ROUTINE:

Although this class is large, I would like as much as possible to create a seminar atmosphere this semester. Class time will be devoted largely to our discussion of Freud's texts. There will be times when I must present background material in order to insure a more intelligent reading and discussion of the books. At these times, I will have no choice but to lecture. The vast majority of class meetings however will be discussion-based in approach. Everyone is expected to share in the identification of discussion topics in class. Our class is a collaborative effort, and to a great degree, what aspects we discuss will depend on you. **YOUR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN CLASS DISCUSSION ON A DAILY BASIS IS IMPERATIVE FOR THE SUCCESS OF OUR CLASS.** It is also a requirement for the course. Your qualitative contribution to the class on a regular basis is worth a full letter grade.

1. **THE TUTORIAL DISCUSSION CLASSES** -- At Oxford these classes are called “tutorials”, at Cambridge, they are referred to as “supervisions”. The Tutorial has been a standard feature of British university education for many years. First of all, the name “tutorial” does not signify anything remedial or corrective of academic deficiency as it does in the United States. Far from it! In the UK system, it designates an intensively collaborative educational framework characterized by low student-to-teacher ratios (usually ranging from 1:1 to 4:1). The specific structure of the tutorial may vary widely. The standard model involved weekly or biweekly meetings between the faculty member and the students. Students are typically required to prepare a short essay on a specific theme that is either chosen or assigned. Students generally read aloud or summarize their work, after which the tutor and/or fellow students offer comment and critique. The Oxford tutorial is a highly respected educational model that has been praised for the degree of student initiative involved. Skills at critical analysis, oral presentation and creative thinking are fostered in situations where professors and students work in close collaboration. A video sample of an Oxford tutorial session in philosophy appears on CANVAS.

We will modify this basic model for our course this fall. Our Tutorials will occur on selected class meetings, usually on Friday. In groups of three, you will prepare a one-page essay that addresses a specific topic generated from that week’s reading and class discussion. Your Tutorial will take the following format:

1. It will last from 20-30 minutes, during which time your group will sit at the front of the class with me. The remainder of the class will take notes on what is said, and after the 20-30 period will be required to enter the conversation.
 2. You will read your essay aloud to the group, after which there will be a discussion initiated by the professor, or by you.
-
2. **THE SUMMARY ESSAYS** - The papers are meant to be no more than **five pages** (double spaced) in length and should aim at a critical discussion of the material covered in the Tutorial Discussions. Everyone is required to complete the first and the Final Summary Essay. There are eight class meetings set aside for the Tutorial Discussions. You are then required to complete any other three Summary Essays of your choosing.
 - a. First Summary Essay will focus on a topic of your choosing that arose from the Sept. 5 Discussion Class from the *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. This essay is due Monday, Sept. 15.
 - b. The Final Summary Essay will focus on an overall assessment of the material discussed during the semester. You can choose a particular topic from Freud or you can provide a more overarching evaluation of his theoretical ideas. This essay is due on .
 - c. In addition to the first and final Summary Essays, you are to choose to write essays on **any three** of the following six Discussion Classes. Due dates for these chosen Essays are as follows:
 - i. Sept. 19 Discussion Date - essay is due on Monday, Sept. 29
 - ii. Sept. 26 Discussion Date - essay is due on Monday, Oct. 6
 - iii. Oct. 17 Discussion Date - essay is due on Monday, Oct. 27
 - iv. Oct. 31 Discussion Date - essay is due on Monday, Nov. 10
 - v. Nov. 14 Discussion Date - essay is due on Monday, Nov. 24
 - vi. Nov. 24 Discussion Date - essay is due on Monday, Dec. 8

GRADING SCALE & ACADEMIC HONESTY: Your final grade will be based upon your oral contribution to the assigned Tutorial Discussion dates, the quality of your summary essays as well as the regular and consistent contributions that you make to daily discussion. In addition, an explanation of the Philosophy Department's evaluation standards for writing essays is appended to this syllabus. Please refer to those standards for explanation of how your essays will be graded.

The Xavier University policy on academic honesty as it appears on Xavier's website is in effect for this course:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an "F" in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.

http://myxu.xu.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.xavier.edu

ATTENDANCE:

Keep in mind that philosophy classes thrive on conversation, especially in honors level seminars such as this. It is difficult to contribute to, let alone benefit from, such conversation if you are not here. I do not regularly take attendance, yet I expect you to be in class unless you are ill or have some other valid reason for missing. Professors are keenly aware of students who miss an excessive number of classes. Please do not make attendance into a casual affair. If I notice frequent absences (and I will) without any explanation made to me, this will be reflected in your final grade. It is my policy to reserve the right to lower your final grade for excessive non-attendance and /or excessive lateness to class.

OFFICE HOURS:

My office hours are listed below. If you cannot get there when they are listed, you can always make an appointment. Office hours mean that I am in my office waiting to see students for reasons that pertain to our class. You also have my phone numbers and my email address provided at the top of the syllabus. Please use them!

Office Hours -- Hinkle Hall -- 210

Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 12:30-1:30
Tuesday & Thursday, 9:00 – 1:00
And by appointment

Calendar of Readings for the Semester

- Aug. 25 General Introduction to the Course
- Aug. 27 ***Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*** (1909) In 1909 Freud made his only trip to the United States where he delivered a series of lectures at Clark University in Massachusetts. These lectures provide a brief but detailed overview of the core doctrines of psychoanalysis as they existed in 1909. We shall use this text as an introduction to the course, just as Freud had intended these lectures as introductory when he spoke at Clark. We will examine Freud's account of the original case dating from the early 1880's from which psychoanalysis developed, the Case of "Anna O".
- Five Lectures*, Lecture I: The Case of "Anna O." as a sample of hysteria and the role it plays in the discovery of psychoanalysis
- Aug. 29 *Five Lectures*, Lectures II & III
- Sept. 1 LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
- Sept. 3 *Five Lectures*, Lecture IV & V
- Sept. 5 **TUTORIAL DISCUSSION**
- Sept. 8 "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896) and Letters to Fliess (1897) (On Canvas)
- Sept. 10-17 ***On Dreams*** (1901) – Freud's own popularization of his monumental *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The latter work is considered to be one of Freud's masterpieces and represents the first of his psychoanalytic books. In it, Freud establishes the psychological as well as epistemological importance of dreams as the mechanism by which the unconscious can be rendered accessible. In so doing, he jettisons conceptions dating back to the Enlightenment and begins his reconfiguration of human nature.
- Sept. 19 **TUTORIAL DISCUSSION**
- Sept. 22, 24 "Screen Memories" (On Canvas) and discussion of ***The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*** (1901) – Freud's famous treatment of the slips of tongue, pen, bungled actions and momentary forgetfulness – the "Freudian Slip" – are treated exhaustively in an attempt to show that the workings of consciousness are far from random and chaotic. *Jokes & Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) treats the various kinds of humor from the perspective of the mechanisms of dream-work.
- Sept. 26 **TUTORIAL DISCUSSION**
- Sept. 29, Oct. 1, 3 *Dora: An Analysis of a case of Hysteria* (1905) is both famous and notorious in psychoanalytic literature. We hope to have Dr. Karl Stukenberg from the Department of Psychology as a guest lecturer this week to lead us through this important case study.
- Oct. 6, 8 ***The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*** (1905) – Usually thought of together with the dream book as Freud's most revolutionary contribution to science, these essays shatter traditional views of sexuality and its place in human experience. The provocative second

essay on infantile sexuality was sufficient to win a negative public reputation for Freud and psychoanalysis. **The reader is reminded that this book contains an explicit discussion of the full range of human sexuality.** Freud himself counted this book, together with *The Interpretation of Dreams* as his greatest literary achievement.

- Oct. 10 **FALL HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**
- Oct. 13, 15 *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) – continued
- Oct. 17 **TUTORIAL DISCUSSION**
- Oct. 20, 22, 27, 29 *Totem & Taboo* (1912-1913) – This work finds Freud’s mind at its most speculative as he generalizes from psychology to anthropology. The condition of pre-civilized humanity is discussed following the lead of Darwin and other scientific sources available to him. The famous Oedipus Complex, so essential to individual psychology, is now traced back through the totem meals of primitive peoples to the murder of the primal father by his sons. Freud speculates that this event marked the passage to civilization and brought with it the beginnings of social customs, morality and religion.
- Oct. 31 **TUTORIAL DISCUSSION**
- Nov. 3 We will read and discuss “Thoughts for the Times on War & Death” (1915) against the context of the First World War, and introduce Freud’s interest in the Death Instinct.
- Nov. 5, 7, 10 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) – The immense dislocation caused by the First World War led Freud to modify his theory of the instincts in this important book. Building on themes he developed in “Thoughts for the Times on War & Death” (1915), Freud argues for the existence of the death instinct alongside the erotic instinct, thereby placing impulses for violence and aggression deep within the human personality.
- Nov. 12 “Creative Writers and Daydreaming” (1907) and “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” (1915) (On Canvas)
- Nov. 14 **TUTORIAL DISCUSSION**
- Nov. 17, 19, 21 We shall read and discuss the early essay “Obsessional Acts & Religious Practices” (1907) as an entry into Freud’s views on religion treated at great length in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) – *The Future of an Illusion* is perhaps Freud’s most famous book on religion. He wrote on the topic as early as 1907 in “Obsessive Acts & Religious Practices” and would return to it once more in *Moses & Monotheism*, his final publication during his lifetime.
- Nov. 24 **TUTORIAL DISCUSSION**
- Nov. 26-30 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASSES**
- Dec. 1 “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex” (1924) and “Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes” (1925) (On Canvas)
- Dec. 8-12 *Civilization & Its Discontents* (1929-30) – Freud argues the case for his cultural and historical pessimism in what is perhaps his most disturbing book. Written as the Western nations were about to plunge into the economic ruin of the Great Depression, and with Hitler on the not too distant horizon in European politics, this book is remarkable for its

unvarnished consideration of humankind's bleak prospects. Quite simply, the erotic instinct may no longer be able to restrain the instinct for aggression and destruction. World War I had already demonstrated that weapons technology could possibly eliminate humanity from the globe once and for all. This technology, combined with the uncontrollable death instinct, has placed the very future of humankind in jeopardy. All this some fifteen years before Hiroshima and Auschwitz! The final sentence added in the second edition gives voice to Freud's pessimistic appraisal of what the 1930's may possibly hold in store.

Dec. 10

TUTORIAL DISCUSSION

Dec. 17

Final Summary Essay Due by 5:00pm