

History and Context: Situating Psychoanalysis

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Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to psychoanalysis through posing the question as to how one situates psychoanalysis, both as theory and as practice. Freud set his “depth psychology” on what is, at least at a glance, an uncertain foundation – now mechanics, now biology, anthropology and literature. Even as psychoanalysis calls upon these fields for support, it does them a certain violence – the complaints of psychoanalysis’ alleged twisting of biology, of sexuality, and the rest are not infrequent, and not entirely unjustified. Far from being reason for its rejection, in this distortion, in the resistance that it poses to other fields, psychoanalysis shows something of its particular nature, as a working through of unconscious dynamics that resist definite capture. Through an interrogation of key psychoanalytic concepts – the unconscious, sexuality, the psychic apparatus – one can see this specificity of psychoanalysis, as it appears *at work* in theory and in clinical practice.

Reading Assignments

All assigned texts will be made available via Basecamp. **Please read the initial assignment prior to the first course meeting.**

Week One: S. Freud, “An Outline of Psychoanalysis”

Week Two: J.-B. Pontalis, “Introduction to a Reflection on the Function of Theory in Psychoanalysis”

Week Three: J. Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* 1-45

Week Four: J. Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* 45-88

Week Five: M. M. R. Khan, “The Becoming of a Psychoanalyst”

Fall Break, no meeting

Week Six: : N. Abraham, “The Shell and the Kernel”