



Syllabus

College: The Graduate College and E-School

Title: GCAS Seminar, "Conversion Disorder: Bodies, Symptoms, and Anxiety"

Course Number: PHI604

Dates:

Day(s): Saturdays and Mondays Oct 2, 4, 9, 11

Time: 12 PM EST (New York Time)

Term: Fall 2021

Year: 3 BA, 1st year MA, 1st year PhD

Credits: 1

Instructor(s): Jamieson Webster, PhD

Description:

In the twenty-first century, the body is the arena for political contestation and political claims: who receives care and who is exposed to risk, who is excluded and who has rights, who is granted the privilege of life and who is left to die, perhaps un-mourned. Returning to Freud's early thoughts on "conversion" shows a landscape where the question of the body is always tied to a demand for radical structural change, indicating so much more than simply personal pathos. The body was at the cross-roads of the individual and the social-historical, seen as a "somatic preserve" with a potential for revolt that fascinated, mystified, and at times, frightened Freud. "Conversion" was part of the very creation of the unconscious and was also the source of working through in psychoanalysis.

When thinking of the classical image of hysterical symptoms many bear in mind the Freudian idea of translating these symptoms into language as a texture of memory, conflict, and wish. But what if the process wasn't so uni-directional? What could an embodied psychoanalysis look like? What problems does this pose for the listening analyst? From Freud's early definition of conversion, to his notion of the drive on the frontier of the somato-psychic, to Lacan's distrust of knowledge exemplified in the symptom's symbolic over-interpretation, and his focus on what he names *jouissance*,

set-up in relation to anxiety, we will re-consider the centrality of the body in psychoanalytic process.

Academic Level: (i.e., Year 3 Bachelor; Year 1 Masters; Year 1 Doctoral Studies)

Prerequisites: Familiarity with Philosophy, Psychology, and Psychoanalysis

Format: This course will have 5 pre-recorded lectures, which each enrolled student must engage and show they comprehend the lecture before being admitted to the discussion section.

Required Texts:

Freud, S. (1900). The Interpretation of Dreams. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IV (1900): The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, Pp. 96-121.

Freud, S. (1920) Beyond the Pleasure Principle. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 18.

Lacan, J. (1988) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*. (trans. Tomaselli). New York: Norton. Pp. 146-171.

Lacan, J. (2014) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book X: Anxiety* (trans. Price) London: Polity.

Webster, J. (2018) *Conversion Disorder: Listening to the Body in Psychoanalysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Learning and Teaching Methods:

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Forum Interaction
- Examination--Research Paper of 3,000-5,000 words (for researchers, "students" taking this seminar for credit)

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Enhanced critical thinking skills
- Enhanced writing and communication skills
- Enhanced understanding of the history of philosophy, psychology, and psychoanalysis.

Assessments:

The student will be assessed in all aspects of this course through the following means:

1. Presentation [10% of total Grade]
2. Weekly Paper Submission of 400 words, but no more than 1,000 [20%]
3. Participation [In the live discussion sections, or in the forum if unable to attend the discussion live] [20%]
4. Research Paper Examination 3,000 word academic research paper [50%]

Schedule: at 12 Noon New York Time

Saturday, October 2:

Class 1 - From Freud to Lacan on the Real in Dreams and Beyond the Pleasure Principle

Monday, October 4:

Class 2- Conversion Disorder

Saturday, October 9:

Class 3- Anxiety Between *Jouissance* and Object a

Saturday, October 11:

Class 4-Case Presentation: On Lacan's Patient, his Reading of Lucia Tower's Cases, and 2 Recent Psychoanalytic Sessions

Grading Scale:

Pass/Fail (for certificate researchers)

For credit seeking researchers, students

10 - Excellent

9 - Very Good

8 - Good

7 - Pass

6 and below (fail)

Accommodations:

Please inform the Chancellor's office if you need accommodation by completing [this form](#).