

ENGL 573/COML 570/PSYS 573: Lives of the Death Drive
fall 2021 / Mondays 12:00-3:00, Fisher-Bennet Hall 323
course listserv: ENGL573-401-21c@lists.upenn.edu

Professor Max Cavitch
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virtual office hours by appointment

COVID-RELATED REQUIREMENTS AND PROTOCOLS AS MANDATED BY THE UNIVERSITY

- Masking indoors is mandatory for everyone, regardless of vaccine status.
- Students must not remove their masks in class.
- If any student refuses to remain masked, it's considered a health and safety issue, and instructors are required to dismiss class and contact the Office of Student Conduct.
- Not every kind of mask is allowed—please see this [page regarding minimum construction standards for masks](#).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- attendance at all seminar meetings and regular participation in seminar discussion
- completion of all required readings in advance of each seminar meeting
- an autotheoretical essay, to be developed in four stages—referred to below as essays 1-4—in consultation with me; your completed essay (“essay #4”) will be due on December 17

REQUIRED TEXTS

NOT AVAILABLE AT PENN BOOKSTORE; PLEASE ORDER THESE BOOKS VIA YOUR PREFERRED BOOKSTORE (E.G., [AMAZON](#), [ABEBOOKS](#), [BOOKSHOP.ORG](#), ETC.), AND BE SURE TO BUY THESE EDITIONS ONLY:

- Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, *The Hundreds* (ISBN 9781478002888)
- Jean Genet, *The Thief's Journal* (ISBN: 978-0802128270)
- Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (ISBN 9781558618374)
- Greta Thunberg et al., *Our House Is on Fire: Scenes of a Family and a Planet in Crisis* (ISBN 9780143133575)
- Frank B. Wilderson, *Afropessimism* (ISBN: 978-1324090519)

SEMINAR GOALS

- To introduce you to fundamental psychoanalytic concepts and, chiefly, to explore the contentious history of the concept of the death drive, from Freud to the present.
- To assess, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, the nature and consequences of aggressivity, rage, mastery, violence, melancholy, identification, desire, and creativity as reflected in the ways people (re)tell their lives.
- To bring that assessment to our study of the relation between psychoanalytic and autobiographical modes of (re)telling a life.
- To evaluate the emergent term “autotheory” and its contemporary import for both the writing and the reading of autobiography, including autobiography as a “death-driven” genre.
- To explore and, in your own writing, to experiment with the “personal” or “autobiographical” voice in contemporary criticism and theory in the humanities, at a time when the humanities (and the world of which they're a part) often seem to be under the sway of the death drive.

SEMINAR PROPOSITIONS

- That the concept of the death drive—as developed, debated, and applied in the writing of psychoanalysis from Freud to the present—continues to be a flashpoint for the investigation of both intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences, including aggressivity, rage, mastery, violence, melancholy, identification, desire, and creativity
- That the work of self-narration and self-analysis, central both to psychoanalysis and to autobiographical writing, always proceeds from questions of one’s responsibility to and for others.
- That the recently coined term “autotheory” is not a label for a new sub-genre of autobiography but, rather, a timely designation of ways of “doing” (i.e., both reading and writing) autobiography—ways that center intersubjectivity and relational ontology at a moment when the frenzied pursuit of individual security threatens our collective survival.
- That engagement with the foregoing propositions can help us better to understand and, in our own writing, to experiment with the recently renewed focus on modes of self-narration in criticism and theory in the humanities—at a moment when the humanities are under various forms of attack both from without and from within.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

All readings followed by this symbol √☒ are available on-line as pdfs for downloading and printing; just follow the links. [Note: The pdfs are only available at Professor Cavitch’s on-line [“PDF Library,”](#) via the links below. They are NOT available in Canvas.]

M 9/6 NO CLASS—LABOR DAY

M 9/13 INTRODUCTION: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SELF-NARRATION

On getting mad; anger and narrative; love and hate; psychoanalysis as the “talking cure”; Freud’s self-analysis and the foundations of psychoanalysis; subjects and objects of narration; limits of representation.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- William Blake, [“A Poison Tree,”](#) from *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) √☒
- Algernon Charles Swinburne, [“Anactoria”](#) (1866) √☒
- W. H. Auden, [“In Memory of Sigmund Freud”](#) (1939) √☒
- Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, [“Case History: Fräulein Anna O.”](#) (1895) √☒
- Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Fliess, [selected correspondence on “self-analysis” \(1897\),](#) from *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, 267-85 √☒
- —, [“The Method of Interpreting Dreams: An Analysis of a Specimen Dream,”](#) from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) √☒
- —, [“A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis”](#) (1936) √☒
- Roy Schafer, [“Narrating the Self,”](#) from *Re-Telling a Life: Narrative and Dialogue in Psychoanalysis* (1992), 21-56 √☒
- Judith Butler, [“Psychoanalysis,”](#) from *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), 50-82 √☒
- Adam Phillips, [“Against Self-Criticism,”](#) from *Unforbidden Pleasures* (2015), 84-121 √☒

M 9/20 THE PSYCHIC APPARATUS AND THE INTERPERSONAL FIELD

Drive theory and its discontents; relational theory; self-state theory; seeking the origins of aggression; aggression in theory and practice; primary dynamics, secondary reactions, and intersubjective complications; countertransference.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, "[Sigmund Freud: The Drive/Structure Model](#)," from *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (1983), 21-49 ✓
- Donnel B. Stern, "[The Problem of the Private Self: Unformulated Experience, the Interpersonal Field, and Multiplicity](#)," from *Unformulated Experience: From Dissociation to Imagination in Psychoanalysis* (2003), 147-60 ✓
- Stephen Mitchell, "[Aggression and the Endangered Self](#)," from *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis* (1993), 151-72 ✓
- Philip Bromberg, "[Introduction](#)," from *Standing in the Spaces: Essays on Clinical Process, Trauma, and Dissociation* (1998), 1-16 ✓
- Sigmund Freud, "[Mourning and Melancholia](#)" (1917) ✓
- Sigmund Freud, "[Thoughts for the Times on War and Death](#)" (1915) ✓
- Sigmund Freud, "[On Transience](#)" (1916) ✓
- —, "[The Economic Problem of Masochism](#)" (1924) ✓
- D. W. Winnicott, "[Hate in the Counter-Transference](#)" (1949) ✓
- Julia Kristeva, "[Psychoanalysis—A Counterdepressant](#)," from *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1987), 1-30
- Nancy McWilliams, "[Psychoanalytic Character Diagnosis](#)" (1994) ✓

F 9/24 DUE: ESSAY #1

Essays to be sent no later than midnight to cavitch@english.upenn.edu.

M 9/27

THE "BIRTH" OF THE DEATH DRIVE

Biographical and historical factors; the nature of drive/Trieb; Freud's late metapsychology, the intrapsychic, and the interpersonal.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Sigmund Freud, [Beyond the Pleasure Principle](#) (1920) ✓
- —, [Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego](#) (1921) ✓
- —, [Civilization and Its Discontents](#) (1930) ✓

M 10/4

CLINICAL PHANTASIES AND APPLICATIONS OF THE DEATH DRIVE

Klein and Lacan as inheritors of the death drive; metapsychology and clinical practice.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Melanie Klein, "[A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States](#)" (1935) ✓
- —, "[Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms](#)" (1946) ✓
- Jacques Lacan, "[Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis](#)," from *Écrits* (1966), pp. 82-101 ✓
- Esther Sánchez-Pardo, "[The Death Drive and Aggression](#)," from *Cultures of the Death Drive: Melanie Klein and Modernist Melancholia* (2003), 137-61 ✓

- Benjamin Y. Fong, "[Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis \(Reprised\): Jacques Lacan and the Genesis of Omnipotence.](#)" from *Death and Mastery: Psychoanalytic Drive Theory and the Subject of Late Capitalism* (2016), 59-78 ☞

M 10/11

THE PSYCHIC CONSTITUTION OF THE HISTORICAL SUBJECT

Hate and humanness; self-division and self-destruction; the necessity and inconvenience of other people; attacks on linking in psychoanalysis.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Lynn Layton, "[Attacks on Linking: The Unconscious Pull To Dissociate Individuals from Their Social Context.](#)" from *Toward a Social Psychoanalysis: Culture, Character, and Normative Unconscious Processes* (2020), 34-44 ☞
- Frantz Fanon, "[Colonial War and Mental Disorders.](#)" from *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), 181-233 ☞
- Christopher Bollas, "[Loving Hate.](#)" from *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis and the Unthought Known* (1987), 117-34 ☞
- Lauren Berlant, "[Slow Death \(Obesity, Sovereignty, Lateral Agency\).](#)" from *Cruel Optimism* (2011) ☞
- Lee Edelman, "[The Future Is Kid Stuff.](#)" from *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), 1-31 ☞
- Todd McGowan, "[The Subject of Desire and the Subject of Capitalism.](#)" from *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets* (2016), 19-50 ☞

F 10/15

DUE: ESSAY #2

Essays to be sent no later than midnight to cavitch@english.upenn.edu.

M 10/18

THE PSYCHIC CONSTITUTION OF THE PSYCHOANALYST;
OR, ANALYTIC WRITING AS AUTOTHEORETICAL WRITING

Psychoanalysts' autobiographical narratives; confronting aggression in the consulting room and in the world; introduction to autotheory as a way of doing autobiography; autotheory as a relational mode.


REQUIRED READINGS:

- Annie Lee Jones, "[A Black Woman as an American Analyst: Some Observations From One Woman's Life Over Four Decades](#)" (2020) ☞
- Avgi Saketopoulou, "[Minding the Gap: Intersections Between Gender, Race, and Class in Work With Gender Variant Children](#)" (2011) ☞
- Leilani Crane, "[Invisible: A Mixt Asian Woman's Efforts to See and Be Seen in Psychoanalysis](#)" (2020) ☞
- Judy L. Kantrowitz, "[A Psychoanalytic Memoir: The Analyst Enabled and Disabled By What Is Personal](#)" (2020) ☞
- Steven H. Knoblach, "[Fanon's Vision of Embodied Racism for Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice](#)" (2020) ☞
- Max Cavitch, "[Everybody's Autotheory](#)" (2022) ☞

- M 10/25 **RELATIONAL CONFLICT; OR, DRIVEN TO RELATE?**
Recent and contemporary perspectives on psychic functioning; rethinking mastery.
- REQUIRED READINGS:
- Thomas Ogden, "[On Becoming a Subject](#)," from *Subjects of Analysis* (1994), pp. 1-7 ☞
 - Jessica Benjamin, "[Master and Slave](#)," from *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (1988), 51-84 ☞
 - ---, "[Sympathy for the Devil: Notes on Sexuality and Aggression, with Special Reference to Pornography](#)," from *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference* (1995), 175-211 ☞
 - Malcolm Owen Slavin, "[Relational Psychoanalysis and the Tragic-Existential Aspect of the Human Condition](#)" (2016) ☞
 - Benjamin Y. Fong, "[In Defense of Drive Theory](#)," from *Death and Mastery: Psychoanalytic Drive Theory and the Subject of Late Capitalism* (2016), 1-18 ☞
- M 11/1 **THE DEATH DRIVE AND THE QUESTION OF (NON)RELATIONALITY**
- REQUIRED READINGS:
- Jean Genet, *The Thief's Journal* (1949)
 - Leo Bersani, "[The Gay Outlaw](#)" (1994) ☞
 - Max Cavitch, "[Do You Love Me? The Question of the Queer Child of Psychoanalysis](#)" (2016) ☞
- M 11/8 **SADOMASOCHISM AND SOCIAL DEATH**
- REQUIRED READINGS:
- Frank B. Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (2020)
 - Kathleen Pogue White, "[Surviving Hate and Being Hated: Some Personal Thoughts About Racism from a Psychoanalytic Perspective](#)" (2002) ☞
- M 11/15 **THE DEATH DRIVE AND THE VIOLENCE OF GENDER**
- REQUIRED READINGS:
- Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (2008)
 - Susan Stryker, "[My Words To Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage](#)" (1994) ☞
- F 11/19 **DUE: ESSAY #3**
 Essays to be sent no later than midnight to cavitch@english.upenn.edu.
- M 11/22 **NO CLASS MEETING**

M 11/29 MOBILIZING (AGAINST) EXTINCTION

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Greta Thunberg et al., *Our House Is on Fire: Scenes of a Family and a Planet in Crisis* (2018)
- Donald Moss, [“Where Are All the Bodies?—Defensive Representational Strategies in a Time of Cataclysmic Change”](#) (2019) 

M 12/6 THE DEATH DRIVE, THE MEANWHILE, THE POSSIBLE

REQUIRED READING:

- Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, *The Hundreds* (2019)

F 12/17 **DUE: ESSAY #4: FINAL DRAFT OF AUTO THEORY PROJECT**
Essays to be sent no later than midnight to cavitch@english.upenn.edu.