

**COLI 211B-04**  
**Literature and Psychology: Guilt and Decision**  
**TR 11:40-1:05 p.m.**

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## **I: COURSE DESCRIPTION**

One of the premises of psychoanalysis is that human speech is the scribbling of destiny where from one point to another the text is imbued with the sense of finishedness. This means that, in every moment, human speech tends toward its consummation, even when it abides in the trivia of everydayness. Human speech suffers from the deferral of a sense giving point at the same time as it indulges in this postponement. Psychoanalysis starts with the presupposition of a point being already there, it is just a matter of an appropriate punctuation that restores it to the otherwise sense-eluding speech, speech that burdens us with its incommensurable suspense.

In that sense, we will see that, every human act is, in fact, such a point. But an act is not an act in itself, it only gets to be an act within the historicity of a subject. In other words, an interpretation makes an act. Also, we will see that an act, that is, an incision in the overall course of destiny, is never accidental, that it is always, in a way, premeditated. That is to say that there are no innocent acts. On the other hand, if an act really is what it is, it must obey a necessity appropriate to it, as belonging to the course of destiny. There are no unnecessary or non-essential acts, as much as a man cannot step out of the destiny. That is to say that there are no guilty or accessory acts either.

In this course psychoanalysis will be read as a secret message legated to us by Freud where human existence may finally be restored in its innocence.

## **II: COURSE GOALS**

The course's main goal is to enhance students' critical thinking abilities as well as their capacities for deeply thought and coherent writing. Much more than 'learning' the material, I will put an emphasis on working on the texts' unstated premises, and far-reaching assumptions.

A text is something to be interpreted. Sometimes a text seems easy, like, for example, in Freud. But, in close reading, which is an attempt at interpretation, we will see that many things call for further explanation, and, not rarely, for an active remodeling of the text itself. On the other hand, many other texts, such as in Heidegger and Lacan, for example, give off a completely inaccessible, incomprehensible and narcissistic appearance. The temptation to desert them is always too big, but that may mean that those texts call for overcoming our ordinary patterns of thinking. In that view, apart from reading and discussing the required material, we will organize discussions around, apparently, most

trivial questions such as ‘What is the difference between nature and culture?’ ‘What is the essence of courageousness?’ ‘What is the difference between theory and practice?’ ‘What is a man?’ ‘What is a woman?’ ‘When do we cease to be children?’ etc., and we will create an argument in class that responds to those questions.

### **III: ESSAY WRITING**

You are responsible of submitting 2 essays each 7 pages long during the semester.

*An essay must have a title that you have invented yourself and that, ideally, issues from your main argument.*

*The most important feature of an essay is its ARGUMENT that will be clearly stated on the first page of your essay.* The essays that merely retell the plot or engage in exhausting descriptions that lead to no conclusive argument will be considered as failed.

Essay writing will constitute 60 percent of your overall grade, each of the two essays bringing 30 percent to it.

Essays are submitted in the Turnitin on Blackboard.

### **IV: PRESENTATION**

Each student will give one presentation during the semester. Presentation topics, with the instructions on how to prepare them will be posted on the ‘Course Documents’ link on Blackboard. Your presentation will bear 10 percent of your grade.

### **V: COMMENTARIES**

The commentaries’ purpose is to check whether you have read the required theoretic material such as texts by Freud and Heidegger. Trying to vainly philosophize in your commentary will be considered as trying to cover the lack of knowledge regarding the material. Commentaries should be brief and informative. They will bear 15 percent of your grade.

### **VI: CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Class participation refers to the extent to which you contribute to class discussions. Your overall class participation will bear 15 percent of your grade.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Each student is allowed 3 unexcused absences. No lateness will be tolerated unless you have a good excuse of which I should, ideally, be informed in advance.

### **CELL PHONES AND LAP-TOPS**

...are forbidden.

### **VII: REQUIRED READINGS:**

Freud: “Mourning and Melancholia”, “A special type of object choice made by men” (e-reserve), “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, “The Ego and the Id” (2 hours reserve, Main Library circulation desk)

Lacan: “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty” (e-reserve)

Heidegger: “The Attestation of Da-sein of an Authentic Potentiality-of-Being and Resoluteness” (e-reserve)

Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

Euripides: *Medea*

Goethe: *Faust*

Kafka: *The Castle*

## **VIII: CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Jan 29** Introduction

**Jan 31** A special type of choice of object made by men

**Feb 5** Mourning and Melancholia

**Feb 7** Hamlet

**Feb 12** The Attestation of Da-sein of an Authentic Potentiality-of-Being and Resoluteness

**Feb 14** The Attestation of Da-sein of an Authentic Potentiality-of-Being and Resoluteness

**Feb 19** The Attestation of Da-sein of an Authentic Potentiality-of-Being and Resoluteness

**Feb 21** Hamlet

**Feb 26** Medea

**Feb 28** Medea –FIRST PAPER DUE

**Mar 4** Beyond the Pleasure Principle

**Mar 6** Beyond the Pleasure Principle FIRST RE-WRITE DUE

**Mar 11** Faust

**Mar 13** Faust

**Mar 18** Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty

**Mar 20** Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty

**Mar 25** Easter

**Mar 27** Easter

**Apr 1** The Ego and the Id

**Apr 3** The Ego and the Id

**Apr 8** The Ego and the Id

**Apr 10** The Castle

**Apr 15** The Castle

**Apr 17** The Castle

**Apr 22** The Castle

**Apr 24** The Castle—SECOND PAPER DUE

**Apr 29** Faust, Medea, Hamlet

**May 1** Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty—SECOND PAPER  
RE-WRITE DUE

**May 6** Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty

**May 8** The Attestation of Da-sein of an Authentic Potentiality-of-Being and  
Resoluteness

**IX: NOTE AGAINST PLAGIARISM:**

All students must be aware that plagiarism is a serious violation of the University's policies. Plagiarism involves putting somebody else's intellectual property into your written work without clearly indicating the source and stressing that in order to pursue your own argument you are using somebody else's ideas as a contribution. That includes paraphrasing without references, quoting without using citation marks and without indicating the source etc.