Fordham University
History 4137/English 4137
Hysteria, Sexuality, and the Unconscious
An Interdisciplinary Seminar in History and Literature
Doron Ben-Atar (History) and Anne G. Hoffman (English & Comp Lit)

Anne G. Hoffman: hoffman@fordham.edu (212) 636-6386
Office Hours: Lowenstein 923C: M 5:15-6:15 pm; Th 1:15-2:15, 5:15-6:15, and by appointment

Doron Ben-Atar: benatar@fordham.edu (212) 636-7014
Office Hours: Lowenstein 422b: M 4:00-5:00, Tu 11:00-12:00 and by appointment

This interdisciplinary seminar is sponsored by the Department of English and the Department of History; it satisfies EP 3 and Interdisciplinary Capstone Core requirements. The seminar explores issues raised by hysteria, sexuality and the unconscious in Europe and the U.S. at the turn of the 20th century. These are topics that cross disciplinary boundaries. From a historical perspective, they engage medical, psychological, political, and ethnographic discourses, and permeate artistic expression. From the perspective of contemporary inquiry, they are of interest to scholars engaged in studying gender, ethnicity, identity and difference, disease and pathology.

The seminar will focus on the following questions: What is the origin of the term hysteria and the history of its use, including its gendered associations? How did hysteria come to define social and cultural boundaries in the latter part of the 19th century? What is the relationship between the “discovery” of the unconscious and discourses of sexuality? What is the relationship between the growth of psychoanalysis as a discipline and the rise of new discourses concerning social health and hygiene? How have psychoanalytic, literary, and artistic forms of inquiry shaped our understanding of subjectivity over the last hundred years? How does psychoanalysis disrupt unitary models of the self and identity? What happens to cultural constructions of otherness in this time period? What is the relationship between the psychoanalytic model of mental life and forms of social change? What are the legacies of the psychoanalytic understanding of hysteria, sexuality and the unconscious?

Requirements:
1. Keep up with the schedule of readings and assignments.
2. Take part in class discussion. Class participation will account for 10% of your grade.
3. Blog on blackboard about the weekly reading assignments. Your blogs will count for 30% of your grade.
4. Each student will give one oral presentation on a reading of her/his choice from the list of recommended readings for that week (10%) and a second oral presentation of his/her research paper. The second presentation is not graded.
5. Write a 15-page **research paper**. The grade for the research paper will be calculated in the following fashion: annotated bibliography, 5%; thesis and outline, 5%; final grade on the research paper, 40%.

**Class Rules:**

1. The class is a safe place for intellectual exploration and speculation. We all make mistakes and we all may say things we regret. Engage, converse and disagree, but don’t judge. Exercise respect for your peers.
2. Attendance is mandatory and punctuality is expected. Each student is allowed to miss one class without penalty. Afterwards, absences will have an adverse effect on your grade.
3. Avoid leaving the room during class, unless there is a real emergency.
4. To facilitate excellent intellectual interaction the use of electronic equipment of any kind (computers, phones, tablets) is not allowed in the class.
5. As members of an intellectual and creative community, we have a responsibility to others and to ourselves to document carefully all the sources that we use in our work. Failure to give proper acknowledgement to the intellectual work of others is a profound ethical violation of the values that sustain an academic community. Plagiarism, in other words, is a form of theft; it incurs heavy penalties. Please consult the Student Handbook and feel free to speak with one or both of us, if you have any questions or concerns about this.

**Class Structure:**

The class meets on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 5:15. At 2:30 we will meet together as a group for a joint discussion till 3:45. At 4:00, after a 15 minutes break we’ll reconvene in sections for seminar discussion of the week’s material. Students are expected to keep up with the joint readings and to participate in class discussion. During the last two weeks of the term we will meet exclusively in sections where students will present their research, offer critiques and participate in peer review of others’ papers.

**The Research Paper:**

Work on the **research paper** will be an integral part of class work throughout the term. By Week 3 all students must select a research topic from a list of possible subjects available on Blackboard. Students will then upload onto Blackboard an **annotated bibliography** by midnight, **Saturday February 28, 2015**. (Students must use either MLA or Chicago Manual of Style for bibliographies.) A **thesis paragraph, detailed outline, and bibliography** should be posted on Blackboard by midnight **Wednesday, April 1, 2015**. Draft research papers must be uploaded onto Blackboard by midnight **Thursday, April 16, 2015**.

Please note: Each assignment leading up to the final paper will receive a separate grade. Grades on the separate components (annotated bibliography; thesis, outline, and bibliography) will not have bearing on the grading of the final paper. The last two weeks of the term will be dedicated to research presentations. At that time, each student will
give a 10-minute presentation of the research paper, followed by comments from peers. All students will be responsible for posting at least one comment on Blackboard for each paper. The **final version of the research paper** is due at the time scheduled for the course final.

**Guidelines for blog posts:**

On the evening before each Monday meeting students will post 250-300 word blogs (no more!) in response to a question posted by the instructors on Blackboard.

1. Each blog will be graded. We will drop the two lowest grades at the end of the semester, when we calculate final grades. Alternatively, you may choose to opt out of posting for two blogs.
2. All blogs must be posted by 9:00 pm on Monday night **before** class, so that all of us can read them. Late submissions will not be graded or counted towards the course requirement.
3. **Word limit: 250-300 words.**
4. Compose your blog post in response to the question(s) about the reading for that particular week. These posts are meant to get you thinking about the readings before class. Therefore, you should avoid summarizing the reading, although you may want to refer to (or quote briefly from) the reading, in order to make a specific point.
5. These weekly blogs are not meant to be formal essays. Nevertheless, since they are part of the work of the course, you should pay attention to your writing: check grammar and spelling; do your best to articulate a point of view and to organize your thoughts. Clarity of focus and expression are key values in effective writing.
6. We will each be happy to meet with you individually to discuss any concerns or questions about your writing in the course.

**Guidelines for Presentations:**

Over the course of the semester, students will give two formal ten-minute presentations using powerpoint. During the common-reading period students will deliver a presentation on one of the readings listed as “recommended” for that week. Your presentation should include:

a. **Context:** Since other members of the section will not be familiar with the specifics of the piece you should begin by introducing classmates to the broad issues at play.
   
b. The **problem** addressed in the piece.
   
c. The author’s **argument**.
   
d. How does the author **prove** her/his argument?
   
e. **Personal reflections** on the piece in light of the work of our course.

In the final two weeks of the term students will deliver ten-minute presentations of their research. Your presentation should include:

a. The **problem** your paper addresses.
   
b. Your **argument**.
c. The evidence you used to support your thesis.
d. How your research connects to the work we’ve done in the course.

Students with Disabilities:

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please feel free to speak to me and to schedule an appointment with someone at the Office of Disability Services (Room 207, x6282).

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Part I: Cultural Debates at the Fin-de-Siècle

January 13: Introduction to Course Themes: Decadence

Close Reading in Class:
Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1892), selections from Book I on the fin de siècle and Bk. III, ch. 3, “Decadents and Aesthetes”)
Edgar Saltus, *Philosophy of Disenchantment* (1887), selection from chapter 6, “Is Life an Affliction?”
Oscar Wilde, “Preface” to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)

January 20: Bourgeois Anxieties

Required:
Theories of Masturbation: excerpts from 19th-century treatises on self-abuse (b).
Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature (A Rebours)*: introduction by Havelock Ellis and selection from the novel (b).

Recommended:

January 27: Masculinity in Crisis

Required:
Rudyard Kipling, “If” (b)
Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*, chapter 12 (b)
Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*

**Recommended:**
- Mark Micale, *Hysterical Men*, chapter 4: Male Hysteria at the Fin de Siècle."
- Oskar Panizza, “The Operated Jew.”

**February 3: Femininity in Crisis**

**Required:**
- Excerpt from *The Diary of Alice James* (b)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*

**Recommended:**
- Jane Hunter, “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late Victorian America,” *American Quarterly* 44 (March 1992), 51-81. (b)
- Ann Douglass Wood, “‘The Fashionable Disease’: Women’s Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4 (Summer 1973), 25-52. (b)

**Part II: The New Science of Psychoanalysis**

**February 10: Hysteria before Freud**

**Required:**
- Jan Goldstein, *Hysteria Complicated by Ecstasy: The Case of Nanette Leroux*, 3-17, 83-94, 111-121, (b)
- Pierre Janet, The Mental State of Hystericals: A Study of Mental Stigmata and Mental Accidents, 278-91, 350-65, (b)

**Recommended:**

**February 24: Freud’s First Foray**

**Required:**
- Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria* (entire)

**Recommended:**
- John Fletcher, chapter 2, “Freud’s Hysteria,” in *Freud and the Scene of Trauma* (Fordham UP, 2013) (b)

**March 3: Mapping the Unconscious**

**Required:**
- Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (selected chapters addressing Freud’s dreams: the specimen dream (Irma’s injection) and the dream of the botanical monograph (b).
- Film: Alfred Hitchcock, *Spellbound* (1945)

**Recommended:**
- Jeffrey Masson ed., *Freud-Fliess Letters* (selection) (b)

**Part III: The Sex Drive and the Unconscious**

**March 10: Developing a Theory of Sexuality**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
Douglas A. Davis, “Freud's Unwritten Case: The Patient ‘E.’” (b)

March 24 The Specter of Sexual Decadence

Required:
Stanley Kubrick, Eyes Wide Shut (1999), film.
Arthur Schnitzler, Dream Story
Sigmund Freud, “‘A Child is Being Beaten’: A Contribution to the Study of the Origins of Sexual Perversion,” (b)

Recommended:

March 31: Hysteria, Dreams, and the Unconscious

Required:
Sigmund Freud Dora: Fragment of a Case of Hysteria;
Sybil: A Brilliant Hysteric?, NYT RetroReport

Recommended:
Hannah Decker, Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900 (1992), a selection (b)

April 7: Perspectives on Feminine Desire

Required:
Freud, “Medusa’s Head” (b).
Helene Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa” (b).
Sigmund Freud “On Femininity” (b);
T.S Eliot, Hysteria, (b)
Elizabeth Young Bruehl, Freud on Women: A Reader, Introduction.
Recommended:

Nancy Mann Kulish and Deanna Holtzman, from *A Story of Her Own: The Female Oedipus Complex Reexamined and Renamed* (2008): “Baubo: The Female Body in the Triangular Phase.” (b)

April 14: Male Trauma and World War I

Required:

Wilfred Owen, “DULCE ET DECORUM EST,” (b)
Wilfred Owen, “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young,” (b)
Freud on "Electrical Treatment of War Neurotics," (b)

Recommended:

Marc Micale, “On the ‘Disappearance’ of Hysteria: A Study in the Clinical Deconstruction of a Diagnosis,” *Isis* 84 (September 1993), 496-526. (b)

April 21: Students’ Presentations

April 28: Students’ Presentations