

PS447 - Psychoanalytic Social Psychology

Course convenor:

Derek Hook

Availability and restrictions

Students from all departments may attend subject to numbers, their own degree regulations and at the discretion of the teacher responsible.

Core syllabus

The course introduces students to the characteristic concepts of 'psychoanalytic social psychology' and explores how more recent developments in psychoanalysis - as applied in postcolonial theory, feminist analyses and the critique of ideology - might inform, extend and develop the imperatives of contemporary social psychology.

Content

The course seeks to combine the perspectives of a traditional psychoanalytic social psychology with newer contributions to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and to do so as a means of critically engaging with a series of topical socio-political issues. Areas of particular importance in this respect include: the scrutiny of group dynamics and processes in 'the psychic life of power'; the interpersonal functioning of racism and prejudice; the role of libidinal ties and affective economies in social identification; dream-interpretation and symptomatic reading; 'postcolonial psychoanalysis'; the role of fantasy in the formation of ideological attachments; embodiment and 'sexuation'.

Teaching

The course consists of 10 two-hour lectures/seminars in Lent Term, and two revision sessions during Summer Term. Lectures will take place between 5-7 on Mondays (D311), and will include time for discussion and debate.

Written work

Students are expected to write one essay of 3,000 words and complete a 2 hour examination. The course includes a formative assignment, for which written feedback will be supplied: a 1,000 mini-essay that takes the form of an encyclopaedia entry on a prominent psychoanalytic term. **The 3000 word essay should be submitted to Jacqueline Crane in S302 on March 12th no later than 12 noon.**

Preliminary reading list

- Benvenuto, B. & Kennedy, R. (1986). *The Works of Jacques Lacan. An Introduction*. London: Free Association Press.
- Billig, M. (1976). *Social psychology and intergroup relations*. London: Academic.
- Bocock, R. (1983). *Sigmund Freud*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Evans, D. (1996). *An introductory dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalysis*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Feldstein, R, Fink, B, & Jaanus, M. (1996). (Eds.), *Reading Seminars I and II*. SUNY Press.
- Fink, B. (1995). *The Lacanian subject between language and jouissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Freud, S. (1963). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press. (Vol. 5, *The Interpretations of Dreams*; Vol. 14, *On narcissism, Mourning and melancholia*; Vol. 19, *The ego and the id*).
- Freud, S. (1991). *On Sexuality*. London: Penguin.
- Freud, S. (2004). *Mass Psychology and Other Writings*. London: Penguin.

- Homer, S. (2005). *Jacques Lacan*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Kay, S. (2003). *Žižek: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Lacan, J. (2006). *Écrits*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Minsky, R. (1996). *Psychoanalysis and gender. An introductory reader*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Myers, T. (2003). *Slavoj Žižek*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, J. & Rose, J. (Eds.). (1982). *Feminine Sexuality*. London & New York: Norton.
- Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso: London. (pp. 87-129).
- Žižek, S. (1997). *The plague of fantasies*. London & New York: Verso.
- Žižek, S. (2003). (Ed). *Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory*. London & New York: Verso.
- Žižek, S. (2006). *How to read Lacan*. London: Granta.

Overview:

Week 1: Freudian dream-theory: Analytical applications

Week 2: Embodiment

Week 3: Mass psychology

Weeks 4 & 5: From identity to identification

Week 6: 'Sexuation'

Week 7: Postcolonial psychoanalysis

Week 8: The psychoanalysis of ideology

Week 9: Desire and the Other

Week 10: Fantasy, *jouissance* and racism

Lecturers contact details:

Derek Hook (d.w.hook@lse.ac.uk)

Week 1: Freudian dream-theory: Analytical applications

Aim: To introduce the key components of Freudian dream theory and to discuss how this approach to interpretation might inform critical social and psychological forms of analysis.

Learning outcomes

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Explain Freud's account of the dynamic interchange between conscious, preconscious and conscious states of mind
- Outline the concept of the dream-work with reference to the distinction between latent and manifest content
- Provide examples of the mechanisms of condensation, displacement and symbolism in dreams
- Discuss how a variety of theorists have made use of these concepts in the context of critical race theory and ideology critique

Summary

Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* is, in many ways, the text that inaugurates psychoanalysis. A series of vital concepts are introduced here: the determining role of unconscious wishes; the dynamic interchange between conscious, preconscious and conscious aspects of mind; the distinction between primary and secondary processes; operations of displacement and condensation. This lecture will discuss the key components of Freud's theory of dreams, and identify which features of the dream-work help us understand more general features of everyday psychical life, both social and individual. Of particular importance here is how certain of these concepts have informed the analysis of racism; as Stuart Hall notes: "[racism works] more like Freud's dreamwork than anything else...racism expresses itself through displacement, through denial...the surface imagery speaking of an unspeakable content, the repressed content of a culture".

References

- *Forrester, J. (2006). Introduction. In S. Freud, *Interpreting dreams* (Ed. Adam Phillips), pp. vii-liv. London & New York: Penguin.
- *Freud, S. (2001). *The Interpretations of Dreams*. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. Volume 5. London: Vintage. (Chapter 7: The Psychology of the dream processes).
- Freud, S. (1991). *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*. (Ed. J. Strachey and A. Richards). London: Penguin.
- Hall, S. (1992). Race, culture, and communications. *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 5, No. 1. pp. 10-18.
- Marinelli, L. & Mayer A. (2003). *Dreaming by the book: A history of Freud's 'The interpretation of dreams' and the psychoanalytic movement*. New York: Other Press.
- Solms, M. (2001). Freudian dream theory today. *The Psychologist*, 13, 618-619.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- Silverman, J. (1983). *The subject of semiotics*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso: London.
- Williamson, J. (1978). *Decoding advertisements*. Marion Boyers: London.

Week 2: Embodiment

Aim: To open debate on the psychoanalytic topic of embodiment, emphasizing how the necessary gap between the psychical and the somatic – as advanced in Freud's notion of the uncanny, Kristeva's account of abjection and the Lacanian 'real' – provides a basis for 'essentialist' discriminatory logics which, as theorists such as Fanon and Manganyi argue, are crucial to the maintenance of colonial power.

Learning outcomes

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Explain the incommensurability of the body-to-psyche relation for psychoanalysis
- Discuss how the notions of the uncanny, abjection, and the real all provide a means of approaching this problematic of embodiment
- Link these ideas regards the bodily-somatic disjuncture to issues of differential embodiments and the 'pre-discursive'
- Expound upon the uses Fanon and Manganyi make of such accounts in the conceptualization and critique of colonial racism

Summary

What, for psychoanalysis, does it mean to occupy a body, and why is this body-to-psyche relation always characterized by a degree of disjuncture? What differential orders of embodiment characterize particular (i.e. patriarchal, colonial) regimes of power? This lecture explores this problematic, this 'lack of fit' between the somatic and psychical from a variety of perspectives, paying particular attention to how this incommensurability becomes the grounding point for various 'essentialist' forms of social discrimination. Freud's notion of the uncanny and its distinction disembodied presence and embodied absence is an important touchstone here, as is Kristeva's theory of abjection, and Lacan's account of the *real* of embodiment. Each of these theorizations allows us to speak of a 'pre-discursive' realm of experience, which plays an important role in the affectivity of racism. The lecture closes by turning to the work of Frantz Fanon and Chabani Manganyi, both of whom explore the discriminatory social and political articulations of this bodily-somatic disjuncture in colonial racism.

References

- Fanon, F. (1986) [1952]. *Black skin, white masks*. London: Pluto.
- Freud, S., 1964. The uncanny. In: Strachey, J. (Ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 17. Hogarth Press, London, pp. 217–252.
- *Hook, D. (2002). The other side of language: The body and the limits of signification. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 89 (5), October, pp. 681-713.
- *Hook, D. (2005). 'Pre-discursive' racism. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 16: 1-26.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror an essay on abjection*. Columbia University Press: New York.
- Lacan, J. (1988). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan; Book II. The ego in Freud's theory and in the technique of psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Manganyi, N. C. (1981). *Looking through the keyhole dissenting essays on the black experience*. Ravan Press: Johannesburg.

Week 3: Mass psychology

Aim: To discuss and elaborate upon the basic tenets of Freud's 'mass psychology' with a focus on how a series of related concepts – symbolic/imaginary identification, the notion of libidinal economy – might shed some light on the dynamics of racism and social exclusion.

Learning outcomes

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Outline the strengths and distinctiveness of a psychoanalytic approach to social analysis
- Explain the basic tenets of Freud's 'mass psychology'
- Discuss the Lacanian elaboration of these concepts with reference to the distinction between imaginary and symbolic identification
- Elaborate on how the notion of a mass libidinal economy might extend the analysis of various forms of social exclusion

Summary

What is the nature of the ideals and investments that tie us to particular social institutions and symbolic ideals? This lecture revisits Freud's (1921) investigation of 'mass psychology' both as a means of extending notions of group and symbolic identification, and, perhaps more importantly, in light of contemporary debates on the nature of the psychological dynamics and 'possessive investments' underlying political activity. These ideas are best explained with reference to contemporary debates over the causes and tenacity of racism. The lecture will close by making reference to how these and related psychoanalytic notions (i.e. 'the narcissism of minor differences', the necessary incompleteness of identity) have been applied to the project of multicultural cosmopolitanism by critics such as Paul Gilroy (2004) and Edward Said (2003).

References

- *Billig, M. (1976). *Social psychology and intergroup relations*. London: Academic Press. (Chapter 2: 'Freud's group psychology').
- Bocock, R. (1983). Sigmund Freud. London & New York: Routledge. (Chapter 3: 'Freud's social theory').
- Cohen, P. (2002). Psychoanalysis and racism: Reading the Other scene. In D.T. Goldberg & J. Solomos (Eds.), *A companion to racial and ethnic studies*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell.
- Fink, B. (1996). *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, N.J.
- Frosh, S. (1989). *Psychoanalysis and psychology minding the gap*. London: Macmillan.
- *Freud, S. (2004). *Mass Psychology and Other Writings*. London: Penguin.
- Gilroy, P. (2004). *After empire melancholia or convivial culture*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Parsons, T. (1989). The superego and the theory of social systems. In L. Spurling (Ed.), *Sigmund Freud critical assessments*. Vol. III., 83-97. London & New York: Routledge.
- *Rose, J. (2004), Introduction. In S. Freud, *Mass Psychology and Other Writings*. (Ed). A. Phillips. London: Penguin.
- Said, E. (2003). *Freud and the non-European*. London & New York: Verso.
- Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso: London.

Weeks 4-5: From identity to identification

Aim: To introduce, via a series of pivotal Freudian and Lacanian concepts – narcissism, melancholia, the mirror-stage – a psychoanalytic account of the difficult and necessarily incomplete process of identification.

Learning outcomes

After these lectures and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Explain why for psychoanalysis identification is an ‘impossible’ process characterized by instability, discontinuity and failure
- Outline the basic terms of Freud’s theorization of identification, via his descriptions of narcissism, melancholia and ego-development
- Introduce and elaborate upon Lacan’s account of the ‘Mirror stage’ paying particular attention to the distinction between ego-ideal and ideal-ego
- Speculate on how these notions play a useful role, not only in the workings of ideology, but as means of understanding elementary social relations of rivalry, ambivalence and aggressivity.

Summary

Rather than the rationally conceived, whole, or autonomous ‘identity’ of much social psychological theorizing, psychoanalysis presents the attainment of ‘identity’ as itself an impossibility. As Rose (1997) notes “the unconscious constantly reveals the “failure” of identity...there is resistance to identity at the very heart of psychic life”. Given the fact of the ‘barred’ subject of language and the unconscious - a subject who is characterized by lack and alienation - it is more appropriate to speak of attempts at identification than of identity itself. In these two lectures I introduce this concept of identification - “the psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect...of the other” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988) – with reference to the Freudian accounts of narcissism, melancholia and ego development. I then move on to Lacan’s notion of the mirror-stage emphasizing his ideas of the alienating destiny of the ego, the captivation of the image and the ‘other is I/I is other’ paradox. Crucial here too is the distinction between imaginary and symbolic identifications, the difference between (ideal ego) identifications of ‘what we would like to be’ and (ego-ideal) identifications *with the place* from where we are being observed. These ideas provide a powerful means of expanding, supplementing and indeed critiquing more conventional psychological notions of ‘social identity’.

References

- *Benvenuto, B. & Kennedy, R. (1986). *The Works of Jacques Lacan. An Introduction*. London: Free Association Press.
- Dor, J. (2000). *Introduction to the reading of Lacan: The unconscious structured like a language*. Other Press: New York.
- *Freud, S. (1914). On narcissism. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. London, Vintage. Volume 14: 67-102
- *Freud, S. (1917). Mourning and melancholia. *Standard ed.*, 14: 237-258
- Freud, S. (1923). The ego and the id. *Standard ed.*, 19: 12-59.
- *Homer, S. (2005). *Jacques Lacan*. London & New York: Routledge. (Chapter 1: The imaginary).
- Frosh, S. (1991). *Identity crisis: Modernity, psychoanalysis and the self*. London: Macmillan.
- Lacan, J. (2006). *Écrits*. London & New York: Routledge.
- *Rose, J. (1981). The Imaginary. In C. McCabe, (Ed.), *The talking cure*, 132-161. London: St. Martin's Press. (Also in Žižek (2003). *Lacan: Critical Evaluations*).
- Stavrakakis, Y. (1999). *Lacan and the political*. London & New York: Routledge.

Week 6: ‘Sexuation’

Aim: To introduce and critically discuss the Lacanian revision of the Freudian theory of sexual difference, and to speculate how a related series of notions – the Oedipus complex, the phallic signifier, castration - might be usefully put to the work of critique.

Learning outcomes

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Explain why for psychoanalysis sexuality is never reducible to socialization or to biology
- Critically outline the rudiments of Freud's theorization of sexual difference
- Discuss how a Lacanian perspective revises a series of key Freudian concepts such that they are freed of a reductive biologism
- Outline the structuring role of language with recourse to the idea that taking on a sexual identity amounts to assuming a position relative to the 'phallic signifier'.
- Speculate on the critical usefulness, for feminist modes of analysis, of this series of ideas.

Summary

Psychoanalysis offers us a distinctive perspective on issues of 'gender', or sexuality: neither the sum total effect of socialization nor of biology, the facts of who we desire (sexual orientation) and who we identify with (sexual identity), always retain a powerful unconscious dimension. Freudian psychoanalysis offers us the basic components of such an account, principally through a description of the Oedipal dynamics of desire and identification, and via the controversial notion of castration as structural factor in the constitution of subjectivity. Aware of the reductive potential of aspects of this account, Lacanian psychoanalysis revises the Freudian theory of sexuality with reference to the structuring role of language and with recourse to the idea that taking on a sexual identity amounts to taking up a position relative to the 'phallic signifier'. The aim of this lecture is not only to introduce these ideas, but to do so against the backdrop of social psychological understandings of gender, and to thus emphasize what is radical and distinctive about the psychoanalytic account and why it has become a necessary touchstone for many feminist theorists.

References

- Frosh, S. (2002). *Sexual difference: Masculinity and psychoanalysis*. London: Palgrave.
- *Hook, D. (2006) Psychoanalysis, sexual difference and the castration problematic. In T. Shefer, F. Boonzaier & P. Kiguwa (Eds), *The gender of psychology*. Cape Town: UCT Press, pp. 45-59.
- *Hook, D. (2006) Lacan, the meaning of the phallus and the 'sexed' subject. In T. Shefer, F. Boonzaier & P. Kiguwa (Eds), *The gender of psychology*. Cape Town: UCT Press, pp. 60-84.
- Minsky, R. (1996). *Psychoanalysis and gender. An introductory reader*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, J. (1974). *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A radical reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*. London: Allen Lane.
- Mitchell, J. & Rose, J. (Eds.). (1982). *Feminine Sexuality*, (Translated by Jacqueline Rose). London & New York: Norton. (2 introductory chapters)
- *Parker, I. The phallus is a signifier. (Unpublished paper, available from Derek Hook).
- Verhage, P. (2002). *Does the woman exist? From Freud's hysteric to Lacan's feminine*. London: Rebus Press.
- Wright, E. (2000). *Lacan and Postfeminism*. Reading: Icon.

Week 7: Postcolonial psychoanalysis

Aim: To introduce a style of postcolonial critique, evident in the writing of Fanon, Bhabha and Coetzee, which draws on a variety of crucial psychoanalytic notions – ambivalence, desire, affect, disavowal, fantasy – in order to interrogate various facets of colonial racism.

Learning outcomes

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Explain the benefits, for postcolonial critique, of psychoanalytic conceptualizations
- Appreciate how an analytics of desire, identification and ambivalence enables a unique perspective on issues of racism
- Elaborate upon Fanon's notion of the sexual etiology of colonial racism
- Outline Bhabha's notion of the stereotype, with reference to Freud's model of fetishism and associated ideas of condensation, displacement and disavowal

Summary

One of the most vital areas for the critical revitalization of psychoanalysis has been the domain of postcolonial theory. An obvious proponent of such an approach is Homi Bhabha, whose recourse to the more psychoanalytically-inflected work of Frantz Fanon is particularly evident in his re-conceptualization of a fundamental social psychological problematic: the stereotype. This lecture will open with a brief discussion of the importance and value of psychoanalysis to postcolonial critique, before moving on to discuss two particular applications of 'postcolonial psychoanalysis': J.M. Coetzee's description of the role of desire and fantasy in the prolonging of apartheid ideology, and Bhabha's innovative theorization of colonial discourse along the lines of Freud's model of fetishism. The racial stereotype, for Bhabha, like the fetish, entails operations of condensation and displacement, and attempts to secure and domesticate a world of difference (to completely know 'the other'), even while it heightens anxiety, producing radical 'unknowable' forms of otherness. How does such a notion extend our understanding of racist discourse and identification in contemporary postcolonial multiculturalism?

References

- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The location of culture*. London & New York: Routledge.
- *Coetzee, J.M. (1991). The mind of apartheid: Geoffrey Cronjé. *Social Dynamics*, 17: 1-35.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. London: Pluto.
- *Hook, D. (2005). The racial stereotype, colonial discourse, fetishism, racism. *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 92 (5): 701-734.
- *Hook, D. (in press). Postcolonial psychoanalysis. *Theory & Psychology*.
- Huddart, D. (2006). *Homi Bhabha*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Khanna, R. (2003). *Dark continents: Psychoanalysis and colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- McCulloch, J. (1983). *Black soul white artifact: Fanon's clinical psychology and social theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore-Gilbert, B. (1997). *Postcolonial theory contexts, practices, politics*. London & New York: Verso.
- Mannoni, O. (1990). *Prospero and Caliban: The psychology of colonization*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Young, R. (1990). *White mythologies: Writing history and the West*. London & New York: Routledge.

Week 8: The psychoanalysis of ideology

Aim: To introduce and discuss recent psychoanalytic contribution to ideology critique, paying particular attention to the notions of the master-signifier, the real of social antagonism, anamorphic distortion and the role of fantasy in ensuring the consistency of social reality.

Learning outcome

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Introduce and critically discuss a variety of conceptualizations of ideology
- Discuss and elaborate upon the importance of a psychoanalytic contribution to the study of ideology
- Provide examples of a series of key psychoanalytic terms – the master signifier, anamorphic distortion, the real of social antagonism, the function of fantasy in filling out social reality – that extend the project of ideology critique

Summary

The critique of ideology, once a central objective of social psychological analysis, has been largely neglected in the discipline over the last decade. In stark contrast to this, one of the most vibrant trends in contemporary social theory has been Slavoj Žižek's utilization of Lacanian psychoanalysis to rejuvenate the concept and practice of ideology critique. This lecture outlines what is most distinctive and original in this approach, beginning with Žižek's engagement with the history of this particular critical tradition, then moving onto his premise that cynical distance is an integral component in the working of contemporary ideologies. A variety of Lacanian notions – the master signifier, the role of fantasy, and the idea of the real of social antagonism – are then introduced as a means of extending Žižek's approach. Crucial here is the notion of the *primacy* of fantasy in political analysis, the notion of anamorphic distortion, and the distinction between constructionism and fantasy as incompatible attempts to resolve the inconsistency of (ideological) social reality.

References

- Butler, R. (2005). *Slavoj Žižek live theory*. Continuum: London & NY.
- Butler, R & Stephens, S. (Eds). (2005). *Slavoj Žižek Interrogating the real*. Continuum: London & NY. (Chapters 4 and 11).
- Kay, S. (2003). *Žižek: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Myers, T. (2003). *Slavoj Žižek*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Eagleton, T. (1991). *An introduction to ideology*. Verso: London.
- Stavrakakis, Y. (1999). *Lacan and the political*. London & New York: Routledge.
- *Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso: London.
- *Žižek, S. (1994). The spectre of ideology in S. Žižek (Ed)., *Mapping ideology*. Verso: London & New York.

Lecture 9: Desire and the Other

Aim: To grasp two crucial Lacanian concepts – the ‘big Other’ and desire – to appreciate their relevance in a variety of psychosocial domains of analysis, and to understand how these concepts may be related to one another in the formation of fantasy.

Learning outcomes

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Define and elaborate upon the concept of the ‘big Other’ as it might be applied in the realms of language, inter-subjectivity and social power
- Discuss various of the implications and interpretations of the Lacanian notion of desire
- Explain how these two concepts – the Other and desire – play a crucial role not only in the constitution of fantasy, but in tying the subject into a matrix of social relations

Summary

Unlike ‘others’, imaginary counterparts with whom we share relations of identification (be they narcissistic or aggressive), the ‘big Other’ designates a radical otherness with which there can be no possible identification. This Other may be understood as the symbolic structure, as an external point of authority, indeed, as “the third in any dialogue” (Dolar, 1999) which makes language and symbolic exchange work. For Lacanian psychoanalysis thus, the Other supplies the reference points, the coordinates for how we are situated in the matrix of social relations of which we are a part. It is also *the* addressee of a variety of urgent questions of desire (*How am I seen by the Other? What does the Other want from me?*) that play a foundational role in the constitution of fantasy. It is from this perspective that we best grasp the Lacanian maxim that ‘Desire is the desire of the Other’, i.e. the interlinked notions that a) I desire what is desired by the Other, b) my desire is determined by the symbolic network and c) I arrive at my desire only through the complication of the Other’s impenetrable, enigmatic desire. This lecture ends by considering the usefulness of this approach as a means of critical social psychological analysis.

References

- Butler, R & Stephens, S. (Eds). (2005). *Slavoj Žižek Interrogating the real*. Continuum: London & NY. (Chapters 4 and 11).
- Fink, B. (1996). The Subject and the Other's Desire. In R. Feldstein, B. Fink, M. Jaanus (Eds.), *Reading Seminars I and II*, pp. 76-97 SUNY Press, 1996. (*Also in Žižek (2003). Lacan: Critical Evaluations*).
- *Dolar, M. (1999). Where does power come from? *New Formations*, 35, 79-92.
- Evans, D. (1996). *An introductory dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalysis*. London & New York: Routledge.
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- Žižek, S. (2006). *How to read Lacan*. London: Granta.

Lecture 10: Fantasy, *jouissance* and racism

Aim: To outline the Lacanian notions of fantasy and *jouissance*, and to do so with reference to how they enable a distinctive analysis of forms of anti-Semitism and racism.

Learning outcome

After the lecture and suggested readings, students should be able to:

- Understand the role that fantasy and desire play in the perpetuation of racism /anti-Semitism
- Appreciate the paradoxical status of fantasy as that which is most irreducible about us yet nevertheless fundamentally social in nature (the idea thus that 'there is no such thing as a private fantasy')
- Describe, with examples, the rudiments of the Lacanian notion of *jouissance* as a kind of excessive enjoyment
- Grasp Žižek's thesis concerning racism as 'the theft of enjoyment'

Summary

Slavoj Žižek's application of the Lacanian notion of fantasy to the topic of racism provides a way out of the impasse of those historical, discursive and structural accounts unable to explain the psychological structuring of racist discrimination. Crucial here is the formula '*Che vuoi?*', the question, in other words, of what the Other wants of me, which, Žižek insists, erupts most violently in the case of racism. Once we understand that the problem of the 'racial other' is typically the problem of their desire, of "what s/he *really* wants", as Žižek (1996) puts it, then we appreciate the role of fantasy as a means of filling out the void of this question, of explaining the hidden agenda of the other ('taking our jobs', 'getting our money', etc). Focusing strongly on this material, this lecture will introduce and develop the idea of fantasy as a fundamental category of social psychological and political analysis. An important related concept here is the Lacanian idea of *jouissance* – an excessive mode of psychical enjoyment – which Žižek elaborates in his thesis of racism as 'the theft of enjoyment'.

References

- Homer, S. (2005). *Jacques Lacan*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Miller, J.A. (2000). Paradigms of Jouissance. *Lacanian Ink* 17, 10-47
- Myers, T. (2003). *Slavoj Žižek*. London & New York: Routledge. (Chapter on racism).
- Rose, J. (1996). *States of fantasy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- *Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso: London. (pp. 87-129).
- Žižek, S. (1991). *Looking Awry: An introduction to Jacques Lacan through popular culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Books.
- *Žižek, S. (1997). *The plague of fantasies*. London & New York: Verso. (Section: 'The seven veils of fantasy' also to be found in D. Nobus, D. (ed.), *Key concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis*, 190-218. Other Press: New York.)
- Žižek, S. (1999). Fantasy as a political category. In E. Wright & E. Wright (Eds.), *The Žižek reader*, pp. 87-101. Blackwell: London.
- Žižek, S. (1999). Is it possible to traverse the fantasy in cyberspace. In E. Wright & E. Wright (Eds.), *The Žižek reader*, 102-124. Blackwell: London.
- Žižek, S. (2006). *How to read Lacan*. London: Granta.

Essays

Two copies of your essays must be submitted by 12 noon on Monday March 12th 2007 to room S302, including the appropriate forms.

Please choose ONE essay title from the following. Students may wish to offer alternative essay topics; such alternative essay topics will however be subject to the agreement of Derek Hook.

1. "...the human body...is a perfect medium for the elaboration of social meanings" (Chabani Manganyi). Discuss.
2. For Stuart Hall, the methodology of Freudian dream-interpretation represents an advance on content analysis, especially when it comes to the analysis of racist texts. Discuss.
3. It might be said of the libidinal economy of the mass that we hate others in order to love ourselves. Explain.
4. For psychoanalysis sexuality is never reducible to socialization, to biology, or the joint interaction of these factors. Discuss.
5. Cynical detachment is a condition of possibility for the working of ideology today. Discuss.
6. I do not need to believe, for a kind of believing to occur of which I am a part. Discuss with reference to the notion of the Other.
7. The Lacanian distinction between imaginary identifications of 'what we would like to be' and symbolic identifications *with the place* from where we are being observed, is crucial. It is on the basis of this distinction that Jacques-Alain Miller maintains that Lacan "situates a certain politics in the very foundations of psychology". Discuss.
8. The paradox of fantasy is that it is at the very core of one's 'private' subjectivity, and is nevertheless fundamentally *social* in nature. How can this be?