

Society and Psychoanalysis in Sigmund Freud's Vienna

Eveline List

February 3–14, 2025

4 ECTS

Course Description

Around 1900, economic and social changes fostered deepening political and cultural conflicts. Emancipatory movements and mass phenomena demanded new approaches. Vienna was culturally highly complex and politically and socially divided. Religion and social conventions ceased to provide sufficient orientation. Mass movements and political demagogues characterized the public space.

Psychoanalysis offered new ways of dealing with actual problems and found its way not only into psychiatry, into art, literature, and music but also into the emerging social sciences and political analysis. This was a radical reaction against traditional views of the world.

Psychoanalysis would combine and elaborate developments that had been around since the 18th century. The scientific exploration of intimate emotions and of areas that were once taboo – like infantile sexuality or the profane foundation of religion and the functioning of propaganda – was considered scandalous, but nevertheless gained a wide notoriety and eventually revealed dimensions of human behavior and cultural life commonly denied or concealed.

In this course we want to combine a look at the history of human sciences with an exploration of developments in the fields of society, politics and culture.

The course will cover the following topics:

- The political and social situation of the late Habsburg Empire
- Jewish emancipation
- Labor movement and women's rights movement
- The scientific background of psychoanalysis
- Foundations of creativity and artistic expression
- Understanding and enjoyment of literature, art, and music.
- Mass psychology and (political) propaganda
- Political violence and war
- Sigmund Freud and his discoveries:
 - (1911) Formulation on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning
 - (1907) Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices
 - (1907) Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming
 - (1914) The Moses of Michelangelo
 - (1915) Thoughts for the Times on War and Death
 - (1921) Mass Psychology and Analysis of the Ego

Requirements: Attendance and participation in class discussion constitute 30 %, small group discussion of reading-assignments, and the presentations 30 %, and a written final exam 40 % of the grade.

Syllabus

1st week

Monday, February 3, 2025

11:00 am–1:00 pm

General Introduction to the course

Late 19th century Vienna - legal, economic and social system.

Vienna around 1900:

Science and culture

Emancipatory movements and „Red Vienna“

The Age of Psychology

Tuesday, February 4, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	Psychoanalysis - Basic Ideas Sigmund Freud: Biography Publications
Wednesday, February 5, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	Film-screening <i>The Young Dr. Freud</i> Discussion
Wednesday, February 5, 2025 2:00 pm–4:00 pm	Excursion: Sigmund Freud Museum
Thursday, February 6, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	The discovery of the unconscious <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> Dynamic model of the mind
Friday, February 7, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	<i>The two Principles of Psychic Functioning</i> Symbolization Theory of drives - repression and defense mechanisms
2nd week	
Monday, February 10, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	Developmental psychology, relationship between psyche and biology The psychoanalytic understanding of sexuality The Oedipus Complex
Tuesday, February 11, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	Creativity and Literature <i>Creative Writers and Day Dreaming</i> Transitional Phenomena Symbolization
Wednesday, February 12, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	Artistic creation and Appreciation <i>The Moses of Michelangelo</i> and Interpretation of art work
Thursday, February 13, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	First World War - war neurosis Freud's <i>Thoughts for the Times of War and Death</i> Destructivity - projections -scapegoating - prejudice Mass psychology
Friday, February 14, 2025 11:00 am–1:00 pm	Final Exam