

Site for Contemporary Psychoanalysis

Introductory Course 2026/7

The Site's Introductory Course consists of a year-long experiential group and a series of seminars on psychoanalysis. There are 27 sessions over the year, divided into three terms. The evening starts promptly at 6.30pm and ends at 9.15pm at Westminster Quakers Meeting House in Covent Garden.

Please arrive five minutes early to the first session, when there will be a short welcome introduction.

Schedule

6.30 - 7.45pm Experiential group

7.45 - 8.00pm Break

8.00 - 9.15pm Seminar

Term one: 15 October - 10 December

15, 22, 29 October - Hysteria : Madhu Nandi

Psychoanalysis in the modern world. Does the term 'hysteria ' help us understand ourselves and others?

With the emphasis in “getting better quickly”, psychoanalysis has had a bad press. We live in a world in which we are expected to know who we are and how to be in the world. Our troubled selves are to be cured, and at once. And yet, many struggle to find their way, and the usual solutions don't work.

Freud's patient, Dora, was just like this. She had suffered from multiple conditions since early childhood and seen many doctors, over a number of years, who had been unable to offer relief from her difficulties. Freud, on the other hand, was curious about this young woman's suffering and how her troubles may be related to her family and social conditions and how she understood her role within these particular circumstances. In this case history Freud introduces several concepts. One of the key features is that physical conditions may be related to psychological difficulties.

Contemporary society offers pills, but often they are only temporary measures. So, our headache returns, our ennui remains, the stress is only briefly reduced.

This seminar will introduce theories over 100 years old and discuss how Freud's theory of hysteria, which he conceptualised as he treated Dora, is pertinent to our everyday struggles. Hysteria is a rebellion against complacency and a refusal to comply to society's demands. I believe this diagnosis, fallen out of favour, is as relevant today as it was at the end of the 19th century.

The importance of this is that it allows for a place of hope; a possibility that one can articulate suffering and difficulties so that they have meaning. The individual does not have to be endlessly bound by their predicament, but rather find solutions and possible answers to the question of who am I and what is my place in the world."

5, 12, 19 November The psychoanalytic plague:

Judith Soal

"They don't realise we are bringing them the plague" - Freud

We will consider what Freud meant in this much-cited comment to Jung as he arrived in America on a lecture tour in 1909. If psychoanalysis was considered shocking and even dangerous at the time, to what extent is this still true today? If not, what might have been lost (or gained) by the widespread dissemination and domestication of psychoanalytic theories?

26 Nov, 3, 10 December - Palestine: Nick Blackburn

What is it like for us to come together and speak about Palestine and psychoanalysis together, in the United Kingdom, at this moment in time? Why might it be that Palestine feels, to some of us, so uniquely necessary, difficult, painful, a topic to speak about, and how might it push us to examine psychoanalytic positions such as 'the reparative' and 'neutrality'? These three sessions, more associative than historical, offer a starting point, aim to stimulate thinking and raise more questions than they answer.

1. 'Is not their desert the garden of the Lord?' : The Death of Klinghoffer and a stage for suffering.
2. Freud and the Non-European (Edward Said, Lara and Stephen Sheehi)
3. Violent Innocence and the Anti-Reparative Turn (Christopher Bollas, Avgi Saketopoulou)

Term two: 21 January - 18 March

21, 28 January, 4 February - Six Paradigms of Jouissance:

Oliver Jarvis

In this series of seminars, we will be looking at jouissance, a notoriously slippery term coined by Jacques Lacan, which he evolves and develops throughout his thinking. The aim of these seminars won't be to pin down and understand jouissance but to experience its vicissitudes. In Lacan's terms, we will gain *connaissance* (familiarity) rather than *savoir* (knowledge) in our understanding.

Although this group of seminars will orbit around one short but dense central text – Jacques-Alain Miller's *Paradigms of Jouissance* – it is my hope that the discussion that will emerge from it will take us into different rhizomatic directions, mirroring the evolving and

dynamic nature of jouissance itself. This is why I have included a range of supplementary readings from Brian Massumi, Spinoza, Freud, amongst others.

I also wish to make space, if appropriate, for an honest and open observation of some of the surrounding papers and comments that Miller has published, especially his views on transness and Zionism. We will keep a question in mind: what is the cost of jouissance? And who is paying for our enjoyment? This will open up a conversation surrounding shame, which will draw inspiration from Miller's text *On Shame*.

I would also like us to keep Freud's concepts of *Fixierbarkeit* and *Haftbarkeit* in mind, which he explores in his *Three Essays*. Does the fixity of one's jouissance provide some insight into whether the subject is receptive to an affect or "emotion". I wish to use a working definition of "emotion" in conversation with "feeling", where a feeling may be described as an individual response, while emotion could be read as something social. In other words, emotions are encountered due to an experience with the other.

11, 18, 25 February - Hysteria (2): Douglas Gill

A Second Look at Hysteria: Looking at its beginnings with Freud and Breuer to how it has been identified in the 21st century.

Drawing on clinical material plus an experiential art workshop to explore this psyche-soma phenomenon.

Texts to follow.

4, 11, 18 March - Psychoanalysis and race:

Peter Nevins

We will be looking specifically at black women writers. Session one will be an experiential exercise; session two on Toni Morrison and three on bell hooks.

Term three: 29 April - 1 July

29 April, 6, 13 May - Limits & Liberation in

Psychoanalysis: Andie Newman

Ideas around limits, restrictions and constraints are everywhere to be found within psychoanalysis. We will reflect on how limits

operate within – and are essential to – the psychoanalytic approach, including thinking about the frame, boundaries and ‘the rules’, and the consequences of limits/restrictions in opening up – or liberating – the space for the work of psychoanalysis to unfold. Alongside other texts, we will read some of Freud’s key papers on technique.

20 May, 3, 10 June - Marion Milner : Akshi Singh

Marion Milner lived for the entirety of the twentieth century. By the age of ninety-eight she had written nine books revealing how free time and creativity are vital for a fulfilled life. These three seminars present an introduction to Milner’s work which inspired Singh’s book *In Defence of Leisure* (Penguin, 2025).

Akshi Singh was born ninety years after Milner, in Rajasthan, over four thousand miles away from where Milner lived and worked. At first glance, the worlds of these two women seem entirely separate. Yet when Singh found herself standing at a crossroads in her life and grieving personal loss, she realised the questions and preoccupations Milner was exploring were her own.

Marion Milner is explored as a writer for our times. In asking the simple question: how do I want to spend my free time? Milner developed a method for discovering her true likes and dislikes. As

Singh follows Milner's approach - from keeping a diary to painting, building a home to travelling to the sea - she discovers the importance of rest, creativity and play in all of our lives, and how it can open the door to achieving what we truly desire.

**17, 24 June, July 1 - Trauma in collective contexts:
understanding the need for its representation within
community environments: Luisa Pretolani**

This series will explore the formation of collective trauma and the need for their representations. One of the most recognizable symbols of collective trauma in the twentieth century is the creation of Godzilla, or “Gojira,” which first appeared before Japanese audiences in 1954. The fictional creature—a giant dinosaur awakened and mutated by mankind/exposure to the H bomb—embodies the anxieties of a nation grappling with the aftermath of nuclear devastation. The movie functions as a powerful political statement, reflecting the fears and traumas of the Japanese people during a period characterized by extensive censorship under American occupation.

But if a movie can be perceived as a very sophisticated medium to answer to a collective shared trauma, there are other ‘simpler’ but

equally powerful representations which are borne from the needs of a community to share their deep pain, shame and resilience... What does the representation answer? How does the censorship of a collective voice inform the creation and the meaning of the symbolic representation?

Experiential Group

The experiential group, facilitated by Barbara Cawdron, offers the opportunity to reflect on the experience of being in a group.