William James and Sigmund Freud: Pioneers of Modern Psychology
A Special Topics Seminar / Psychology 359
Spring 2016 / MW 3:00-4:15 / RYLH 422
David E. Leary

Description & Objectives

This seminar will entail intensive reading about the life and work of two major contributors to the development of contemporary psychology and culture – the American William James (1842-1910), a founder of modern scientific psychology, and the Austrian Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), a founder of modern clinical psychology. The seminar will focus on each of them individually as well as in relation to each other. The comparative study of these two giants of modern thought and culture has particular significance since both were steeped in literature and philosophy; both approached psychology with a background in medicine, physiology, and neurology; both were among the early adopters of a Darwinian framework for psychology; both thought a great deal about the relation between consciousness and unconsciousness; both argued for the importance of instinct, habit, and the emotions; and both arrived at innovative and multilayered views on the human self and its relation to society. Through these and other means (e.g., James’s advocacy of a pragmatic approach to knowledge and his meditations upon the relevance of religion and values, and Freud’s awakening of concern for the effects of childrearing, repression, and sublimation), both of these pioneers have had a major impact on culture at large.

The goal of the seminar will be a clearer understanding of some of the basic sources of contemporary psychology and culture. Although a background in psychology would be helpful, there will be no prerequisites other than a willingness to read, analyze, reflect on, discuss, and write about sometimes challenging – but always interesting and important – primary sources (original texts) by James and Freud.

Requirements & Grading

Overview: Participants will do some reading about James and Freud, but the principal focus of the seminar will involve reading and discussing their seminal works. In addition to this reading and discussing, each student will write two short (6-10 page) papers and one longer (12-20 page) paper, as described below.

Readings: Each student will be expected to mark up paper copies of daily reading assignments and to bring marked up copies to class discussions. Underlining, highlighting, and annotating reading assignments will advance analysis, understanding, and memory. Each student will also be encouraged to keep notes on the reading assignments. Jotting down queries, confusions, ideas, and responses to the readings will help each student identify potential contributions to class discussions as well as possible topics for written papers.

Discussions: Every participant will be expected to arrive at seminar sessions ready to raise questions, offer interpretations, and share analytical and critical observations regarding the readings and regarding the comments made by other participants. To facilitate class discussion, each participant should be prepared, at the start of the class, to point out one or two passages or sections of the assigned reading that grabbed his or her attention and interest, and should be able to indicate what in particular did the grabbing: the topic? the style? the insight? the evidence? the relation to some previous claim? the corroboration or contradiction of what our other author
argued? In pursuing such questions, the instructor may call upon participants to share the responsibility for leading class discussion.

**Papers:** One of the short, 6-10 page papers for the seminar will be on James (due February 26), the other on Freud (due April 22). Each of these short papers will involve the selection of some aspect of the work of James or Freud – an aspect treated in our assigned readings – and the creation of a thesis and related argument about it, which is to be supported by textual evidence from our assigned readings.

The longer, 12-20 page paper (due April 29) will compare James and Freud, either in general or with regard to a particular aspect of their thought, based only on our assigned readings. This longer paper, like the two shorter ones, will be expected to have a thesis and to be organized as a logical, sequential argument that supports this thesis with clear reasoning and adequate textual evidence, drawn from assigned readings.

Students will be encouraged to discuss plans for their papers with the instructor at least a week before those papers are due. Initial conversations with the instructor regarding papers for the seminar are likely to be more productive if students come to these discussions with ideas about their possible interests. Later conversations will be more productive if students come with a written thesis statement and a list of textual passages that would support that thesis.

**Grading:** Grading will be based on the three major components of the seminar – reading, discussing, and writing – in approximately equal proportions, so about one-third of the final grade will depend on each of these three factors. The grade for reading will be based upon evidence provided in class discussions, office visits, and written papers that assigned readings have been done in a timely manner and have resulted in accurate comprehension. (No one will be expected to comprehend everything prior to class discussion, but a significant amount should be understood by that time.) The grade for class discussion will be based on the quality as well as quantity of contributions, though allowances will be made for individual variability in personality and communication style. The grade for writing will be based on the quality of the three written papers, with each of the shorter papers counting for approximately 25% of the writing grade and the longer paper counting for approximately 50%. The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments in grades in light of unusual circumstances or unusually strong or weak performance in some regard.

**Required Texts**

All students will be expected to have the exact same paper-copy versions of the assigned texts, so that they can mark their texts and be on the same page during class discussions. All required texts are listed at the end of this syllabus. Some, listed immediately below, can be purchased in the campus bookstore (or, if purchased elsewhere, must be the exact same versions, as indicated below by their ISBN numbers):

- **PBC** = William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course* (Dover) ISBN 0-486-41604-6

PBC, VRE, RR, INT, CIV, and PG will be used in the Class Schedule to indicate the source of assigned readings. All other required texts will be on our seminar’s Blackboard site, indicated below as BB. (This includes any reading indicated as a “handout” on the syllabus.) You should print these Blackboard texts and, as with all of other assigned texts, mark them up as you read them and then bring them to class for the day’s discussion.
When the daily reading assignment indicates that you should focus on certain pages, that means that you should at least skim the rest of the reading to see what it entails and read carefully the pages on which you have been instructed to focus.

**Recommended Background Reading**

There are large secondary literatures on both James and Freud. Notable biographies of James include Ralph Barton Perry’s *The Thought and Character of William James* (2 vols., 1935), Gay Wilson Allen’s *William James* (1967), and Linda Simon’s *Genuine Reality: A Life of William James* (1998). Notable biographies of Freud include Ernest Jones’s *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (3 vols., 1953-57), Frank J. Sulloway’s *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* (1979), and Ronald W. Clark’s *Freud: The Man and the Cause* (1980). However, if you wish to purchase one work on each of our pioneers – works that treat their ideas and works within the context of their lives – I recommend Robert D. Richardson’s *William James* (2006) and Peter Gay’s *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (1988). (Richardson and Gay, you will notice, are the editors of our two “readers.”) Both biographies are available in more recent paperback versions. There will be no assigned readings from these biographies, but you might find it interesting and useful to read them – or at least read in them – as we read and discuss the assigned texts.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon. Jan. 11</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WILLIAM JAMES (1842-1910): PIONEER OF MODERN SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY**

**William James and His Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Historical Context of James’s Work” (handout)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Materials on William James and His Early Development” (handout) (1-45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Basic Premises of James’s Thought**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon. Jan. 18</td>
<td>No Class – Martin Luther King Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. Jan. 20</td>
<td>“Materials on William James and His Early Development” (handout) (46-91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Sentiment of Rationality” (1879, 1882, 1897) (BB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon. Jan. 25</td>
<td>Table of Contents for <em>The Principles of Psychology</em> (1890) (BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preface and Table of Contents for <em>Psychology: Briefer Course</em> (1892) (BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Scope of Psychology” (1890) (BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Habit” (1892) (PBC 1-17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**James’s Views on Consciousness and Unconsciousness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed. Jan. 27</td>
<td>“The Stream of Consciousness” (1892) (PBC 18-42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Perception of Reality” (1890) (RR 46-78)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon. Feb. 1</td>
<td>“Attention” (1892) (PBC 84-105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Will” (1892) (PBC 282-327)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed. Feb. 3</td>
<td>“The Methods &amp; Snares of Psychology” (1890) (BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Do Unconscious Mental States Exist?” (1890) (BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Relations of Minds to Other things” (1890) (BB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**James’s Views on Self and Society**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon. Feb. 8</td>
<td>“The Self” (1892) (PBC 43-83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Sick Soul” (1902) (VRE 53-63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Divided Self, and the Process of Its Unification” (1902) (VRE 63-67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wed. Feb. 10  “Great Men and Their Environment” (1880) (BB)
“On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings” (1899) (RR 145-163)
“What Makes a Life Significant” (1899) (RR 164-182)

Some of James’s Distinctive Ideas

Mon.  Feb. 15  “The Will to Believe” (1897) (BB)
“The Moral Equivalent of War” (1910) (RR 301-313)


Mon.  Feb. 22  The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902) (VRE 138-160)
“The Energies of Men” (1906) (RR 263-280)
“William James’s Psychological Perspectivism: The Foundation of His Philosophical Pragmatism, Pluralism, and Radical Empiricism” (handout) Read at least 1 & 16-22.
“The Contemporary Reception of James’s Work” (handout)
“The Current Reputation of James’s Work” (handout)

Wed.  Feb. 24  No Class – Work on your short (6-10 page) paper on William James

Fri.  Feb. 26  Your short (6-10 page) paper on William James is due by 5:00 p.m. as a Word-compatible attachment emailed to dleary@richmond.edu.

SIGMUND FREUD (1856-1939):
PIONEER OF MODERN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Sigmund Freud and His Background

Mon.  Feb. 29  “Sigmund Freud’s Life and Work” (handout)
“The Historical Context of Freud’s Work” (handout)
An Autobiographical Study (1925) (PG 3-41)
“Materials on Sigmund Freud and His Early Development” (handout) (1-37)

The Basic Premises of Freud’s Thought

Wed.  Mar. 2  “Materials on Sigmund Freud and His Early Development” (handout) (37-51)
Introduction to Wilhelm Fliess and “Draft B” (1893) (PG 55-56)
Josef Breuer, “Fräulein Anna O.” (1895) (PG 60-78)
“Project for a Scientific Psychology” (1895) (PG 86-89)
“Letters to Fliess” (1897) (PG 111-116)

Spring Break (March 5-13)

Mon.  Mar. 14  The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) (INT) Read here and there, as you wish, being sure to include 3-8, 11, 89-111, 122-123, 129-131, 144-145, 226-231, 264-265, 287-291, & 401-402. (Note that we will discuss the final chapter, Ch. 7, on March 21.)

Wed.  Mar. 16  “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria” (also known as “Dora”) (1905) (PG 172-239)

Mon.  Mar. 21  Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905) (PG 239-293)

Freud’s Views on Consciousness and Unconsciousness

Wed.  Mar. 23  The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) (INT 403-489) Focus on 421-437, 443-451, & 466-489

Mon.  Mar. 28  “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning” (1911) (PG 301-306)
“Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” (1915) (PG 562-568)
“Repression” (1915) (PG 568-572)
“The Unconscious” (1915) (PG 572-584)
The Ego and the Id (1923) (PG 628-658)
Wed. Mar. 30  No Class – Work on your short (6-10 page) paper on Sigmund Freud and your longer (12-20 page) paper on James and Freud

**Freud’s Views on Self and Society**


Wed. Apr. 6  Civilization and Its Discontents (1930) (CIV 76-149)

**Some of Freud’s Distinctive Ideas**

Mon. Apr. 11  The Future of an Illusion (1927) (PG 685-722)


William James and Sigmund Freud: Comparison and Final Thoughts

**CONCLUSION**

Mon. Apr. 18  No Class – Meeting with Instructor and/or work on your short (6-10 page) paper on Sigmund Freud and your longer (12-20 page) paper on James and Freud

Wed. Apr. 20  No Class – Meeting with Instructor and/or work on your short (6-10 page) paper on Sigmund Freud and your longer (12-20 page) paper on James and Freud

Fri. Apr. 22  Your short (6-10 page) paper on Sigmund Freud is due by 5:00 p.m. as a Word-compatible attachment emailed to dleary@richmond.edu.

Fri. April 29  Your long (12-20 page) paper on James and Freud is due by 5:00 p.m. as a Word-compatible attachment emailed to dleary@richmond.edu.

**SEMINAR READINGS & REFERENCES FOR PAPERS**

As indicated in the Class Schedule, all of our seminar readings are from one of these sources:

- **BB** = Seminar Blackboard Site (handouts are included on this website)

The handouts written by the instructor are not to be cited in papers for this seminar, but the primary sources included among the “Materials on William James and on His Early Development” and the “Materials on Sigmund Freud and His Early Development” may be cited and referenced as indicated within those collections and explained more fully in handouts on “How to Cite James Letters in Your Papers” and “How to Cite Freud Letters in Your Papers.”

All other seminar readings are listed below, cited in APA Manual Style, as they should appear in the reference sections of papers written for this seminar (with an appropriate revision of a, b, c, etc. after dates for multiple publications):


James, W. (1979b). The will to believe. In *The will to believe* (pp. 13-33). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original publication 1897)


