Module Description:
Psychoanalysis has made a great impact upon artists in the twentieth century to now and also on the work of art critics and historians. This course seeks to explore and signpost some of the developments and points of convergence between psychoanalysis and art. The Surrealists in Paris c. 1924 to the late 1950s were among the first artists and writers to adopt the ideas of Freud and others. The ideas of Freud and artistic works by the Surrealists will provide a point of departure for the course but the main emphasis will be on more contemporary art and its links with psychoanalysis.

Another significant phase in these two areas has been their impact on artists engaged with subject matter linked to identity, gender and sexuality since the later 1960s. It was also around this time, the so-called ‘new art history’ and criticism came into being, in which methods of studying the visual arts began to draw on other disciplines such as sociology, literary theory, anthropology, etc. Psychoanalysis has been used by writers on art to take the study and understanding of art beyond empiricism and positivism. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s reinterpretation of Freud has been instrumental to art history and criticism since the 1960s. It is important to note that Freud, Lacan, and others such as Melanie Klein, were concerned with psychoanalysis in its clinical sense, but in the course we will be exploring their ideas as models which have either influenced artists directly, or at least can be used to interpret their work.
Three main themes structure the course:

- The viewer and the viewing process;
- Artworks - imagery, objects and the representation of bodies;
- The creative process of the artist and the use of psychoanalytic ideas in contemporary artists’ works and in writings about art today.

The course will present a selective history of the subject concentrating on Freud and the Surrealists and their legacies, especially the reinterpretation of Freud by Lacan and its application in recent art history and criticism.

**Entry Requirements:**
This module is open to anyone with an interest and enthusiasm for the subject. However, all modules are taught at university level, and students should be able to read, write and speak English fluently to benefit from their studies.

**Aims and Objectives:**
- Develop students’ understanding of the topic area
- Develop an understanding of the theoretical and conceptual issues
- Develop students’ aptitude for study and research, including effective oral and written skills
- Encourage active participation in class discussions and critical evaluation of material
- Encourage students’ participation in different forms of assessment

**Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of the module students will:

**Subject Specific:**
- have deepened their understanding of the topic area
- be able to outline the development of ideas, including the way in which such developments may or may not have been influenced by socio-cultural contexts.
- be able to discuss key approaches, theories and concepts within specific areas of psychoanalytic psychology
- be able to describe areas of debate and controversy within specific areas of psychoanalytic psychology

**Intellectual:**
- have acquired new perspectives on approaching the topic area
- have the ability to review knowledge with critical awareness, insight and originality. Making cognate connections between historical context and contemporary debates in the field.

**Practical:**
- be able to describe and discuss their newly acquired knowledge and understanding
- have developed their research, writing, and discussion skills, and extended their capacity for critical analysis and reflection
- have completed, and been assessed on, their course work
**Personal and Social:**

- the ability to act as a self-directed, reflective learner, recognising and employing a range of strategies to support personal learning, including the ability to reflect on success and failure.
- the ability to communicate more effectively and to participate in small group discussion/debate, both listening and contributing their own ideas in an appropriate and clear manner.

**Teaching and Learning:**

A range of approaches to teaching and learning will be adopted. These include talks, lectures, group work and discussions. Slides and reproductions will be used to support these activities. A museum or gallery visit may be included too.

Guidance with study skills, research and coursework preparation will be given during the course at appropriate intervals.

**Course Content:**

The course is divided into the following blocks:

**Artworks – Imagery, objects or making sense of non-sense**

The first part of the course will consider the ways in which different types of artwork can be interpreted using psychoanalytic ideas. At this stage of the course we will begin by exploring some of the ideas of Freud and their legacy which are current in writing about art and visual culture. Particular subjects we will consider are: the dream-work; the uncanny and fetishism. Various examples of Surrealist art and film and the legacy of Surrealism in art will provide a ground for discussing the role, relevance and implications of using psychoanalysis to interpret art.

**The spectator and spectatorship**

The study of spectatorship is an important sphere in which psychoanalysis has been used to explore a viewer’s identifications and phantasies (unconscious as opposed to conscious -fantasies). Film theoretician Laura Mulvey has produced several studies of visual pleasure which have been taken up by art critics and historians to examine the psychic dramas at work in the viewing process.

We shall also consider the relationship of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ in terms of a colonial gaze. Frantz Fanon (1925-61) was a psychoanalyst, writer and playwright concerned with the effects of colonialism. His writing is characterised by strong visual themes and metaphors. We shall explore how artists have responded to his ideas and how they may be used to interpret visual culture.

**Artworks - bodies, desire & fantasy**

This part of the course will focus some of the ideas raised earlier in the course and provide a space to consider interconnected ideas of the representation of the body, desire and fantasy. Using a range of visual examples, we will also have the opportunity to discuss the depiction of the female body, sexuality and identity. Many women artists in
particular have, over the last thirty years, developed their art practice and writing by using psychoanalysis. Despite the Freudian legacy of psychoanalysis reproducing the patriarchal views, evident in his writing, it is within psychoanalysis that many women have found the theories through which to discuss and formulate ideas about the construction of gender, sexuality and identity. This is especially pertinent to understanding and interpreting the prevalence and commodification of images of women in visual culture. One of the papers we will explore here is Joan Riviere’s, ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’.

The creative process
This section of the course will consider the artist’s investments in the creative process. We will not be attempting to produce a psychology of the artist from their work. A simple equation between the artist’s intentions and the meaning of a work has been thrown into question by the implications of psychoanalysis itself. Art history and art criticism considers factors such as historical and social context to be important in the production of meaning as well as or in spite of the artist’s intention. We will be thinking about creativity as a process and exploring the mechanisms that may be at work in certain cases. While the idea of creativity as a process will underpin all sections of the course, in this section we will consider Melanie Klein’s ideas of children’s play which she see as analogous to psychoanalysis itself. Klein (1882-1960) was born in Vienna but later moved to Berlin and London. Although she was a follower of Freud, many of her ideas challenged Freud’s, particularly the centrality of the Oedipus Complex in his work. We shall also consider D.W. Winnicott’s concept of the transitional object in relation to art.

Reading:
B Fer, Ch 3 ‘Surrealism, Myth and Psychoanalysis’ in B Fer, D Batchelor & P Wood (eds): Realism, Rationalism and Surrealism: Art Between the Wars (Open University and Yale University Press 1993) (Essential reading)
I Parker: Psychoanalytic Culture: Psychoanalytic Discourse in Western Society (Sage Publications 1997) (Wide-ranging overview of the relationship between psychoanalytic ideas and society)
R Short: Dada and Surrealism (Octopus Books 1980) (Introduction to these art movements with a good balance of images and text)
R Wollheim: Freud (Fontana 1985)
E Wright: Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice (Routledge 2003) (An introduction to the use of psychoanalysis as a methodology to look at culture)

Please note: Psychology books are frequently revised and updated. Any recent edition would be suitable to use.
Coursework and assessment:
Participating in coursework and completing assessment will help you to develop your understanding of the subject and develop your skills of analysis.

Students are expected to prepare two pieces of coursework each between 1000 and 1500 words in length which, in most instances, will take the form of written work. Students may choose from a list of topics which will be available during the course. It may be possible with the agreement of the tutor, to submit one longer piece of work (between 2500 and 3000 words). Other forms of coursework include a review of an exhibition or part of an exhibition, a report, a verbal presentation to the group with some visual supporting material and a written report or a case study.

For a 15 credit module students will need to complete 2500-3000 words or equivalent.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The My Birkbeck website (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/) is your gateway to accessing all student support services at Birkbeck.

You may find the following links particularly useful:-

- Obtaining your library/ID card: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/you/cards
- Accessing IT Services: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing/username
- Contacting our disability office: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/disability/disability-office
- Study skills support: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/study-skills

You can visit the My Birkbeck helpdesk on the ground floor of the main Birkbeck building on Malet Street (entry via Torrington Square). For details of opening hours visit: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/helpdesk/

You can also call the helpdesk on 020 7631 6316.

Library and study skills resources

Once you have your ID card, you may use the Birkbeck library and associated resources. You may find the following web links helpful:

- For information on how best to access the resources available for psychology students through Birkbeck College Library, students may wish to work through the tutorial available at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/
- For specific guidance for psychologists and psychology students on getting the best out the internet go to: http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/- and search for ‘Psychology’
For specific guidance on how to avoid plagiarism in your course work go to https://connect.le.ac.uk/p50066682/ and press the ‘play’ button.

Course Evaluation
During the course students will be asked to complete an evaluation form which gives the opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of their learning.

WHAT CAN I DO NEXT
It is important you are clear which award the module you are enrolled on counts towards. Our website provides an overview of each Certificate award so you can decide which best suits your needs: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/2014/certificates/subject/psychology/

Information is available on core and option modules for each Certificate. Your choice of subsequent modules you take should be informed by this information. Modules can be taken in any order although it is recommended that certain core modules are taken first. Not all core modules have to be taken in the same year. If you need further advice you can contact the department by telephone on 020 3073 8044 or 020 7631 6669 or by e-mail: psychologycert@bbk.ac.uk