

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MA Psychoanalytic Studies (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip, PG Cert
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home Department/other teaching departments	School of Social Sciences Psychosocial Studies
Location of delivery	Central London, Online
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) October
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	TMAPSAIP_C on-campus study TMAPSAON_C online study TMAPSAMX_C flexible study
HECoS Code	100498
Start date of programme	October 2011
Date of programme approval	Summer 2011
Date of last programme amendment approval	November 2022
Valid for academic entry year	2025-26
Date of last revision to document	21/05/25

Admissions requirements

At least a second class honours degree or its equivalent in any discipline relevant to the course. These will include most humanities and social science disciplines, for example Psychology, Sociology, Politics, Philosophy, History, Cultural Studies, Anthropology, English, Film Studies. In exceptional circumstances, the Admissions Tutor will consider applicants who do not meet this criterion but who have substantial professional experience (e.g. teaching, social work, counselling and psychotherapy, mediation, development work, etc) and who can demonstrate that they have the required academic abilities to complete a Masters level course.

In order to undertake the optional module at the British Psychoanalytical Society, students will be required to attend an additional interview with the BPAS.

Course aims

The MA Psychoanalytic Studies takes psychoanalysis as its object of study. It examines the clinical and theoretical developments of the tradition of thought and practice pioneered by Sigmund Freud, and considers the wider relationship between psychoanalysis, culture and history in the modern age. The programme explores how psychoanalytic thought has been used to illuminate pressing social and political concerns and examines the controversies that have surrounded its application outside the clinical setting. It focuses on the interface between psychoanalysis as an evolving clinical practice, as a form of knowledge, and as a mode of critique. It is not part of a clinical training and teaches no clinical skills, but it does provide a strong theoretical grounding for students who might go on to train in psychoanalysis or psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

The core teaching staff group for the programme brings together researchers in psychosocial studies, historians, cultural and literary critics and practising clinicians. The aim is to enable students to study closely the numerous modern developments within psychoanalysis, from Freud through to contemporary psychoanalytic theory and practice; to examine its key concepts in detail; to place those concepts in context; and to explore the methodological, epistemological and ethical issues that have resulted from diverse elaboration and extension of psychoanalytic ideas, not only in a clinical setting but particularly in social and cultural inquiries and in the interpretation of the historical past.

The MA programme has good links with the British Psychoanalytical Society through its teaching staff and also because the Society's Foundation Course in Psychoanalysis can be taken as an option module by students on the MA. For students with strong clinical interests, this arrangement provides an exceptional opportunity to be taught psychoanalytic theory by some of the most senior and eminent psychoanalysts in the country.

Course Objectives

- To provide postgraduate level teaching addressing the intersection of psychoanalysis with cultural and social issues, with a focus on British, American, Latin American and Continental European psychoanalysis as it has developed in the past 100 years.
- To provide an opportunity for students to engage critically with key psychoanalytic concepts and to understand them in their historical, social and cultural context.
- To introduce students to the history of psychoanalysis as it has developed from its European base, including some coverage of psychoanalysis outside Europe and America.
- To critically explore applications of psychoanalysis to the understanding of culture, the arts and society.

Course structure

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year, October Start					
7	SSPA103S7	Concepts in Psychoanalysis	30	Core	1 (Autumn)
7	SSPA078S7	Psychoanalysis and Culture	30	Core	2 (Spring)
7		Optional Module 1 (may be restricted or prescribed for online-only students). Level 7 modules taught in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in term 1, 2 or 3, plus other options in the College, e.g. the Birkbeck Law School. Students will be particularly alerted to modules of psychoanalytic interest in the Faculty, (e.g. SSPA067S7 Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice; and AREN197S7 Freud in the World: Psychoanalysis, literary writing and the legacies of history) The Foundation Course in Psychoanalysis is available as an option taught at the Institute of Psychoanalysis over the whole year.	30	Option	1, 2 or 3
7		Optional Module 2 (may be restricted or prescribed for online-only students). Level 7 modules taught in the current Faculty of Social Sciences in terms 2 or 3, plus other options in the College, e.g. The Birkbeck Law School. Students will be particularly alerted to modules of psychoanalytic interest in the Faculty, (e.g. SSPA067S7 Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice; and AREN197S7 Freud in the World: Psychoanalysis, literary writing and the legacies of history). The Foundation Course in Psychoanalysis is available as an option taught at the Institute of Psychoanalysis over the whole year.	30	Option	2 or 3
7	SSPA085D7	Independent Research Module	60	Core	[all year]
Part-time – 2 years, October start					
Year 1					
7	SSPA103S7	Concepts in Psychoanalysis	30	Core	1
7	SSPA078S7	Psychoanalysis and Culture	30	Core	2
Year 2					
7		Optional Module 1 (may be restricted or prescribed for online-only students). Level 7 modules taught in the current Faculty of Social Sciences in terms 1, 2, or 3 (or term 3 of year 1), plus other options in the College e.g. the Birkbeck Law School. Students will be particularly alerted to modules of psychoanalytic interest in the Faculty, (e.g. SSPA067S7 Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice; and AREN197S7 Freud in the World: Psychoanalysis, literary writing and the legacies of history). The Foundation Course in Psychoanalysis is available	30	Option	1, 2 or 3 (or Yr 1, 3)

		as an option taught at the Institute of Psychoanalysis over the whole year.			
7		Optional Module 2 (may be restricted or prescribed for online-only students). Level 7 modules taught in the current Faculty of Social Sciences in terms 1, 2 or 3, plus other options in the College e.g. the Birkbeck Law School. Students will be particularly alerted to modules of psychoanalytic interest in the Faculty, (e.g. SSPA067S7 Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice; and AREN197S7 Freud in the World: Psychoanalysis, literary writing and the legacies of history).	30	Option	1, 2, or 3
7	SSPA085D7	Independent Research Module	60	Core	All year

Core: *Module must be taken and passed by student*

Compulsory: *Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)*

Option: *Student can choose to take this module*

Indicative Options

SSPA053S7 Foundation Course in Psychoanalysis (*in-person*)

AREN197S7 Freud in the World: psychoanalysis, literary writing and the legacies of history (*in person*)

PSSL040S7 Theories and Sites of the Psychosocial; (*hyflex*)

PSSL039S7 Texts and Interpretation (*hyflex*)

FDRE017S7 'Race', Empire, Postcoloniality (*in-person*)

FDRE012S7 Culture, Community, Identity (*in-person*)

SSPA152S7 Sociology for New Worlds (*hyflex*)

SSPA067S7 Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice (*hyflex*)

ENHU049S7 Becoming Modern (*hyflex*)

SSHC483S7 Narrative Medicine (*hyflex*)

ENHU050S7 The Post-War: 1945 to the present (*hyflex*)

AREN231S7 Future Bodies: Medicine, Culture and Technology (*hyflex*)

AHVM025S7 European Cinema at the Crossroads (*in-person*)

ARCL065S7 Memory and History (*hyflex*)

SSHC528S7 Decolonising Histories/Histories of Decolonisation (*in-person*)

SSHC549S7 Capitalism: Ideas, Systems, Practices (*TBC*)

AHVM083S7 Fashioning the Body (*hyflex*)

SC03020S7 The Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence: Minds, Machines and Meaning (*hyflex*)

SSPL267S7 Themes in twentieth Century French and German Philosophy (*hyflex*)

FDGD009S7 Theorising Gender and Sexuality (*hyflex*)

SSGE107S7 The Politics of Race and Diaspora (*TBC*)

LACN019S7 Regulating Sex and Sexuality (*hyflex*)

Note: options available each year may vary. Option modules available to students taking the course fully online may be restricted or prescribed. Options to be offered online are subject to confirmation each year (delivery modes currently expected for 2025/6 are shown in brackets, but maybe subject to change. Modules shown as hyflex are currently expected to be available both online and in-person.).

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Your learning for this course will be organised around the activities outlined below.

The programme is designed to develop psychosocial, psychoanalytic, cultural and historical knowledge and skills – including analytical and communication skills that students can apply in range of future employment situations.

To this end the course utilises a range of learning and teaching methods:

- Formal teaching and lecturing by specialist staff in Psychosocial Studies and other subject areas
- Seminars, tutorials, and group and individual supervision
- Engagement with electronic learning resources such as pre-recorded lectures, films, and online talks
- A research training programme comprising taught sessions and workshops on method and methodology, research design and constructing a dissertation, and dissertation support sessions
- Engagement with an ongoing range of talks, masterclasses, film screenings, and specialist workshops across the College during the academic year
- Tailored study skills training and support

Note: The programme can be taken on campus, fully online, or flexibly mixing both. Students choosing an online-only route have some limits on possible option choices.

How we will assess you

The assessment strategy and methods are designed to test and develop a student's capacity to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. The assessment for the programme takes the form of a range of written pieces of work associated with each module, and a dissertation of between 10,000-12,000 words that is the culmination of the student's independent research. Students are given formative and summative feedback consisting of written comments and numerical marks for each piece of assessed work. The weighting of the assessed components takes into account the potential development of students' abilities during the course.

Students produce assessed work at regular intervals during the programme, using the online discussion board as a way to test out and develop ideas with peers prior to writing formal assignments, and are offered individual tutorials during term-time to discuss their workload and to monitor student progress and identify any individual difficulties.

Students are formally assessed through academic essays, a 'portfolio of learning' and the dissertation.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand and critically reflect on the intersection of psychoanalysis with cultural and social issues, with a focus on British, American, Latin American and Continental European psychoanalysis as it has developed in the past 100 years.
- Engage critically with key psychoanalytic concepts and understand them in their social and cultural context.
- Have a basic knowledge of the history of psychoanalysis as it has developed from its European base, including some coverage of psychoanalysis outside Europe and America.
- Explore applications of psychoanalysis to the understanding of culture, the arts and society.
- Manage your own independent reading and learning outside staff contact-time so as to produce assignments of the required standard.
- Demonstrate a conceptual grasp and practical understanding of methodologies for theoretical or empirical research in order to propose, develop, deliver and write up a piece of independent research on a topic of their choice.

Careers and further study

You will find Psychoanalytic Studies graduates in the following kinds of roles: mental health, counselling, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis; health and social care; education; social research; social policy; civil service; international development and human rights; youth and community work; publishing, the arts and the cultural industries; as well as further study at MPhil/PhD levels.

Birkbeck's MA Psychoanalytical Studies graduates will complete with a set of valuable attributes, for example:

- The ability to assess and evaluate a range of psychosocial issues and problems
- High-level oral and written communication skills in English
- High-level analytical and critical reading skills
- The ability to design and complete research projects
- The ability to present yourself and communicate an argument to a range of audiences

Although **not** a clinical training programme, many of our students are clinical practitioners wishing to enhance their scholarly understanding of and critical distance from their professional practice; others are hoping to enter clinical practice with a solid foundation in the theoretical corpus in which psychoanalytic practice is grounded. Our collaborations with the Institute of Psychoanalysis and other professional bodies are designed to enhance this; the possibility of doing the Foundation Course in Psychoanalysis as an optional module means that students can take steps towards professional practice while pursuing the MA.

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services.](#) This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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