



O.P. Jindal Global University
A Private University Promoting Public Service



Psychoanalysis through the lens of popular media

Course Instructor: Prof. Indupriya. B

Jindal Institute of Behavioral Sciences (JIBS)

3 Credit Course

SPRING SEMESTER

Faculty Contact:

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Office Hours:

Classroom:

The information provided herein is by the Course Coordinator. The following information contains the official record of the details of the course.

PART I

Course Title: Psychoanalysis through the lens of popular media	
Course Code	
Course Duration	Semester
No. of Credit Units	3
Level	UG/PG
Pre-Requisites	Nil
Pre-Cursors	Nil
Equivalent Courses	Nil
Exclusive Courses	Nil
Class Timing	

PART II

Course description

This course introduces students to the foundations of psychoanalysis and explores how its key concepts—such as the unconscious, repression, desire, and defense mechanisms—shape not only the human mind but also culture, media, and everyday life. Students will examine classical theories from Freud, Jung, and Lacan, as well as their evolution and critiques, while engaging with case studies that range from early clinical examples to contemporary films, advertising, and social media. Through lectures, discussions, film clips, group projects, and interactive workshops, students will learn how psychoanalytic ideas illuminate cultural products like cinema and digital platforms. By the end of the course, students will gain skills in applying theoretical concepts to analyze both personal experiences and cultural texts, reflect critically on media's role in shaping unconscious desires, and develop a nuanced perspective on how psychology, art, and society intersect.

Learning outcome

After the completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- **Recognize** the major concepts of psychoanalysis, including unconscious processes, repression, desire, and defense mechanisms.
- **Demonstrate** an understanding of how psychoanalytic theories (Freud, Jung, Lacan, and beyond) have influenced literature, film, advertising, and social media.
- **Apply** psychoanalytic frameworks to analyze cultural products such as films, advertisements, and digital media texts.
- **Analyze** case studies (e.g., Anna O., Little Hans, film scenes) to identify psychoanalytic processes at both individual and cultural levels.
- **Evaluate** the relevance and limitations of psychoanalytic approaches in contemporary cultural and psychological contexts.
- **Create** original interpretations of media and cultural artifacts using psychoanalytic concepts, showing both critical and creative engagement.

Course Format

Class sessions will combine lectures, guided discussions, film screenings, media analyses, and interactive activities. Students will engage with foundational psychoanalytic texts, apply key concepts to cultural case studies (such as films, advertisements, and social media), and participate in group projects designed to deepen theoretical understanding through practical analysis. Pre-class preparation will include assigned readings and short reflections, enabling students to actively contribute to discussions and case analyses. Students are expected to attend all sessions, complete readings on time, and participate thoughtfully in both individual and group activities.

Assessments and evaluation

Individual instructions and rubrics will be shared through mail for all the assessments and discussed in detail on the first day of the class.

Evaluation 1: Quiz / Short Answer Test (20 marks)

This evaluation will be conducted after the completion of the first module, which introduces students to the foundations of psychoanalysis. The quiz will include a combination of objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, and definitions) and short-answer responses designed to

assess students' grasp of the basic concepts and theories, such as the unconscious, repression, defense mechanisms, psychosexual stages, and early case studies. The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure that students build a strong conceptual foundation, as the subsequent modules—particularly those involving interpretation of film, advertising, and social media—require a clear understanding of psychoanalytic terminology and frameworks. By testing comprehension at this stage, the quiz helps both students and instructors identify areas of strength and areas that may need reinforcement. This evaluation is crucial because it provides the knowledge reserve upon which all later analytical and interpretive tasks will depend. Strong performance here will support success in more complex assignments such as group projects, presentations, and the final paper.

Individual Assignment: Analytical Essay (15 marks)

Students will write a short analytical essay (1,000–1,200 words) that applies psychoanalytic concepts from the course to a personal experience, social observation, or societal issue that has been personally meaningful. The aim of this assignment is to encourage students to move beyond theory and demonstrate how psychoanalytic ideas can be used as interpretive tools to understand lived experiences and cultural phenomena. Students are encouraged to select a topic that resonates with them, such as a moment of personal conflict, an observed behavior in their community, or a broader cultural/societal issue (e.g., body image in social media, consumer desire in advertising, or repression in family/organizational contexts). The essay should demonstrate both self-reflection and critical application of theory.

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Good (B)	Satisfactory (C)	Needs Improvement (D/F)
Application of Psychoanalytic Concepts (5 marks)	Accurately and insightfully applies multiple psychoanalytic concepts; strong integration with chosen topic.	Applies concepts correctly, with some depth; minor gaps in integration.	Basic use of concepts; limited accuracy or depth.	Misunderstands or misapplies concepts; little/no connection to topic.
Analysis & Critical Thinking (4 marks)	Deep, original analysis with strong connections between theory and personal/societal issue; demonstrates critical reflection.	Good analysis with some originality; connections made but not fully developed.	Limited analysis; mostly descriptive with minimal reflection.	Little/no analysis; purely descriptive or off-topic.

Structure & Clarity (3 marks)	Essay is very well organized, coherent, and clear; strong introduction, logical flow, and conclusion.	Mostly organized and clear; minor lapses in flow or clarity.	Some organization but lacks clarity in places; arguments not well developed.	Poorly structured, unclear, or difficult to follow.
Engagement & Relevance (2 marks)	Chosen example is highly relevant, personal, and engaging; demonstrates strong personal connection to theory.	Relevant and personal; some engagement demonstrated.	Somewhat relevant; weak engagement with topic.	Irrelevant, generic, or lacks personal connection.
Language & Referencing (1 mark)	Uses academic language effectively, error-free writing, and correct referencing (APA 7).	Minor errors in language or referencing.	Some errors that distract from clarity or flow.	Frequent errors in language or referencing; difficult to follow.

In-Class Assignment: Poster Creation (10 marks)

Students will work individually (or in pairs, depending on class size) to design a visual poster that addresses a socially relevant issue—such as mental health awareness, consumerism, gender equality, environmental sustainability, political propaganda, or body image—using at least one psychoanalytic principle discussed in class.

The poster should demonstrate how psychoanalysis can reveal the hidden dynamics behind the issue, such as:

- Power struggles (e.g., political authority vs. individual agency).
- Motivation and desire (e.g., consumer culture, advertising, unconscious drives).
- Defense mechanisms (e.g., denial in climate change discourse).
- Humour and sublimation (e.g., memes, satire as coping mechanisms).

The poster can be digital or hand-drawn, but must clearly integrate visual design + psychoanalytic interpretation. Students will also provide a short explanatory note (150–200 words) describing the chosen issue, the psychoanalytic concept applied, and how the visuals reflect the interpretation.

Group Task: Creative Project (20 marks)

In groups, students will design and present a creative performance or media project that demonstrates their understanding of psychoanalytic concepts. The project may take the form of a short video, play/skit, digital media piece, or another approved art form, with a maximum duration of 20–25 minutes. The purpose of this task is to encourage students to translate theory into creative practice, showing how psychoanalysis can illuminate human behavior, culture, and society. Students may explore themes such as unconscious desire, repression, defense mechanisms, the uncanny, dream-work, fixation, or the mirror stage.

Each group is expected to:

- Identify a central psychoanalytic concept(s).
- Develop a storyline or artistic form that conveys the concept clearly.
- Integrate theory with creative expression (performance, visuals, script, sound, etc.).
- Provide a brief written rationale (500–700 words) explaining how their project reflects the chosen psychoanalytic ideas.

Attendance/Punctuality/pro active class engagement - (5 marks)

- **Attendance (2 marks):** Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, tutorials, and workshops. Allowances will be made for documented emergencies, but repeated absences will result in loss of marks.
- **Punctuality (1 mark):** Arriving on time and being prepared (having completed assigned readings and activities) is essential for maintaining the flow of discussions. Late arrivals and early exits disrupt the class dynamic and will affect the score.
- **Proactive Engagement (2 marks):** Students are encouraged to ask questions, contribute insights, and participate in discussions, group activities, and peer feedback sessions. Engagement is measured not by the frequency of speaking, but by the quality and relevance of contributions, willingness to collaborate, and respectful interaction with peers.

Assessment Approach:

- Full marks will be awarded to students who consistently attend, arrive on time, and engage meaningfully in class activities.
- Partial marks will be given where there are minor lapses in attendance, punctuality, or engagement.
- Minimal marks will be given if students are frequently absent, disengaged, or disruptive.

(*Please note that absenteeism on day of assessment will not be entertained and no assessments shall be rescheduled.)

Missed or Late Assessment Submission

All assessments are expected to be submitted on the scheduled day. In case of exceptional circumstances, the student can contact the course instructor and at their discretion (with or without penalty), the instructor may take a call on the concession that is granted. It is the students responsibility to double check that the correct file has been submitted. In case the incorrect or corrupted document is submitted for evaluation, it may result in a lower grade for the student.

Grading of Student Assessment

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	Interpretation
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical
P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter.
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject

F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.
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Course Outline and Reading with Application Hours

Module 1	References	Learning objectives
<p>Week 1& 2</p> <p>Psychoanalysis</p> <p>Introduction and a brief history</p> <p>I. The Birth of Psychoanalysis: From mesmerism and hypnosis to Freud's free association</p> <p>II. Freud's Model of the Mind: Conscious, preconscious, unconscious; the topographic vs. structural model (id, ego, superego).</p> <p>III. Dreams and the Unconscious</p> <p>IV. Case Studies: Anna O., Little Hans – the clinical roots of psychoanalysis.</p> <p>V. Beyond Freud: Jung's archetypes & collective unconscious; Adler's inferiority complex.</p> <p>VI. Critiques & Evolutions: From Freud to Lacan – language, desire, and the mirror stage.</p>	<p>Ibrahimova, S. (2024). <i>Personality Psychology</i>. Routledge.</p> <p>Lothane, Z. (2006). Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory. In C. S. Hall, G. Lindzey, & R. M. Spiegel (Eds.), <i>Encyclopedia of Psychology</i> (pp. 1-10). Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Freud, S. (1955). <i>Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Girl</i>. In J. Breuer & S. Freud (Eds.), <i>Collected Papers</i> (Vol. 1, pp. 1-10). Basic Books.</p> <p>Barzilai, S. (2004). Lacan's Psychoanalytic Theory. In C. S. Hall, G. Lindzey, & R. M. Spiegel (Eds.), <i>Encyclopedia of Psychology</i> (pp. 1-10). Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Additional reading</p> <p>Freud, S. (1953). <i>The interpretation of dreams</i>. Basic Books.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the origins of psychoanalysis and its place in the history of psychology. 2. Familiarize with the key figures (Freud, Jung, Adler, Lacan) and their foundational concepts. 3. Explore how psychoanalysis shaped ideas of the mind, behavior, culture, and creativity. 4. Critically reflect on how psychoanalysis connects to both clinical psychology and cultural studies.

<p>Module 2</p> <p>Week 3 & 4 & 5</p> <p>Psychosexual Development & Defense Mechanisms</p> <p>I. Freud's early concepts. - Anna Freud's elaboration of defense mechanisms.</p> <p>II. Common defenses: repression, denial, displacement, projection, rationalization, reaction formation, regression, sublimation, humor.</p> <p>III. Adaptive vs. maladaptive defenses.</p> <p>IV. Relevance in therapy, everyday coping, and cultural expression.</p> <p>V. Cultural/clinical examples (oral fixations - smoking, anal fixation - obsession with order etc.).</p>	<p>Hall, C. S., Lindzey, G., & Campbell, J. B. (1998). <i>Theories of personality</i> (4th ed.). Wiley.</p> <p>Ahuja, N. (1999). <i>A short textbook of psychiatry</i> (5th ed.). Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers.</p> <p>Cramer, P. (2015). Understanding defense mechanisms. <i>Psychiatric Times</i>, 32(5), 34–37.</p> <p>Vaillant, G. E. (1994). Ego mechanisms of defense and personality psychopathology. <i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology</i>, 103(1), 44–50.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe Freud's psychosexual stages (oral, anal, phallic, latency, genital) and their relevance to personality development. 2. Identify and explain the concept of fixation and how unresolved conflicts in early stages may shape adult behavior. 3. Define and illustrate key defense mechanisms (e.g., repression, denial, projection, rationalization, sublimation). 4. Critically assess the strengths, limitations, and contemporary views on these concepts.
<p>Week 6</p> <p>First Assessment -In class Quiz and short answers</p> <p>Group formation and briefing for movie discussion on week 9 & week 10</p>		

<p>Module 3</p> <p>Week 7 & 8</p> <p>Psychoanalysis & Society: Influence on literature, film, and art</p>	<p>Golinelli, C. (2023). Psychoanalytic reflections on writing, cinema and the arts. <i>Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association</i>. Advance online publication</p> <p>Monti, M. R., & Pazzaglia, A. (2010). Psychoanalysis and art: Artistic representations in patients' dreams. <i>The Psychoanalytic Quarterly</i>, 79(4), 905–932.</p> <p>Cox, D., & Levine, M. (2019). Psychoanalysis and film. In R. B. Ray (Ed.), <i>The Oxford handbook of film theory</i> (pp. 297–317). Oxford University Press.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain how psychoanalytic concepts are applied to media and cultural texts. 2. Analyze film, advertising, and digital media through a psychoanalytic lens. 3. Discuss the role of media in shaping unconscious desires and anxieties (e.g., gender, identity, consumerism). 4. Apply psychoanalytic frameworks to contemporary media (streaming shows, social media, music videos).
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<p>Module 4</p> <p>Week 9 and week 10</p> <p>Movie screening and discussion</p> <p>Fight Club (1999) – Psychoanalytic Concept: Split Identity / Repression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Scene: The revelation that Tyler Durden and the narrator are the same person — the return of the repressed as alter ego. <p>Black Swan (2010) – Doppelgänger / Desire & Repression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Scene: Nina's hallucination where Lily and she merge sexually, later revealed as fantasy — the eruption of repressed desire. <p>Inception (2010) – Dream-work / Unconscious Desire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Scene: Cobb confronting Mal in limbo, where his guilt manifests as her projection — condensation of grief, desire, and repression. 	<p>Group activity</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Application of Theory (30%) 2. Scene Analysis (20%) 3. Cultural & Critical Reflection (15%) 4. Creativity & Engagement (10%) 5. Teamwork & Presentation (10%) 6.
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<p>Module 5</p> <p>Week 11</p> <p>Psychoanalysis and consumerism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertising as manipulation of unconscious desire. 2. Fetishism, fantasy, and commodity culture (e.g., luxury goods, beauty products). 3. Social media and the “mirror stage” — Instagram, filters, and narcissistic projection. 4. Case Studies: Perfume ads, Coca-Cola’s “happiness” branding, Instagram influencer culture, TikTok trends etc. 5. 	<p>Forest, F. (2016). Psychoanalysis of advertising. <i>International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies</i>, 13(4).</p> <p>Spravtseva, K. (2025). Digital narcissism: Psychoanalytic mechanisms of personality manifestation in social media and their impact on psychological well-being. <i>Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series “Pedagogy and Psychology,”</i> 11(1), 104–112.</p> <p>Lambert, A., & Wickström, A. (2024). Anxiety in digital consumer culture: a psychoanalytic reflection on the emergence of a reactive subjectivity. <i>Consumption Markets & Culture</i>, 27(5), 474–487</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain how psychoanalysis has shaped advertising strategies and consumer psychology. 2. Analyze how media constructs unconscious desire, fantasy, and identity. 3. Critically reflect on how social media platforms exploit unconscious drives.
<p>Week 12</p> <p>Group presentations</p>		
<p>Week 13 -</p> <p>Group presentations</p> <p>Revision/ /Doubt clarification etc.</p>		

Week 14 & 15 Marks distribution and feedback-office hours		
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CLASSROOM POLICIES

Professional Conduct in Classroom

Developing professionalism means arriving on time to the classroom, maintaining classroom decorum, such as being seated within the first two minutes, being respectful to the instructor, peers, conflicting opinions, and submitting assignments on time. As a student of this course you are expected to integrate these skills into your daily behaviour as maintaining professionalism is an essential component of the course. It is essential that we pursue higher ideals which means incorporating behaviours such as listening to others when they are contributing, being sensitive to other individuals and diversity, and supporting the overall learning environment. Disrupting the learning environment by arriving after a two-minute window from the designated start time would mean that the student will be refused entry/attendance. It is also expected that the student contributes in classroom discussions, activities, and presentations to enhance the overall learning environment.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes (100% attendance). Students that are regularly absent cause a disruption to the learning environment and limit their own potential. A student who fails to attend a class is expected to inform the Course Instructor, beforehand, orally or in writing, the reason for their absence. A minimum of 75% attendance is mandatory, failing which, student is not permitted to take the final exam or end term exam.

Punctuality

Students are expected to be seated and prepared inside the class at the scheduled class time. Regular late comers will be denied entry. Both later comers and early departures disrupt the learning environment and would be penalized. A student who might feel like that they might be late for a class is expected to inform the Course Instructor, beforehand, orally or in writing, the reason for the same.

Respectfulness

Students must maintain the integrity of the classroom which means respecting peers, faculty, and staff. It is essential that the student is attentive and sensitive about the words that they use and its impact on others. Students who harm the decorum of the classroom will be asked to leave the classroom and marked absent for the day.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices such as laptops, headphones, mobiles phones are known to be major distractions for learning. Therefore, students will be permitted to use electronic devices only at the behest of the course instructor.

Notes on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not acceptable! Chat GPT extracted answers are not acceptable either. Please refrain from copying and pasting paragraphs and sentences from your reading materials. This include copying someone's words, structure, grammar, ideas, thoughts, and phrases and passing them as your own. Too many quotes are not acceptable! Using

What is acceptable? Using one quote which is not more than 40 words with proper citation. Use citation! It's a must! Present the content you read from your reading materials in your own words! It is necessary to cite all material that is not the student's original work. Think and critically analyse the content! The source should be always acknowledged in your written material and presentation. All papers in this class will be checked electronically for plagiarism. Sharing or using past work is also counted as plagiarism.

Academic learning is founded on ideals of honesty, integrity, and civility and students are expected to display these ideals at all times. Serious consequences could result when the ideals of academic behaviour are violated.

Safe Space Pledge

Some parts of this course may discuss a range of issues that might result in distress for some students. Discussions and images in the course might also provoke strong emotional responses. To make sure that all students collectively benefit from the course, and do not feel troubled due to either the contents of the course, or the conduct of the discussions, it is incumbent upon all within the classroom to pledge to maintain respect towards our peers. This does not mean that you need to feel restrained about what you feel and what you want to say. Conversely, this is about creating a safe space where everyone can speak and learn without inhibition and fear. This responsibility lies not only on students, but also the instructor.

Disability Support and Accommodation Requirements

JGU endeavors to make all its courses accessible to students. All students with a known disability needing academic accommodations are required to register with the Disability Support Committee

s. The Committee has so far identified the following conditions that could possibly hinder student's overall well-being. These include: physical and mobility related difficulties; visual impairment; hearing impairment; medical conditions; specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia; mental health. The Disability Support Committee maintains strict confidentiality in its discussions. The students should preferably register with the Committee in the first week of the semester as disability accommodation requires early planning. DSC will approve and coordinate all the disability related services such as appointment of academic mentors, specialized interventions and course related requirements such as accessible classrooms for lectures, tutorials and examinations. All faculty members are required to refer students with any of the above-mentioned conditions to the Disability Support Committee for addressing disability-related accommodation requirements.

Centre for Wellness and Counseling Services:

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