WOMEN'S STUDIES 300-5
WOMEN AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Spring Semester 1982
Meredith Kimball

Course Outline

In this course we will examine in detail the writings of several traditional psychoanalysts (Freud, Horvey, Thompson) as well as the work of more recent feminist psychoanalysts (Dinnerstein, Chodorow). The focus of the course will be on how psychoanalysis as a methodology has been used by writers of varying cultural background in an attempt to understand female psychology and/or psychological sex differences. We will examine the usefulness and the limits of a psychoanalytic methodology in understanding and explaining women's life choices. The class will be conducted as a seminar. As such, students will be expected to do the readings before each class and to facilitate class discussions on a regular basis. While the amount of reading will vary from week to week, most of it is quite difficult and will require concentration and effort on the part of the reader.

Assignments

Major Paper: The major paper will consist of a comparison of two of the theorists studied in the course. One theorist is to be chosen from the traditional psychoanalysts and one theorist from the feminist psychoanalysts. The paper should be approximately 15-20 pages in length and focus on the assumptions and implications of each theorist. Where biographical information is available (i.e. primarily for the traditional psychoanalysts), this material should be used to show how the analysts' assumptions and theoretical structure are influenced by personal factors (e.g. sex, class, personal history). In addition, the influence of wider social and historical factors (e.g. Women's roles in the culture, wars, economic trends) should be examined for each of the theories. The paper will count for 50% of the final grade and will be due at the end of the term.

Short Essays: Two short essays (approximately 5 pages in length) will also be assigned. One essay will cover the material in the first part of the course (traditional theorists) and one will cover material in the second part of the course (feminist theorists). For each of the short essays several topics/questions will be made available and students may choose one of the suggested topics or design their own question. No extra reading beyond the class readings will be required to complete the short essays. Each essay will count for 15% of the final grade.

Class Participation: Class participation will count for 20% of the final grade. This will be based both on the student's
general participation during class and also on several presentation/facilitation assignments. These assignments will consist of summarizing an assigned reading and presenting several questions or comments based on the reading in order to facilitate discussion.

Assigned Readings:


Prerequisites:

Women's Studies 100 and two Women's Studies 200 courses.