

## 2025–2026 Course Proposal

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Course Title: Cutting together apart Bringing psychoanalysis and Indigenous critical theory into dialogue

This course brings Indigenous critical theory and psychoanalytic theory into a dialogue to create new understandings and possibilities. The aim is to (re)imagine the (potential) relationship between the fields and how they may intersect in ways that interrogate or disrupt our expectations and encourage creativity. This course is also an attempt to incorporate Indigenous critical theory into “mainstream” theoretical discussions to move the field beyond critique and the siloing of Indigenous voices that often occurs within academia.

Course Description Indigenous critical theory has been hostile to Western psychology, yet much of it contains remarkable parallels with psychoanalysis (noting, however, that Indigenous criticism of psychology often neglects psychoanalysis). For instance, both Indigenous thought and psychoanalytic theory value experience and recognize something beyond what we can easily talk about or understand. This recognition is not (exactly) a willingness to naively believe or believing without “evidence”; this recognition is that unspeakable experience, even in absence of doubleblind randomized controlled trials, is evidence. Neither area denies scientific facts instead both recognize the (Lacanian) logic as described by Zupanich that fantasy is the frame of reality—that our subjectivity is what permits objectivity and ‘fantasy’ is inherent in the structure of reality.

The course will begin with looking closely at selections of Freud’s writing from in Totem and Taboo and Civilization and Its Discontents alongside introductory material related to Indigenous critical theory (Chris Andersen) with an optional reading to set the stage for the course (Karen Barad). A selection of texts from Indigenous critical theory and psychoanalytic theory will be looked at in a sort of pseudo dialogue related to overlapping themes from each field. Main psychoanalytic texts will be from Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein, Philip Bromberg, Thomas Ogden, Donald W. Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin. The psychoanalytic thinkers will be paired with Indigenous critical theorists such as Cheas Coulthard, John T. Ward, Shay Welch, David Garneau, Daniel Heath Justice, Linda Tuhiwa Smith, Chris Andersen, Darryl Leroux, Leann Betasamosake Simpson, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang. Lists are subject to change. Through the various pairings we will explore topics such as fantasy dreams, creativity/arts/self/subject/relationality, identity, human nature, the unconscious, the body/phenomenology, narrative, repetition, silence, reconciliation/Lacan’s (university) discourse(s), and decolonization. A metaphor develop

ideas through ongoing discussions, and students could explore (a piece) how new understanding(s) might influence sociological thought. What it means to be a subject (or a man) or what could be gained by theory or anticolonial, postcolonial, decolonial thought (e.g., Franca Fatouros Ahmed) into the dialogue, etc.

Method of Evaluation:

Presentation/Seminar (20–30 minutes): 30%

Presentations will be on the readings from either the Indigenous critical theory or psychoanalytic theory readings for the week. You are not expected to relate the readings from one area to another (see below re. Respondents), although you may. There are up to two seminars a week, one from each area: presenters are welcome to work together if they wish but it is by no means required. Focus on understanding(s) and analysis of the text itself.

Respondent to seminar (x2): 10% x 2 = 20%

Prepare to lead/encourage class discussion on the two works (or two areas discussed in that day's seminar). Since the presenter's focus is on only one area, the respondent's role is to synthesize or problematize the readings in combination and to raise issues.