

# One Course, One Text: Freud's Single Shot at Capturing College Students

Bev Cutler

Interdisciplinary courses and programs are becoming increasingly popular on college campuses. Often touted as a hallmark of the school's excellence, they provide opportunities for faculty and students across the humanities to form connections with others with whom they share natural intellectual affinities.

When a professor of English and associate director of the Honors Program at the University of Alabama of Birmingham was planning such a course thematically centered around emotion and human behavior, she turned to psychoanalyst Fred Griffin for advice on the one Freud text that would give 125 honors undergraduates, two literature professors, two psychologists who are of a biological bent, one economist, and one artist the best introductory sense of Freud.

## AIM

The intent was to have the students and team of teachers read and respond to the text. Knowing that Freud has been all but exiled from most psychology departments and that he rarely gets top billing anymore in philosophy or humanities courses, Griffin wanted to find the best text to "bring out the true sense of the remarkable thinking of this man, pioneering, compelling, and applicable to today's world because of its prescience."

## SOLICITING SUGGESTIONS

He rightly solicited suggestions from Prudy Gourguechon, chair, and the other members of APsaA's former Task Force on the 10,000 Minds Project, an initiative which had as its goal an increase in the exposure of undergraduate students to psychoanalytic ideas.

Bev Cutler, Ph.D., is assistant director, Saint Joseph's University Counseling Center, Philadelphia; psychotherapy associate, Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia; co-chair of APsaA's Committee on Graduate Education in Psychology; and a psychotherapy Associate at APsaA.



Bev Cutler

What follows are the e-mailed recommendations generated by the query from the professionals (APsaA members as well as non-members) representing the fields of college health, student mental health, psychology, psychoanalytic studies programs, the humanities, and social sciences who had comprised the 10,000 Minds Task Force.

## RESULTS

- *Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness (1908)*. Peter Loewenberg, professor emeritus, Department of History, UCLA, would assign this century-old culture critique which challenges parental authority, chastity, abstinence before marriage, and monogamous marriage while valorizing rebellion against a repressive society. It introduces the students to the sexual and aggressive drives as well as Freud's ideas about the right to sexual gratification. "This piece shakes them up and undercuts all the received clichés about Freud and psychoanalysis," Loewenberg wrote. Former students of Loewenberg remember this reading 20 years later.
- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, by Max Weber (1904) is another excellent entrée into Freud, according to Loewenberg, "Weber establishes the links between Puritan 'inner worldly asceticism' which drives economic enterprise and the religious anxiety and guilt which built 'tremendous internal pressure' to achieve capitalist success." Then, a line can be drawn connecting the secularized Benjamin Franklin's espousal of the capitalist virtues—punctuality, industry, and

frugality—to the anal eroticism of the "Rat Man," continuing on to Fenichel's and Reich's conceptualization of obsessive compulsive disorder and Freud's theory of anxiety.

- *Civilization and its Discontents (1930)*. This was one of the texts that ignited the youthful interest of Leon Hoffman, director of the Bernard Pacella Parent Child Center of the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, back in his Columbia University days. Included with Hoffman's recommendation were two handouts of talking points on Freud's theory of aggression: "Freud's Impact on the 21st Century" and "What We've Learned from Sigmund Freud about Guilt, Apathy, and Violence." Paul Schwaber, professor of letters, Wesleyan University, likewise recommended this text as a piece of great importance, but put other sources ahead of it (see below).
- Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)*. In Schwaber's experience, undergraduates find this reading fascinating when they give it the time. "What intrigues them is how Freud ponders and presents a new way of interpreting dreams, which opens to an understanding of how the mind works and develops...an autobiographical account of the scientist-doctor who is proposing this new way of understanding...So there is both a scientific narrative and a personal narrative that they follow at the same time." Schwaber suggests omitting chapter one, including chapters two to five which are essential and easy, skimming chapter six, but requiring chapter seven which is crucial.
- *Little Hans* ("Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy," 1909) This case study of Freud's was also recommended by Schwaber because it demonstrates infantile sexuality through an intriguing and comprehensible unpacking of the boy's symptoms. Schwaber forewarns that the piece works well with students but does cause upset. Yet, as he parenthetically notes, "Nothing of Freud's doesn't cause upset."

Continued on page 26

## One Course, One Text

Continued from page 19

- *Dora (1905)*. Karl Stukenberg, director of The Psychological Services Center, Xavier University, has successfully used this text—although he warned it can be problematic and should not be taught defensively—to give students an appreciation both of Freud's keen powers of observation and his literary style. "Later Freudian discoveries, like countertransference, can be used to help the readers have an empathic attitude towards someone who is trying to discover how to be helpful."
- *The Ego and the Id (1927)*. Stukenberg would also choose this reading, although it is admittedly dense and difficult, because it "elucidates Freud's later model of the mind, and helps articulate the increasingly complex way that Freud came to understand the unconscious."
- *Freud (Routledge, 2005)* by Jonathan Lear, John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor at the Committee on Social Thought and in the Department of Philosophy, University of Chicago, who had been a member of the 10,000 Minds Task Force.

This book is the outcome of teaching lecture courses on Freud, psychoanalysis, and philosophy for over 20 years at the University of Chicago and Yale University. Lear suggests that a course can be organized around the texts of Freud and their correlating chapters in the book. The book focuses on how clinical technique and theory fit together, but it also fits into a larger discussion of Socrates and Plato, then Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

- *How to Read Freud* by Josh Cohen (W.W. Norton & Co, 2005) was successfully used by Vera Camden, professor of English, Kent State University, and training and supervising analyst at the Cleveland Psychoanalytic Center. "Cohen takes the reader through key texts of Freud and frames them most helpfully," she said.
- *Screen Memories (1899)*. Professor Peter Rudnytsky, Department of English, University of Florida, is especially fond of this text not only for the relatively brief, yet compelling way it presents the key concepts of compromise formation and memory, but also because it is a primary source on Freud's life and raises the issue of disguised autobiography in scientific work.

- "Turning Ghosts into Ancestors," a chapter in *The Brain that Changes Itself* by Norman Doidge, (James H. Silberman Books, paperback, 2007) was recommended by Fred Griffin for its beautiful case material that is conducive to an elegant integration of psychoanalysis and neuroscience. It provides an "opportunity to speak both about a psychoanalytic sensibility as it relates to clinical work and to show the incredible durability/plasticity of Freud's psychology of mind into the 21st century."
- The Web site [www.teachpsychoanalysis.com](http://www.teachpsychoanalysis.com), developed by the 10,000 Minds Project, was suggested by Prudy Gourguechon because of the variety of resources for faculty. "It's pretty terrific when you spend some time browsing on it," she wrote. "The more you dig into it the better it gets." APSA

Editors Note: In the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*,  
Stiglitz and Freud

## Research

Continued from page 25

Finally, I presented the work of Susan Andersen at New York University, recently replicated in our own laboratory at Columbia, demonstrating a way to show that healthy adults use specific prototypes of their own significant others to inform how they perceive and recall new information about people. Whether or not we call this, as Andersen does, "transference," it seems likely that this basic psychological process has something to do with what we are addressing in psychotherapy. That is, if we are able to help individuals know more about the ways that they see their current situations through the lenses of the past, it seems likely that this will address some of their symptoms. To what extent this kind of intervention is the primary province of dynamic treatment or takes place in other therapies as well, is something we need to know more about. APSA

### Links to More Information on Trials

#### MTA

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/trials/nimh-research-treatment-adhd-study.shtml>

#### TADS

<https://trialweb.dcri.duke.edu/tads/index.html>

#### CAMS

<http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT00052078>

#### POTS

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/2004/psychotherapy-medications-best-for-youth-with-obsessive-compulsive-disorder.shtml>

#### ADAPT

[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18462573?itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed\\_ResultsPanel.Pubmed\\_RVDocSum&ordinalpos=10](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18462573?itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum&ordinalpos=10)

#### TORDIA

<http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT00018902>