

SYLLABUS:

SELF, PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, AND THE MODERN AGE

= SPMAge; course #: 18:820:560:01

Instructor: Louis Sass (lsass@rutgers.edu)

Spring 2026

(tentative: some adjustments will be made.

Last worked on Jan 5, 2026)

Rutgers University: Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP)

Summary:

“Self, Psychopathology, and the Modern Age” provides an introduction to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and aspects of modernism, postmodernist theory, and psychoanalysis through a study of selfhood, subjectivity, and self-consciousness. The course offers a comparative, psychologically oriented analysis of experience and expression in certain psychological conditions (mainly schizoid and schizophrenic) and in modernist and postmodernist culture (especially literature). Students from clinical psychology (or other mental-health professions, including social work) as well as from literature and other humanities-oriented fields are encouraged to attend. The seminar will include both lecturing and discussion. (See Appendix for longer description of course.)

Learning outcomes: Students are expected to acquire knowledge about two domains: 1, the psychopathology of schizophrenia-spectrum conditions (with a focus on phenomenological approaches) and 2, aspects of 20th century culture, primarily art, literature, and philosophy, from a largely psychological standpoint. They will develop familiarity with phenomenological, hermeneutic, as well as certain psychoanalytical approaches to the understanding of human experience and expression.

Note: Some readings listed below are only recommended, or suggested as background. ALSO: the readings below may be trimmed back.

Note: See # for items on which students may be asked to offer a brief presentation.

CLASS #1: INTRODUCTION TO COURSE: ANTONIN ARTAUD, MADNESS, AND THE AVANT-GARDE

In class: Overview of the course. Introduction to Antonin Artaud (influential avant-garde writer who suffered from schizophrenia), a key figure at crossroads of madness and modernism/postmodernism.

Hear excerpts from audiotape of Artaud radio-play, “*Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu.*”

Lecture: Sass, “The catastrophes of heaven: Modernism, primitivism, and the madness of Antonin Artaud.”

Readings:

Sass, MMRev, Prologue: the sleep of reason, pp. 1-12. (= Sass (2017) *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought: Revised Edition*. Oxford University Press; orig: Sass 1992, New York: Basic Books).

Please bring the following three items to class:

Breton, On Artaud (1 page)

Artaud, "To Have Done with the Judgment of God" (English translation:

<http://www.surrealism-plays.com/Artaud.html>)

Sass, "Catastrophes of Heaven" lecture—quotes

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CLASS #2: NIETZSCHE AND FOUCAULT ON RATIONALITY AND MADNESS

In class: Finish re Artaud. Discuss Nietzsche and Foucault.

Lecture: "Intro to Foucault, especially on history of madness."

Watch: YouTube interview with Michel Foucault, 1971 (16 minutes approx.):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzoOhhh4aJg (or other video re Foucault)

Readings:

Nietzsche, F. (1956, orig 1872). *The Birth of Tragedy*, F. Golffing transl, NY: Doubleday, pp 19-36, 76-97.

Sass, L. (2015). (Book review): Cruel Reason: Confinement, chemical, couches—a new and wide-ranging history of responses to madness. Review essay on Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2015. *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS), #5870. October 2, 2015: 3-5.

Sass, *Madness and Modernism* (= *MM*), Introduction, pp 13-27.

Rec: Sheridan, A. (1980). *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, London: Tavistock, pp. 11-46 (Madness, death, and the birth of reason; = a summary of Foucault's book on history of madness, by one of his translators).

Rec: Foucault, M. *The Foucault Reader*, edited by P. Rabinow. NY: Pantheon, 1984, pp. 141-167 (The birth of the asylum); 206-214 (Panopticism).

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CLASS #3: PHENOMENOLOGY OF SCHIZOPHRENIA SPECTRUM, I

In class: Introductory information re schizophrenia. Focus on the phenomenological perspective (Minkowski, Blankenburg, Kimura; ipseity-disturbance model).

Lecture: Sass re introduction to phenomenology of schizophrenia, with modernist analogues ("Anxiety and Insight": ??).

Readings:

Aviv, Rachel, Which way madness lies: Can psychosis be prevented? *Harpers Magazine*, December 2010: 35-46.

DSM IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) re Schizophrenia and Schizotypal Personality Disorder, pp. 298-302, 312-316, 697-701. Also *DSM-5* (2013).

Parnas, J. (2011). A disappearing heritage: The clinical core of schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 37, 1121-30.

Sass, L. (2001). Self and world in schizophrenia: Three classic approaches [Minkowski, Blankenburg, Kimura Bin]. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, Psychology*, 8, 251-270.

Rec: Minkowski, "The essential disorder underlying schizophrenia," in Cutting and Shepherd (Eds.) (1987), *Clinical Roots of the Schizophrenia Concept*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ Press, pp. 188-212.#

Rec: Blankenburg, W. (2001), "First steps toward a psychopathology of 'common sense'," in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, Psychology*, 8, 303-15.

Background: Kimura, Bin (2001). Cogito and I: A bio-logical approach. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, Psychology*, 8, 331-336.

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CLASS #4: PHENOMENOLOGY OF SCHIZOPHRENIA SPECTRUM, II

In class:

DVD: DSM-IV interviews of patient (mathematician) by Dr. Nancy Andreasen

Readings:

Foucault, Mental illness and existence, ch 4 in Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (see above).

Störing, G., Perplexity, in Cutting & Shepherd (Eds.), *Clinical Roots of Schizophrenia Concept* (see above), pp. 79-82.#

Sass, L. (2014). Explanation and description in phenomenological psychopathology. *Journal of Psychopathology*, 20, 366-376.

Background: Sass, L. (2009). Madness and the ineffable: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Lacan. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology*, 16 (#4), 319-324.

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CLASS #5: MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM

In class: discuss Wallace Stevens' poem, "13 ways of looking at a blackbird."

(<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174503>), also Baudelaire's "The clock," + another poem or two.

Readings:

Sass, *MM*, pp. 28-39 (7 features of modernism/postmodernism).

Ortega y Gasset, "The dehumanization of art" (essay), in Ortega (1948), *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays*, Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ Press, pp. 3-56.#

Greenberg, Clement, "Modernist painting" (essay), in Greenberg. *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4*, John O'Brian, ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Baudelaire, C., "The clock" (brief prose poem). In Baudelaire (2009). *Paris Spleen: Little Poems in Prose*. Middletown CN: Wesleyan University Press.

Wallace Stevens, "13 ways of looking at a blackbird," in Stevens, W. (1990), *Collected Poems*, NY: Vintage Books, pp. 92-95

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CLASS #6: COGNITIVE SLIPPAGE AND RELATIVISM (in Madness & in Modernism/Postmodernism)

In class: read Robert Walser, "The Street"

Brief lecture: more re Wolfgang Blankenburg and Loss of Natural Self-Evidence.

Introduce Nietzsche "Truth and lies" essay.

Reading:

Sass, *MM*, Cognitive Slippage, pp 119-47.

Nietzsche, On truth and lies in a nonmoral sense, in Nietzsche (1990), *Philosophy and Truth (selections from notebooks of early 1870s)*, Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press, pp 79-91.#

Foucault, M. (1994), *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, NY: Vintage Books, preface, pp xv-xxiv.

Review: Störing, Perplexity (already read; see above)

Start reading for next class.

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CLASS #7: DISTURBANCES OF DISTANCE; LANGUAGES OF INWARDNESS (in Madness & Mod/P.mod)

In class:

Discuss Robbe-Grillet essays, including a summary of “Nature, humanism, tragedy” (a *rec.* reading).

Discuss Heidegger essay re metaphysics.

Hear: Use Andreasen interview with thought-disordered pt

Readings: to be selected from the following:

Sass, *MM*, Ch 5: Disturbances of Distance, pp 148-73.

Sass, *MM*, Ch 6: Languages of Inwardness, pp. 198-205 (re Derrida).

Robbe-Grillet, The secret room (a very short, short story), in Pickering, J. (Ed.), *Fiction 100*, London: Longman, pp. 901-903.

Robbe-Grillet, A future for the novel#; Enigmas and transparency in Raymond Rousset#; two pages from New novel, new man. Essays in Robbe Grillet, (1992), *For a New Novel*, Chicago: Northwestern Univ Press, pp. 15-24, 79-87., 138-139. (Also recommended: Nature, humanism, tragedy, pp. 49-75#.)

Heidegger, What is metaphysics? In Heidegger (1993), *Basic Writings*, D. Krell editor, NY: HarperCollins, pp. 89-110 (read at least the first few pages).#

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CLASS #8: LOSS OF SELF IN MODERNISM AND MADNESS

Lecture: Sass presents “Languages of Inwardness”.

Reading:

Sass, *MM*, Ch 7: Loss of Self, pp 213-41.

Sass, L. & Parnas, J. (2003). Schizophrenia, consciousness, and the self. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 29, 427-44.

Sass, L. (2000). “Furtive abductions”: Schizophrenia, the lived-body, and dispossession of the self, in S. Gallagher, S. Watson, P. Brun & P. Romanski (eds) (2004). *Ipseity and Alterity: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intersubjectivity*. Rouen, France: Publications de l’Universite de Rouen, pp. 80-88.

Background: Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, excerpts in *Foucault Reader* (see above), pp. 170-178 (The body of the condemned), 214-224 (Complete and austere institutions).

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CLASS #9: DELUSION, SOLIPSISM, AND THE SUBLIME

Lecture:

Sass presents: finish re Languages of Inwardness (re “autonomization”), then summary of loss of self in schizophrenia (“ipseity”-disturbance view). Also re delusion and double bookkeeping. PROBABLY OMIT: Emotional paradox in sz, with “Adolf Wolfli, Spatiality, and the Sublime.”

Reading:

Sass, *MM*, Ch 9: Morbid Dreamer, pp 268-299.#

Sass, *MM*, Ch 10: World Catastrophe 300-323 (discusses two works of fiction: Casares, “Invention of Morel,” and Kafka “Description of a struggle”)

Heidegger, Age of the world picture, in Heidegger (1977), *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, NY: Harper and Row, pp. 115-54 (read pp 126-134, 142; the rest is only suggested, and will probably be rather confusing)

Beckett, S. chapter 6 of *Murphy* (NY: Grove Press, 1957).

Rec: Sartre, J.P. (1948), *The Psychology of Imagination*, NY: Philosophical Library (excerpts TBA)

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CLASS #10: PARADOXES OF THE REFLEXIVE

Lecture: “Paradoxes of the reflexive.” Sass Foucault lecture re *Order of Things*.

See: Velasquez “*Las Meninas*” (including Foucault’s analysis in *OT*). #

Readings:

Sass, L. (2008). Michel Foucault and the contradictions of modern thought. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*. 28: 601-613. (Doi:10.1037/h0092061)

(= a shortened version in English of an article published in French: Sass, L. (2009).

Foucault and modern self-reflection (*Foucault et l’auto-reflexion moderne*). *Les Temps Modernes*, #656, 99-143 (Paris; in French translation).)

Sass, L. (2009), Foucault and Modern Self Reflection, *Les Temps Modernes*, 656, 99-143

Sass, *MM*, Ch 11: Conclusion: Paradoxes of the Reflexive (somewhat overlaps the previous article)

Rec: Kafka, “Description of a Struggle,” in Kafka (1971), *Collected Stories*, NY: Schocken, pp 9-51.#

Rec: Foucault, *Order of Things* (see above), excerpts: chap 2, section I; chap 3, sec I and II; chap 9, sec II, IV, V, VIII

Rec: Tarnas, R. (1993), pages re Kant, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, NY: Ballantine, pp. 341-354.

Note: no new reading for next time; only review some previous items.

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CLASS #11: FILMS (excerpts only): “LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD” AND “MELANCHOLIA”

{# = presentation re Marienbad by student ; # = presentation re Melancholia by student; in both cases consider also in light of Sass&Pienkos 2013, see below.}

In class: View parts of the films by Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe-Grillet and by Lars von Trier (possibly watch *Melancholia* on your own—to be decided); discuss; compare: schizophrenia vs psychotic depression?

Student presentations re each film

Reading:

Review the following: Kafka, “Description of a Struggle”; Robbe-Grillet essays; description of Casares’ “Invention of Morel” in *MM* pp. 305-310.

Sass, L. & Pienkos, E. (2013). Space, time, and atmosphere: A comparative phenomenology of melancholia, mania, and schizophrenia, Part II. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 20, 131-152.#

Rec: Sass, L. & Pienkos, E. (2013). Varieties of self experience: A comparative phenomenology of melancholia, mania, and schizophrenia, Part I. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 20, 103-130.

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CLASS #12: POSTMODERNISM AND POSTMODERNITY, PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Lecture: ??“‘Hyped on Clarity’: Diane Arbus, Photography, and the Postmodern Condition.”

In class: Discussion of Jameson’s essay, beginning this class.

Reading:

Jameson, F. (1984), Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, originally published in *New Left Review*, I/146, 153-92.#

Heidegger, excerpt from The Origin of the Work of Art, in *Basic Writings* (see above), pp. 157-165 (= an excerpt from essay, which is from pp. 139-212 (re Van Gogh’s peasant shoes painting).

Baudrillard, J., The Ecstasy of Communication, in Foster, H. (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983), pp 126-34.

Baudrillard, J. (1988), Simulacra and Simulations, in M. Poster (Ed.), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Stanford CA: Stanford Univ Press, pp. 166-184 (note, only pp. 166-172 are assigned).# (=re both Baudrillard readings)

Arbus, D., introduction to her photography collection: Arbus (1972), *Diane Arbus*, Millerton NY: Aperture, 1972.

Rec: Sass, L. (2005). “Hyped on clarity”: Diane Arbus and the postmodern condition. *Raritan*, 25 (summer 2005): 1-37.

Rec: Hughes, R., The rise of Andy Warhol, in Wallis, B. (ed.) (1984), *Art After Modernism*, NY: New Museum of Contemporary Art, pp. 45-58.

Rec: Benjamin, W. (1968). The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. In Benjamin, *Illuminations*. NY: Harcourt Brace, pp. 217-52.#

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CLASS #13: PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS CONTINUED; BEGIN ZIZEK/LACAN

In class: Finish (if necessary) discussion of Jameson’s essay. Begin discussion of Zizek and Lacanian perspective

?: Paper topics presented, perhaps

Reading:

Zizek, S. The Hitchcockian blot. In Zizek (1992), *Looking Awry*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, chapter 5, pp. 88-106.

Sass, L. (2014). Lacan, Foucault, and the “crisis of the subject”: Revisionist reflections on phenomenology and post-structuralism. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology*, 21 (#4), 325-342.

Rec: Sass, L. (2003). Lacan and 9/11. *Raritan*, 23, 162-166.

Millhauser, Steven, History of a disturbance, *New Yorker* March 5, 2007.

Background: Sass, L. (2001). The magnificent harlequin (book essay on Jacques Lacan). *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82, 997-1018.

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CLASS # 14: LACAN: THE MIND OF THE MODERNIST

In class: Sass lecture re Lacan as modernist

Reading:

Lacan, J. "Mirror stage as formative of *I* function" (in Lacan, *Écrits*) #

Lacan, J. "7: Anamorphosis (in Of the Gaze)" (in Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*)#

Sass, L. (2015). Lacan: The mind of the modernist. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 48 (#4), 409-443.

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CLASS #15: FINAL CLASS: TO BE DECIDED; CONTINUE LACAN AND MODERNISM POSSIBLY; Paper topics presented perhaps.

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Course requirements include:

Choose to write either:

Term paper: 10-12 pages (= recommended length)

Or, if you prefer:

Take-home exam (a selection of questions to be provided)

DUE ONE WEEK AFTER FINAL CLASS, BY MIDNIGHT.

Also, 1 or 2 times during the semester, each student will present a reading or a reaction to a reading; to be assigned.

Also, of course: attend class, do the reading, participate in class discussion.

STATEMENTS ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND DISABILITIES

Rutgers Statement on Academic Integrity:

<https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf>

Rutgers Statement on Disabilities:

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them

as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:
<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/getting-registered>

APPENDIX: COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

The course is interdisciplinary in nature. It will place phenomenology, hermeneutics, and some forms of psychoanalysis in historical and philosophical perspective, and present the relevance of these perspectives for understanding aspects of both psychopathology and culture. Readings will include essays or brief-excerpts from a number of influential authors from psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and philosophy, including the psychiatrists Karl Jaspers and R.D. Laing, the psychoanalysts Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Zizek, and the philosophers Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre. A number of chapters from L. Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (orig 1992, revised edition 2017, Oxford University Press) will be read. We will probably view and discuss one or more films that evoke the lived worlds of psychosis (e.g., “Last Year at Marienbad” 1961, “Melancholia” 2011).

ONLINE COURSE DESCRIPTION - An interpretive or hermeneutic perspective on psychological aspects of modern culture, society, and personality. Focuses on various forms of psychopathology: especially schizoid and schizophrenic conditions, mania, and melancholia or severe depression, and on exemplary expressions of modernist and postmodernist culture—each used to shed light on the nature of the self and subjectivity in the modern era. Provides an introduction to hermeneutics, phenomenology, cultural psychology, and Lacanian psychoanalysis as alternative approaches to an understanding of personality and psychopathology.

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