

PHIL 468/568.001: Lacan

Adrian Johnston

Fall 2025

Jacques Lacan was a major figure in Parisian intellectual life for much of the twentieth century. He arguably is the most important figure in the history of psychoanalysis after Sigmund Freud himself. Lacan's teachings and writings explore the significance of Freud's discovery of the unconscious both within the theory and practice of analysis itself as well as in connection with a wide range of other disciplines. Especially for those interested in the philosophical dimensions of Freudian thought, Lacan's oeuvre is invaluable. Over the course of the past fifty-plus years, Lacanian ideas have become absolutely central to the various receptions of things psychoanalytic in Continental philosophical circles. Moreover, much of today's global psychoanalytic community is Lacanian or Lacan-inspired. This course will focus on Lacan's seventh seminar of 1959-1960 on "The Ethics of Psychoanalysis." Lacan himself felt that this specific annual installment of *le Séminaire* was particularly pivotal in the arc of his teaching. Similarly, many Lacanians often identify Seminar VII as marking a sort of "turn" in Lacan's thinking away from the more classically structuralist sensibilities coloring his work throughout the 1950s. In addressing "The Ethics of Psychoanalysis," the Lacan of 1959-1960 engages broadly and deeply with such points of reference as Immanuel Kant's practical philosophy, Sophocles's *Antigone*, the Marquis de Sade's literary corpus, and the Freud of such key texts as the 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology* and 1920's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This course will involve a close reading of *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*.