

The Logic of Dreams
GMST S190/LITR S311/HUMS S221

Yale Summer Session B, 2025 (in person), Mon/Wed 9-12:15
Professor: Paul North (paul.a.north@yale.edu)

Course Description

One third of your life is spent asleep, and the life of sleep is dreams. And yet the images, sounds, and language of waking life almost totally dominate discussions of human goals, motivations, and meaningfulness. The last century began with a different dream: that dreams, rightly understood, would give us an unprecedented view of the hidden objectives of human behavior. “The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind,” Freud wrote at the turn of the century. This seminar will be a discussion about dreams and an inquiry into what they may still mean, more than one hundred years later. We will take our departure from a careful reading of Freud’s 1899 *Interpretation of Dreams*, which makes huge claims for the importance and meaning of dreams and proposes methods for their interpretation. Critiques and extensions of Freud’s theory will point up its strengths and limitations. Throughout the seminar we will read literature and watch films in which dreams play a central role. Students are expected to keep a dream journal to record and analyze their own dreams.

Schedule (subject to change)

Session 1 Dreams and Interpretations

Ancient Perspectives

Homeric *Iliad*, Book 1 & 2

Hebrew Bible, Genesis 37-45

Modern Split

Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899): Prefaces 1-8, “II. The Method of Interpreting Dreams,” “III. A Dream is the Fulfillment of a Wish”

Session 2 Dreams and Interpretations

Freud *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899): “IV. Distortion in Dreams”; “VI. The Dream-Work (A-D + I “Secondary Revision”)”

Session 3 Freud, Critiques and Developments

First Essay Due

Film: Hitchcock, *Spellbound* (1945)

Freud, “Metapsychological Supplement” (1915)

Freud, “The Unconscious” (1915) (the first five pages, pp. 116-121)

Session 4 Freud, Critiques and Developments

Lewin, “Inferences from the Dream Screen” (1948)

Pontalis, “Between Dream as Object and the Dream-Text” (1977)

Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object*, Ch. 3 “The Self as Object” and Ch. 4 “At the Other’s Play: To Dream” (1987)

Session 5 Dream and Reality

Film: Zhou Sun, *Zhou Yu’s Train* (2002)

Session 6 Dream and Reality

Descartes, *Meditations* (1641), Ch. 1-6
Malcolm, “Dreaming and Skepticism” (1956)

Session 7 Dreaming and Truth

Film: Richard Linklater, *Waking Life* (2001)

Session 8 Dreaming and Truth

Calderón de la Barca, *Life Is a Dream* (1636)

Second Essay Due

Session 9 Dreaming and the Past

Andre Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924)
Walter Benjamin, “Dream Kitsch” (1927)
Film: Satoshi Kan, *Paprika* (2006)

Session 10

Final Exam – 2 hours

Films

Films can be streamed on the Canvas site and must be watched before the class session in which they are to be discussed.

Books may be purchased through the Yale Bookstore at their website

<https://yale.bncollege.com/shop/yale/home>. Books will ship within 24 hours of the order being placed and will typically take up to one week to arrive.

Calderón de la Barca, *Life is a Dream*. Penguin, 2006. ISBN: 978-0143104827

Descartes, *Meditations*. Cambridge UP, 1996. ISBN: 978-0521558181

Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*. Basic Books, 2010. ISBN: 978-0465019779

Other readings will be available as PDFs on the Canvas website: <https://canvas.yale.edu/>.

Coursework

Students in this course are required to keep a private dream journal throughout the semester, which may require making adjustments to sleeping habits. Dream journals are checked before class each Friday. Note: The contents of your dream journals are private. I do not read them, only mark the assignments completed or not completed. Beyond this important work, other more public work for the course will include a protocol, two short papers and a final exam. Protocol:

in each class a different student will take notes on the most important thoughts in order to present them at the beginning of the subsequent class. For the essays students are asked to interpret one or more of the texts we have read and discussed. Prompts are provided. The final exam is cumulative and in essay form. Participating in the conversations during Zoom sessions is also an important part of your experience and your grade.

Grades

Attendance	Mandatory, see Summer School policy. No absences.
Participation	20%
Dream Journal	20%
2 Essays (3-5 pages each)	20%
Final exam	40%

Academic Honesty

Any work you submit in this class is understood by you and by the instructor to be your own original work and no one else's. You may want to include in your text some words or ideas written by others, but you may do so only with the proper attribution. This means that you openly and obviously mark the words or ideas of others as taken from their work, whether they be another's exact words or a paraphrase of their text or a key idea taken from them. It also means that you fully identify the original source in the proper place in your paper, in parentheses or footnotes, and if necessary in a bibliography as well. Submitting another's work as your own without proper attribution carries serious consequences. Yale's policy on academic honesty can be found here: <http://catalog.yale.edu/first-year-student-handbook/academic-information/introduction-undergraduate-education/academic-honesty/>.

Electronics Policy

During class there is no need to have your device connected to the internet. Please turn off your wifi when class begins and again after any breaks. If you choose to use a laptop or a tablet in class, it should be used for classwork only. Usually you will be using only four apps or sites: 1. Zoom, 2. Canvas, 3. Pdf reader with that day's texts, and 4. Google docs. A note on reference materials. Our references during class time should be the text or texts we are discussing and our own understanding, memory, and imagination. We will practice abstinence with regard to Google and Wikipedia. In almost all situations, this course wants insights and interpretations from you, not answers to factual questions.

AI Policy

Using artificial intelligence apps such as ChatGPT to compose or help compose assignments for class is not allowed. Using AI in this class is considered cheating. On one hand it is easy to recognize AI-assisted compositions with current versions of AI. They frequently include fictitious sources and are very general in their arguments; they are not very good at interpretation and tend to list facts one after the other. On another hand, it is hard to conclusively prove that someone used AI on an assignment. So, our criteria will be simple. If a reasonable person could conclude from reading your essay that you *probably* used AI to help compose it, you will be referred to the Executive Committee for a hearing and you will get a zero on the assignment.