Known for his discovery of psychoanalysis and his theories of psychology, Sigmund Freud is also a central figure in the arts and humanities. This course examines his interdisciplinary influence. After an overview of Freud's life and work, we focus on the concepts of expression, interpretation, and criticism. Our work on expression will break new ground. Via these concepts, we look at art, literature, language, history, philosophy, and law. Using psychoanalysis as a platform to examine productions of culture, students construct an original theory of expression, interpretation, or criticism.

We read from the following work of Freud: The Interpretation of Dreams, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, papers on psychoanalytic technique, Totem and Taboo, Instincts and Their Vicissitudes, Repression, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Civilization and Its Discontents, and Constructions in Analysis. We also read recent work in psychoanalysis.

Students write a major term paper in three stages—a prospectus, a midterm that may be incorporated in the final, and a completed final paper. There are no exams. The class is a seminar. Close reading, lively discussion, and learning from each other are the order of the day. Students present their theories in class.