

"America is the most grandiose experiment the world has seen ... but, I am afraid, it is not going to be a success."

Sigmund Freud (1909, after a visit to the U.S.).

"Whether Freud was wrong or right (and he was probably both), American literature of the early 20th Century showed both how well the experiment had succeeded and how much it had failed. This course asks what did American literature become in the twentieth century? And why did America, for visitors like Sigmund Freud, epitomize everything right and wrong about "modernity"? The early 20th Century saw United States gain industrial might, develop a national consumer culture, become an increasingly modern nation and extend its international influence. These changes, in turn, altered American society and culture. To trace the ways in which changing literary and artistic styles reflected and influenced American society, this course will begin by reading texts by Henry James, Edith Wharton, Charles Chesnutt, Edgar Lee Masters and Mark Twain as a way to understand realism. Then we will trace the way that realism morphed into modernism by reading works by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nella Larsen, T.S. Eliot, Nathaniel West, Langston Hughes, Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, John O'Hara, and Ralph Ellison."

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Sigmund Freud, born on May 6, 1856, in what is now Příbor, Czech Republic (then part of the Austrian Empire), is hailed as the father of psychoanalysis. He was the eldest of eight children in a Jewish family.

Freud initially wanted to become a law professional but later developed an interest in medicine. He entered the University of Vienna in 1873, graduating with an MD in 1881. His primary interests included neurology and neuropathology. He was particularly interested in the condition of hysteria and its psychological causes.

In 1885, Freud received a grant to study with Jean-Martin Charcot, a renowned neurologist who used hypnosis to treat women suffering from what was then called "hysteria." This experience sparked Freud's interest in the unconscious mind, a theme that would recur throughout his career.

In 1886, Freud returned to Vienna, married Martha Bernays, and set up a private practice to treat nervous disorders. His work during this time led to his revolutionary concepts of the human mind and the development of the psychoanalytic method.

Freud introduced several influential concepts, including the Oedipus complex, dream analysis, and the structural model of the psyche divided into the id, ego, and superego. He published numerous works throughout his career, the most notable being "[The Interpretation of Dreams](#)" (1900), "[The Psychopathology of Everyday Life](#)" (1901), and "[Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality](#)" (1905).

Despite controversy and opposition, Freud continued to develop his theories and expand the field of psychoanalysis. He was deeply affected by the outbreak of World War I and later by the rise of the Nazis in Germany. In 1938, due to the Nazi threat, he emigrated to London with his wife and youngest daughter.

Freud died in London on September 23, 1939, but his influence on psychology, literature, and culture remains profound and pervasive. He radically changed our understanding of the human mind, emphasizing the power of unconscious processes and pioneering therapeutic techniques that continue to be used today.

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