Psychological Subjects:
Identity, Health and Culture in 20th-Century Britain

MA Module, Department of History, University of Warwick

Spring Term, 2012, Wednesday 10-12

Venue: Humanities Building, Room 310

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Module Description

This module explores the popularisation and influences of psychology in twentieth-century Britain. It is particularly suited to students on the MAs in Modern British History and the History of Medicine, though students from other MAs are equally welcome. It draws in particular on themes developed in my *Psychological Subjects* (2006). The module begins with a focus on the popularisation of psychology and psychoanalysis at the start of the century, inviting reflection on continuities with Victorian phenomena such as Mesmerism, Phrenology, and Spiritualism, and questioning the centrality of Freud and psychoanalysis in traditional accounts. It then turns to the emergence of the discipline and profession of psychology at the turn of the century, to the influence of psychology within education, industry, and healthcare, and to the role of psychology in relation to war and politics. Finally it concludes with the subject of psychology and sex, and the role of psychology and a culture of therapy in the emergence of what some have called a culture of narcissism in the last decades of the century. Each week, in addition to taking advantage of an increasingly rich secondary literature, students will be encouraged to examine readily available primary sources. Then in the final week, students will present original findings arising from these sources. This will be a useful opportunity for further developing ideas towards the required 5,000 word essay.
Schedule of Meetings

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Popular Psychology and Psychoanalysis: Victorian to Modern Subjects?

Week 3: Education

Week 4: Industry/Consumption/Class

Week 5: Healthcare

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: War

Week 8: Psychology, Sex, and the Permissive Society

Week 9: From Psychological Subjects to the Therapeutic Society (and Beyond: to the Rise of the Neurochemical Subject?)

Week 10: Workshop
Seminars and Reading Suggestions

Each week, students should read material marked * and also come ready to discuss an example drawn from the primary material. They are also encouraged to dip into the further reading.

Week 1: Introduction

This seminar provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the question posed by Roger Smith: ‘Of what is history of psychology a subject?’ It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the potential significance of a history of psychology broadly conceived for understanding aspects of twentieth-century British history. To what extent, as Nikolas Rose suggests, can this open up a history of the ‘assembling of the modern self’. Finally, it acts as an introductory meeting to discuss sources, aims, and expectations of the module.

* Smith, Roger, ‘Does the History of Psychology have a Subject?’, History of the Human Sciences, 1 (1988), 147-77.
Thomson, ‘Reframing the Discipline’, Psychological Subjects, pp. 54-75.

Identity/The Self/Emotions


**Week 2: Popular Psychology and Psychoanalysis: Victorian to Modern Psychological Subjects?**

This seminar concentrates on the early twentieth century, though it also provides opportunity for consideration of earlier popular movements in the nineteenth century. It focuses in particular on assessing the impact of Freud and psychoanalysis on British culture in the first decades of the century, the extent to which these ideas were accepted or resisted and the reasons for this. Did these years see the breakdown of a Victorian model of the self and the emergence of modern psychological subjects instead? To what extent does a search via the online *Times* provide material to address these issues?


Hazelgrove, J., *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars*


*Source: The Times (online search)*

**Week 3: Education and Childhood**

This seminar focuses on the impact of psychology in education and in relation to children, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century. It calls for consideration of the influence and rationale for mental testing, but also for the role of new psychological ideas in the development of progressive education. How far did these two approaches develop, what factors facilitated this, and what factors held it back? In the process, in what senses was childhood reshaped? Finally, can you find sources in the Modern Records Centre that cast light on these processes, and in what ways do the writing and careers of A.S. Neill and Susan Isaacs cast light on the subject?

Hardyment, Christina, *Dream Babies: Child Care from Locke to Spock* (1983).


Thom, Deborah, ‘The Healthy Citizen of Empire or Juvenile Delinquent?: Beating and Mental Health in the UK’, in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Hilary Marland (eds.), *Cultures of Child Health in Britain and the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century* (2003), 189-212.


*Sources:* Modern Records Office (Educational Papers); writing of A.S. Neill and Susan Isaacs (available in Library)

**Week 4: Industry/Consumption/Class**

This seminar considers the particular challenges of tackling the psychology of work in the first half of the century. It asks students to reflect on the motivations for what was called industrial psychology, the reasons for resistance, and the tactics deployed in attempting to overcome this. It also asks whether there is a history of psychology in relation to economic life in this period that goes beyond the subject of industrial psychology. How, for instance, could new psychological thought and practise be mobilised by
workers as well as employers, and in relation to consumption as well as production. Finally, it asks students a) to reflect upon the use of a professional journal (*Journal of the National Institute for Industrial Psychology/Human Factor/Occupational Psychology*) as a source for understanding such issues; and b) to retrieve one document from the Modern Records Centre casting light on the discussion.


Sources: *Journal of the National Institute for Industrial Psychology/Human Factor/Occupational Psychology*; Modern Records Centre.

**Week 5: Healthcare**

This seminar considers the challenges of a shift of interest from mental illness and mental deficiency to mental health in the interwar period. Students should reflect on the strategies available for addressing mental health within medicine, the arguments advanced, and the obstacles encountered. They will search the medical journal, *The Lancet*, for evidence on these issues.


Bartlett, Peter and Wright, David (eds.), *Outside the Walls of the Asylum: The History of Care in the Community 1750-2000* (1999)

Clark, Michael, ‘The Rejection of Psychological Approaches to Mental Disorder in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Psychiatry’, in


Evans, Bonnie; Rahman, Shahina; Jones, Edgar, 1953-. 'Managing the "unmanageable" : interwar child psychiatry at the Maudsley Hospital, London'. *History of Psychiatry*, 19:4 (2008), 454-75.


Hendrick, Harry, 'Children’s Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health in Early Post-Second World War Britain: The Case of Unrestricted Hospital Visiting’, in Hofstra and Marland (eds.), *Cultures of Child Health*, 213-42.


Root, Sheryl, ‘Healing, Touch, and Medicine, c. 1890-1950’ Ph.D. thesis (University of Warwick, 2006).
Stewart, John, 1951 Dec. 3-. ‘I thought you would want to come and see his home’: child guidance and psychiatric social work in inter-war Britain’. In Jackson, Mark (ed.), Health and the modern home (Routledge studies in the social history of medicine, 31) (New York: Routledge, 2007), 111-27.
Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: War

The seminar will consider the influential view that the First World War was a turning point for treatments of and attitudes towards mental illness in Britain. We will view a film and discuss a short film, War Neuroses, made during the First World War that depicts shell-shock. Secondly, the seminar turns our attention to the role of psychology in the Second World War, particularly its function in relation to thinking about the origins of the war, the management of morale, and the building of a better post-war society. To address ideas about the relationship between war, peace and human nature in this period, students will read and compare extracts from Wilfred Trotter’s Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War (1919) and Edward Glover’s War, Sadism and Pacifism (1945).

* Loughran, Tracey. 'Shell-Shock and Psychological Medicine in First World War Britain'. Social History of Medicine, 22:1 (2009), 79-95.


**Week 8: Psychology, Sex and the Permissive Society**

This seminar takes stock of the role of new psychological thinking in changing attitudes towards sexuality in twentieth-century Britain. Changes in this area are often seen as central in the emergence of a more permissive society in the 1960s and 1970s. The seminar reflects on this issue in relation to the subject of homosexuality. It also provides an opportunity to reflect more generally on the relationship between psychology, psychiatry and the permissive society, particularly through case studies of the popular psychology of Hans Eysenck, anti-psychiatry, and the feminist movement of the 1970s. Students will search contemporary magazines such as *New Society*, *Spare Rib*, and the *Listener* for evidence on these subjects.


Lasch, Christopher, The Culture of Narcissism (1980).
Jennings, Rebecca. "'The most uninhibited party they'd ever been to': The Postwar Encounter between Psychiatry and the British Lesbian, 1945-1971'. Journal of British Studies, 47:4 (2008), 883-904.
Thom, Deborah. "'Beating children is wrong': Domestic life, Psychological Thinking and the Permissive Turn'. In Delap, Lucy; Griffin, Ben; Wills, Abigail (ed.), The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 261-83.

Week 9: From Psychological Subjects to the Therapeutic Society (and Beyond: to the Rise of the Neurochemical Subject?)
This seminar considers the extent to which it is only since the era of the permissive society that psychotherapy has found a mass audience and examines this. Has this period seen the emergence of a ‘therapy culture’, and if so why? It also however notes the critique of psychoanalysis and the rise of cognitive therapy on one hand and neurochemical models of the self on the other, and explores the reasons for this. The seminar will discuss sources on current attitudes and initiatives drawn from the media by students over the course of the module.

James, Oliver, *Britain on the Couch* (1997).
Offer, Avner, *Self-Control and Well-Being in the United States and Britain since 1950*
Shevlin, Mark; Davies, Mark; Walker, Stephanie; Ramkalawan, Tina. 'A nation under stress : the psychological impact of Diana’s death'. *In* Walter, Tony (ed.), *The mourning for Diana* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 89-95.

Sources: selected items from the press and media

**Week 10: Workshop**
All students will present papers (10 minutes) on themes and sources related to the module.

**Further Themes**

**Crime and Punishment**

Sources: Modern Records Centre (Howard League Papers).

Politics
Sluga, Glenda, Nation, Psychology, and International Politics: 1870-1919.