Across the two semesters we study the question of ethics in analytic practice and more generally. This exploration involves themes and texts which are at the core of psychoanalysis and the formation of a psychoanalyst. Any study of ethics concerns matters that have occupied humans since the advent of civilization – not only philosophers and other thinkers, but also ordinary people across all times. Hence the significance of the ethical dimension of our praxis, brought to us in concrete forms by each of our patients and present in each of our own acts.

Within the topic area participants engage in an exploration of a range of themes such as:

- Ethical questions in the works of Freud.
- The moral law and the superego according to Freud.
- The Oedipus complex and the law.
- Kant’s categorical imperative and the superego.
- The Oedipus complex and the prohibition of incest: the critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss.
- Melanie Klein and the analysis of the superego.
- The ethics of psychoanalysis according to Lacan: desire and the law, jouissance, the pleasure principle, the Thing.
- The Thing and the object a.
- Why Lacan sees Sade as the underside of Kant’s categorical imperative.
- Ethics and tragedy: what Antigone, Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus and King Lear have to teach us regarding ethics.
- What are the moral goals of psychoanalysis?

We consider what lies beyond the limits of sense through an examination of the symptom. For Freud, the symptom acts as a substitutive sexual satisfaction. Lacan identifies it with the way in which the subject enjoys [jouit] the unconscious. The symptom is what makes up for the impossibility facing the subject to write the sexual relation. In making up for the lack of the sexual relation the symptom incarnates the particular mode of jouissance that represents the singular identity of a subject in its separation from the primordial Other.

The praxis of psychoanalysis is determined by an ethics of the unconscious that is bound to the enigma of what there is of knowledge in the real. What of the inscription of the symptom can be deciphered and what of the fantasy can be interpreted within a phallic logic? What are the limits implicit in the conceptualisation of the unconscious structured like a language? A psychoanalysis cannot begin until there is a signifier of the transference that is precursor to the subject’s symptomatic formation. This allows the analyst to take up his place as partner to the symptom in the treatment.

The symptom is examined as an advent of the real beyond the limits of sense, and the implications this has for the clinic by looking at the place of trauma in the formation of the
symptom, and then at Lacan’s definition of the symptom in RSI as belonging to the real outside sense, that is, to the Real of the Borromean knot.

**GENERAL READING GUIDE**

**SIGMUND FREUD**

(1950a [1895]) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Part I, Section 11 (‘The Experience of Satisfaction’), pp. 317-319; The Hysterical Proton Pseudos. SE 1, pp. 352-356; Part III (‘Attempt to Represent Normal ψ Processes’), Section 1, 360-371, SE I.
(1913c) On Beginning the Treatment, pp. 134-139. Papers on Technique. SE 12.
(1917e) Mourning and Melancholia. SE 14: 239.
(1919a) Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy. SE 17:159-168.
(1926d [1925]) Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety. SE XX.
(1930[1929]) Civilization and its Discontents SE Vol XXI, 57 – 145.

**JACQUES LACAN**

(2006[1966]) On the Subject who is Finally in Question. *Écrits*. 

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FURTHER READING

Shakespeare, W. (1623) King Lear.*
Sophocles, The Oedipus Trilogy: Antigone, Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus.*
(* Various editions available)