



The Freud Café Canada



In May 2014, *Between Hours/Interdisciplinary programme* of the Toronto Psychoanalytic Society launched Canada's first **Freud Café**—an outreach community event that runs through the academic year and has been held in a local café, close to the University of Toronto up until 2020. Since 2020 it has been hosted online via zoom. This ongoing programme, geared toward university students and academics from various disciplines, now going into its tenth year, involves free public talks by Canadian psychoanalysts. It brings for discussion a psychoanalytic perspective on topics of social interest, inviting an open dialogue about their impact on our lives today.

The idea was prompted by the initiative of a few psychoanalysts in Europe who had been successful in inspiring a renewed interest in psychoanalysis through their own outreach endeavours. A presentation on the workings of a Freud bar in Italy at the IPA conference in Prague, 2013, inspired the formation of a group in Toronto whose objective it was to take time out of the consulting room to find a way to stimulate similar invigorating discussions with young people in our own community.

Prof. Charles Hanly was invited as inaugural speaker. He spoke on the topic of Freud and Plato, *Plato's anticipation of Freud's psychology of dreams in The Republic*, to a packed public audience at Tik Talk café in Toronto. We were taken aback by the large turnout of people from various walks of life—students, professors, mental health clinicians and members of the general public—and grateful for the microphone we'd hired as the coffee shop filled with people and those lined outside in an effort to hear about psychoanalysis' philosophical roots. This was a great start to what has become an established free public event and it was encouraging to witness that interest in psychoanalysis was alive and well!

The Freud Cafe is a grass roots endeavour that involved knocking on doors and striking up conversation with local businesses and academic groups. We partnered with Caversham Booksellers in Toronto who have supported us in providing bibliographies and promoting these talks, and in turn with the local businesses who agreed to house them. We advertised at the universities and further afield, and have had success in finding coffee shops and restaurants close to the University of Toronto to house the event. Over the years, our following has extended beyond students and academics and we have hosted at a variety of café locations. Along the way, we partnered with a University of Toronto Comparative Literature student group who had expressed a keen interest in psychoanalysis. Their interest lent us an opportunity for a few years to host the Freud café on campus at Hart House, a venue open to the general public.

Prior to the COVID pandemic, the Freud café ran every other month through the academic year. And while this rhythm was interrupted in March 2020, the pandemic provided us an opportunity to further extend our speaker and audience base through hosting the Freud café on line via zoom. This facilitated our inviting analysts from across the country to speak at the Freud café—a collaboration that has been very well received. We have since hosted a Freud Café event with interdisciplinary speakers from both the UK and Toronto.

As of 2023, the Freud Café is expanding nationally to now include colleagues from across the country in the planning and orchestration of these outreach events. In the spring of 2023 we extended our outreach endeavour nationally by inviting analysts from the different societies to join the Freud Café Canada committee with a view to hosting the Freud Café virtually across Canada, as well as in person in the respective cities of the national members. The Freud Café, Canada events will commence in the 2023-2024 academic year.

About the Freud Café: The talks have generally run for 90 minutes with the talk portion taking up the first half, followed by an open discussion with the audience. We try to keep the talks as jargon free as possible. The Freud café has been well attended and the audience base has been widening. This project has inspired a renewed public interest in psychoanalysis and increased attendance at psychoanalytic events and courses.

To date, we have run 20 Freud Café events on a variety of topics ranging from the philosophical roots of psychoanalysis, to current ideas on guilt, the unconscious, prejudice, mindfulness, sibling rivalry in Jane Austen's novels, jokes, sport, infancy, coupling, dreams, loneliness, the uncanny, the age of bewilderment, propaganda, and Shakespeare's prefiguring of psychanalysis.

We are very grateful to our IPA colleagues who generously shared their outreach ideas inspiring the generation of a similar outreach event in our own community. I would like to thank both the speakers and the members who have served on this committee since 2014, and whose collective input has made this a success. The running of these events free of charge is made possible by analysts and cross-disciplinary speakers volunteering their time to speak to a public audience. It's an exciting time to be a part of the psychoanalytic community as we continue to forge an opportunity to collaborate, share our ideas, and *re-open* the dialogue between psychoanalysis and other disciplines.

Vivienne Pasioka, Chair, The Freud Cafe

The Freud Café, Canada committee members are: Susan Baxt (Montreal), Michael Blugerman (Toronto), Simi Chahal (Toronto), Endre Koritar (Vancouver), Bradley Murray (Vancouver), Vivienne Pasioka (Toronto) and Elizabeth Wallace (Edmonton).

For further information: www.torontopsychanalysis.com