



Washington Baltimore
Center for Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalytic Takes on the Cinema

Please join us for the following sessions

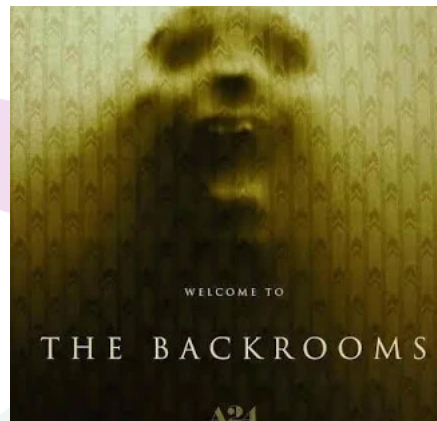
Discussion of the Film: The Backrooms

Discussant: Alex Smith, Psy.D.

Friday, October 30th, 2026, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Via Zoom

1.5 CME/CE



***Film must be viewed before event**

2025 (110 mins)

Director: Kane Parsons

After a therapist's patient disappears into a dimension beyond reality, she must venture into the unknown to save him.

A research team in Antarctica is hunted by a shape-shifting alien that assumes the appearance of its victims.

Presentation: Horror cinema's infatuation with the motif of the "liminal space" reflects our personal experience of the self at the precipice of disintegration, the sense that the "I" is impossible to define in the modern sociocultural void. The deistic Algorithm functions as a mirror. Whether through rage-baiting vignettes, or advertisements for a raincoat that you don't need, (but could kind of imagine yourself wearing), the Algorithm provokes worship, just as it induces dissonance. If the mirror is imperfect, how imperfect is our grasp of ourselves, and the world?

When the physical world is subjected to this same procedural generation, it creates a liminal void- a monochromatically yellow office space running copy-paste routines of reality. This is the liminal space that Backrooms threatens. The self—and, by extension, the world—is never fully ordered. It is

fragmented patchwork in constant transition, resisting ever being fully known. Parsons' Backrooms depicts the "liminal space" and the "I" as they approach a superposition. In here is a bounded "me". Out there is an imperfect copy waiting to engulf the "me." As the backrooms iterate and metastasize, our broken selves will leak into the transitory, undefinable, liminal field. Ultimately, these simulacra—reflections of self, culture, dream—may replace reality.

As a genre, horror functions as a fantastical iteration of universal human experience. The unthinkable and the unfeeling are depicted as just far enough into the woods (or deep enough into the basement) to belong to the other. At this distance, we are free to examine these thoughts and feelings, but never fully inhabit them. Together, we will consider Backrooms, the function of the liminal space, and their explanatory power in understanding the self in transition and in resistance, as well as the universal fantasy of the self and the world as orderly, or at least once-orderly, paradigms.

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain horror as a culturally relevant genre for unveiling experience.
2. Define the concept of the liminal space as it relates to metapsychology and archetypal frameworks of understanding.
3. Consider the fantasy of the "ordered self" and the pathologization of "identity diffusion."

Discussant:

Alex Smith, PsyD, completed his postdoctoral fellowship and additional trainings in psychoanalytic theory, psychotherapy, and supervision at the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute and the Washington School of Psychiatry. He is an Associate Professor at George Washington University. He has led classes in psychological assessment, psychotherapy, ethics, and the writing of the horror story. Alex has a private practice in Washington, DC.

References:

Martin, G.N. (2022). *The Psychology of Comedy*. Routledge. New York, NY.

Fisher, C., Park, S., Lee, J. Y. , Holland, K. & John, E. (2011). [Older people's news dependency and social connectedness](https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X2110064). *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture & Policy*, Vol.181 (1), p.183-196. doi.org/10.1177/1329878X2110064

Naruse, T., Hatsushi, M., Tsuchiya-Ito, R. , Kobayashi, M. & Kato, J. (2023). [Experiences of Disabled Older Adults in Urban Area Adult Day Care Centers: A Multisite Case Study](https://doi.org/10.1177/23337214231156304) *Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine*, Vol.9, p.1-9. DOI: 10.1177/23337214231156304

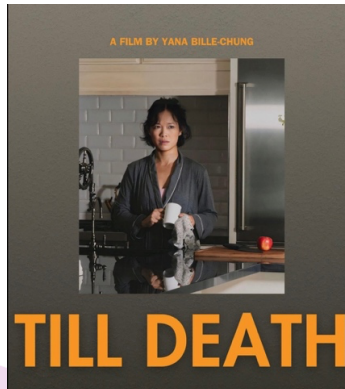
Discussion of the Film: Till Death

Discussant: Katherine Marshall Woods, Psy.D. & filmmaker Yana Billé-Chung

Friday, December 11th, 2026, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Via Zoom

1.5 CME/CE



***Film will be viewed during the event**

2025 (20 mins)

Director: Yana Billé-Chung

When a kind young couple is offered the chance of a lifetime to purchase their dream house from an ailing octogenarian at a fraction of its asking price, they eagerly accept. However, the deal comes with a significant catch: the older woman must live with them until her death, at which point the house will become theirs.

Presentation: Films can often present one narrative and transform before our eyes to offer a different lens to consider. Hopeful beginnings can manifest into dark narratives that provide a richer meaning to the artistic production. When craving object connection, individuals can find themselves seeking attachments in ways that may have been unforeseen. Within the honeymoon phase, the connection yields fruit; however, when expectations are not met, negative feelings of competition and envy arise. Together, we will explore the impact of lack of connection with desired object selves/groups and affective states in isolation.

Yana Billé-Chung's *Till Death* is a substantial contribution to dark narrative productions. Award-winning at Diversity in Cannes, 2026 for Best Actress and Best Screenwriting, the characters demonstrate how one's true self is masked in the service of gaining one's primary need for connection. Viewing this dynamic across generations shows how the human condition remains steadfast in the desire for human connection and the lengths individuals will take to achieve connection and a feeling of being with community.

Discussant: Katherine Marshall Woods, Psy.D. is a media psychologist and licensed clinical psychologist in Washington, DC. Dr. Marshall Woods spearheads PsychMinded Media, which allows

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her to assist individuals in the film and media industry to conceptualize projects with a psychological perspective. She has worked with actors, screenwriters, producers, and directors, and collaborates with film festivals in the US and abroad. Dr. Marshall Woods co-leads the Psychoanalytic Takes on Cinema with the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis and is the developer of Cinematic Imprints with American Psychological Association's Division 39, Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology. She is also the Director of Graduate Studies with The George Washington University Professional Psychology Program.

Dr. Marshall Woods has contributed blogs for The Huffington Post, the former American Psychological Association's PsycCRITIQUES, has a column with Psychology Today and blogs with Thrive Global and Medium regarding psychology, film and media works. She has authored the book, Best Psychology in Film, which has become a 2024 Telly Award-winning television show and podcast that she produces and hosts with UDCtv. Her recent publication, Black Film Through a Psychodynamic Lens, has been featured on numerous podcasts and speaking engagements around the US. Additionally, Dr. Marshall Woods has lent her expertise to media outlets, such as News Channel 8, NPR, The Huffington Post, The Daily Drum and remains the host and producer of A Healthy Mind television show in Washington, DC.

Learning Objectives:

1. Review the effectiveness of dark narratives in crafting an emotional experience for individuals and groups in the role of audience.
2. Describe the concepts of envy and jealousy and its impact on intimacy in interpersonal relationships.
3. Describe aspects of disconnection and the desire for object connection through personal and digital interactions.

References:

Martin, G.N. (2022). *The Psychology of Comedy*. Routledge. New York, NY.

Fisher, C., Park, S., Lee, J. Y. , Holland, K. & John, E. (2011). [Older people's news dependency and social connectedness](#). Media International Australia Incorporating Culture & Policy, Vol.181 (1), p.183-196. doi.org/10.1177/1329878X2110064

Naruse, T., Hatsushi, M., Tsuchiya-Ito, R. , Kobayashi, M. & Kato, J. (2023). [Experiences of Disabled Older Adults in Urban Area Adult Day Care Centers: A Multisite Case Study](#) Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine, Vol.9, p.1-9. DOI: 10.1177/23337214231156304

Discussion of the Film: Before Dawn

Discussant: Oksana Yakushko, Ph.D. & filmmaker Yuliia Haleta

Friday, January 29th, 2027, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Via Zoom

1.5 CME/CE



***Film will be viewed during the event**

2024 (11 min)

Director: Yulia Haleta

This is not supposed to happen in your twenties, but you embrace the emptiness. A spacious apartment on the third floor is the only one with the lights on. It's a warm island in the cold ocean of the outer world. The party is in full swing in there. Clinking glasses, chatter, and laughter drift out through the open balcony. It's a classmate reunion. Ten years after graduation. They set the goal to hold on till dawn, just as they did on graduation night. And it all goes well until people start disappearing without leaving a trace.

Presentation: Psychoanalysis as a discipline was developed within the context of the Great War (World War I), offering distinct perspectives on understanding human lives amidst conditions of large-scale violence. Early psychoanalytic theories, including Freud's work, offer meaningful contributions to understanding how human lives and human minds experience such forms of trauma and brutality. Ideologically based forms of state violence, whether eugenic-based anti-Semitism of the Third Reich or communist-based repressions and "red terror," were also known and addressed by early psychoanalysts (including Freud). In addition, direct experiences of World War II by many analysts, including from its trenches or while being bombed, also shaped psychoanalytic theories and approaches to clinical work. In reflecting on this film, we can consider how existing psychoanalytic frameworks help us witness, experience, understand, and respond to ongoing violence against Ukrainians (and other groups) as well as human aliveness amidst deadly wars. In addition, we can reflect on how contemporary wars can shape and change psychoanalytic thinking today.

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Discussant: Oksana Yakushko, PhD, ABPP, is a clinical psychologist, psychoanalyst and professor of psychology (and PsyD Program Director) at George Washington University. As a member of Ukrainian diaspora, she has been active in collaborating with Ukrainian scholars and activists on supporting Ukraine. She co-edited several special issues, including in *Psychoanalytic Psychology* and *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* as well as a recently released edited book on Ukrainian psychoanalysis under conditions of war (Routledge). She has also collaborated with groups such as the Theater of War on theater and poetry based projects with focus on Ukraine. She is currently completing two books with focus on history of psychoanalysis in Ukraine as well as historic relations of psychoanalysis with totalitarianisms. Her other areas of expertise are immigration (xenophobia) and history of science (especially history of eugenics in psychology).

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain the importance of psychological function of film in contexts of wars.
2. Apply psychological theories to examine production and impact of films that highlight war events and war trauma.
3. Integrate psychological concepts together with media studies, international studies, and cross-cultural studies in interpretation of film and their impact on communities.

References:

- Bondarets, N., Danyliuk, V., Zhuravliova, T., Nosenko, O., & Parokonnyi, A. (2025). The Influence of War on the Evolution and Themes of Ukrainian Cinema. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7(SI1), 985-1008
- Marshall Woods, K. (2024). Psychology and popular film. In *Handbook of media psychology: The science and the practice* (pp. 131-141). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Shumylovych, B. (2023). Cinematic culture during the war in Ukraine: Surviving the year of brutalities. *Images. The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication*, 34(43), 111-126.

Discussion of the Film: The Substance

Discussant: Jamie Steele, LMFT

Friday, April 23, 2027, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Via Zoom

1.5 CME/CE



***Film must be viewed before the event.**

2024 (141 min)

Director: Coralie Fargeat

A fading celebrity takes a black-market drug: a cell-replicating substance that helps her create a younger, better version of herself.

Presentation: The 2024 film *The Substance* uses abjection to explore the internal (psychic) and external (relational/social) impacts of aging and misogyny. This presentation will focus on the aspects of grief, agency, and wish fulfillment.

Discussant: Jamie Steele, LMFT, is a licensed marriage and family therapist and advanced psychoanalytic candidate in private practice in Washington, DC. Jamie is deeply interested in questions of justice, and the ways in which systems of oppression are woven into the core of psychic reality and normative unconscious processes, including how these deeply entrenched organizing structures play out in clinical and social processes. Jamie serving on the Committee on Gender and Sexuality (COGS) at APSA and as the Diversities Committee co-chair at the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis

Learning Objectives:

1. Name three ways "the social" impacts intrapsychic reality in *the Substance*
2. Describe 2 common presentations of unconsciously internalized misogyny

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3. Explain one impact of the intersection of aging and misogyny on women's sense of agency as seen in *The Substance*

References:

Balsam, R. H. (2022). Misogyny and the female body. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 42(7), 579-589.

Goodman, N. R. (2022). 10 Opening space for women to dream and symbolize when facing misogyny. *Psychoanalytic Explorations of What Women Want Today: Femininity, Desire and Agency*, 43.

Lippmann, P. (2022). On getting old. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 58(1), 103-111.

Registration Link:

https://wbcp.memberclicks.net/reg_psych_takes_cinema_26-27

Registration Fees (per session):

I do not need CME/CE

No Fee

I want CME/CE

\$69.00 per session

ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

Continuing Education Units are not issued for partial attendance.

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Katherine Marshall Woods, PsyD, Program Co-Chair
Sarah Hedlund, PhD, Program Co-Chair

There is no known commercial support for this program.
CVs available upon request

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- **Pharmacists/Pharmacy Technicians:** 6.0 Credits
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