Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice
May 29 - June 15

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Course: 668-01
Hours: 9.00-12.15 Tuesday to Friday

Aims and objectives

When psychoanalytic theory is presented in undergraduate teaching it is often presented in a highly abstract, schematized way, cut off from the experiential and lived ground which is its soil. Freud offered a discourse for a world of primitive experience, a language for the unspeakable, and it is this world rather than abstract theory, which will be our concern. Theory may help us organize our thoughts, but it should also help us see what might otherwise remain obscured in darkness or noise.

Contemporary psychoanalysis has come a long way since Freud. This is due to a better understanding of the complexities of identity formation, of its failure in borderline and psychotic states, of the interpersonal structure of psychological life, and of the cultural-historical contexts in which issues such as gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as theory itself, are constituted. The field has also come to be written in a language closer to our human experience. As I have said elsewhere, terms such as self-cohesion, splitting, and fragmentation do not only help us organize our thoughts as therapists; they speak to our experience as patients as well. It is with these thoughts in mind that I am inviting you into the contemporary field.

Throughout the course we shall be integrating theory and practice. Because the course is short, there is not much time for thoughts to mature over an extended time period, as is the case in a full semester. Instead, I hope that this rather intense immersion in psychoanalytic thinking will help develop a process that will stay with you in the years to come.

Because you have other opportunities to study Lacan and Jung in some depth, we shall not be studying their work here. Let me simply say that their work offers important complements and countertoins to the work covered in this course.

The fundamental insights of psychoanalysis come from long term work, but I shall be offering one seminar on short term psychodynamic psychotherapy (in which I have been trained).

There is far more to read than can be read in the time available. I also understand that you might be drawn to various readings and authors. Fortunately, we can structure this so that you can follow your own interests to an extent and bring those to class discussions.
Course structure

You can expect to have 3-5 hours of readings and homework per day.

I would like you to keep a daily journal that is a response to the readings for the next day. You may include further reflections on the seminar just completed as well. The aim is to think consistently about how theory and practice are integrated. Bring your notes to class. Submit FOUR journal integrations for the course.

Each day’s seminar will involve a discussion of the readings for that day and a case presentation. The case presented will be discussed from a psychoanalytic perspective, addressing both a case conceptualization and a discussion of possible dynamics that may emerge in the therapeutic process and the transference-countertransference relationship.

9 - 10.40 Seminar on the readings
11 - 12.15 Case presentation

Evaluation

Your term paper will be your accumulated journal entries 40% (4x10%)
Case presentations 30%
Attendance and contribution to seminar discussion 30%

Attendance is compulsory. If you have to miss a class, please let me know beforehand. The course involves discussions of confidential material. Professionally ethical conduct is required.

Course structure

Week 1, the Oedipus complex and different levels of analytic atttentioness
Tuesday:
I shall start off with an introductory overview presentation on the Oedipus complex.
McWilliams: Preserving our humanity
- The psychoanalytic sensibility

Wednesday:
McWilliams: The case of Molly.
Malan: Individual psychotherapy and the science of psychodynamics, chapters 7 & 8, on Oedipal issues in men and women.

Thursday:
We shall talk about the structural differences between Oedipal and preOedipal organizations of experience. I shall also do a presentation on Jungian contributions to understanding the Oedipus complex. Jung has more to offer in our understanding of Oedipal issues than is generally recognized (even in the Jungian community).
Balint: The two levels of analytic work
McWilliams: Developmental levels of analytic work
- Clinical implications of developmental levels of organization
- The case of Donna

Friday:
Britton: The Oedipus situation and the depressive position
(Ron Britton is a leading Kleinian analyst.)
Miller: Depression and grandiosity as related forms of narcissism
(To what extent might we usefully think of narcissistic disorder as an Oedipal problem?)

Week 2, mostly on Klein, Bion’s ideas, and introducing Winnicott
The focus of this week will be Melanie Klein’s contribution to understanding primitive anxieties, as organized in the paranoid schizoid and depressive positions. You can expect to be able to discern these anxieties in your patient’s presentations, as well as the dynamics of splitting, envy, reparation, and gratitude. I am less concerned with the typically tortuous acrobatics of Kleinian metapsychology than with your ability to make clinical use of some central Kleinian insights. Similarly with Bion, for whose ideas we shall discuss some excellent secondary papers.

Tuesday:
Klein: Love, guilt and reparation
Ogden: The primitive edge of experience, pp. 11-30
These are Ogden’s phenomenological descriptions of the depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions.
Symington: Melanie Klein, parts 1 and 2

Wednesday:
Klein: The origins of transference
Klein: A study of envy and gratitude
Hinshelwood: Clinical Klein, chapter 9: The death instinct and envy

Thursday:
Today we shall discuss some clinical ideas from Wilfred Bion’s work. I find much of his writing tortuous, so am going to recommend these few articles by some who know his work intimately. This seminar will be our one focus on psychotic thinking, but you will find that implied in these writings are profound and subtle transference/countertransference issues to bear in mind in all one’s work anyway.
Bion: A theory of thinking
Symington: Learning from experience and freedom in Bion’s thinking
Britton: Keeping things in mind
Malcolm: As if: the phenomenon of not learning

Friday:
Introduction to Winnicott’s work.
Winnicott: Hate in the countertransference
- Clinical varieties of transference
Week 3, DWI and others
This week we shall continue to focus on some of Winnicott's contributions, but shall look at the central contributions of Guntrip and other significant analysts as well. We shall spend one day discussing Patrick Casement’s clinical contributions, which pull together many of the themes of the past few weeks. On Wednesday, I shall spend an hour giving a seminar on short term psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Tuesday:
Winnicott: Primary maternal preoccupation
- The theory of the parent-infant relationship
- Ego distortion in terms of true and false self
- The capacity to be alone

Wednesday:
Guntrip: Schizoid phenomena, object relations, and the self (excerpts below)
- The schizoid problem, regression, and the struggle to preserve an ego, pp. 58-66
- The schizoid compromise and psychotherapeutic stalemate
- The schizoid problem

Thursday:
Casement: Key dynamics of containment
- Analytic holding under pressure
- The meeting of needs in psychoanalysis
Today I shall also do a presentation on short term psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Friday:
Your own bliss. For our final seminar (June 15) I would like you each to make a short presentation for your colleagues of one or more useful ideas of ONE other psychoanalytic author, integrated with your clinical thinking.
Some of the 10-minute presentations from recent classes:
Sheldon Bach on perversions and object relations
Kernberg on technical issues working with borderline patients
Kernberg on superego pathology
Thomas Ogden’s autistic-contiguous position
Neville Symington’s first and last lectures in The Analytic Experience
Central themes in the relational turn: Scharff, Mitchell and Ogden
Masud Kahn on lying fallow
Margaret Little’s analysis with Winicott
Glen Gabbard on countertransference with borderline patients
Nina Coltart’s Slouching towards Bethlehem, and the silent patient

Disabilities
If you have a disability for which I need to make allowances, please let me know.
References

Here are the references for the above readings.


*Clinical lectures on Klein and Bion*. London and NY: Tavistock/Routledge.

- Keeping things in mind. In R. Anderson *op. cit.*


- (1956). Primary maternal preoccupation. In D. Scharff *op. cit.*


- (1960). Ego distortion in terms of true and false self. In D. Scharff *op. cit.*