

THE BOSTON PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY AND INSTITUTE, INC.

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**Ego Psychology
BPSI, Spring 2015**

Instructors: Nancy J Chodorow, PhD and Alexandra M Harrison, MD

Ego Psychology (*Year I seminar*)

Nancy Chodorow, PhD & Alexandra Harrison, MD

February 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2, 9

Thirty years ago, psychoanalytic training at BPSI and other like institutes was framed entirely in the terms of ego psychology. Today, ego psychology has throughout the psychoanalytic world been superseded by many relational, transference-countertransference, and interactional theories (self psychology, relational psychoanalysis, contemporary and classical Klein, the British independent tradition, field theory, and so forth).

This class begins from the premise that ego psychology, in its classical and contemporary forms, has much to recommend it, both to the beginning and to the experienced analyst. Indeed, it is impossible to conceptualize the mind from a psychoanalytic perspective or to think about doing analytic work without this essential approach to theory, technique, and the mind.

Growing out of “middle” and “late” Freud, particularly works like “Two principles of mental functioning” (1911), “On narcissism” (1914), “Mourning and melancholia” (1917), *The ego and the id* (1924), and *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety* (1926), but encompassing concepts that we meet in Freud’s first writings (for example, repression, resistance, defense, conflict, and, from the *Studies on Hysteria*, “a psychical group divorced from the ego”), ego psychology describes, and looks at how we address clinically, the basic neurotic and normal development and functioning of the psyche.

This course introduces you to some of what came in the early 1940s to be called ego psychology, named especially after the writings of Anna Freud (1936, *The ego and the mechanisms of defense*) and Heinz Hartmann (1939, *Ego psychology and the problem of adaptation*). We will look at founding classical writers whose thinking remains germane to our work today, creative rethinkers like Loewald, and contemporary writings by those whose thinking is in the ego psychological tradition.

Following upon your study of Freud, the course is organized around central ego psychological concepts and writers. Along the way, we will pay attention to how concepts developed historically. We begin with the writings of Anna Freud in relation to the ego defenses, followed by the contributions of early infant researchers Spitz and Mahler to our understanding of ego development. We then consider, through the writings of Hartmann and Brenner, conflict and compromise formation; Paul’s Gray’s contributions to the analysis of drive and defense, and Schafer and Schlesinger’s reconsiderations on resistance and defense. We study the evolution of ego psychology into a contemporary intersubjective ego psychology initiated by Loewald, and we conclude with reflections by the course’s instructors.

1. **February 26: The ego and the mechanisms of defense: Anna Freud and A. Kris**
Freud, A. 1936. The Mechanisms of defense *and* Identification with the aggressor. Chs.4 and 9 in *The ego and the mechanisms of defense*. New York: International Universities Press. Pp.42-53 and 109-121. . [Available in the [Library](#)]

Kris, A. 1984. The conflicts of ambivalence. *Psychoanal. St. Child* 39: 213-234. [PEP Web Link](#)

2. **March 5: Conflict and compromise formation: Hartmann and Brenner**

Hartmann, H. 1939. The conflict-free ego sphere *and* Some integrative functions of the ego. Chs.1 and 6 in *Ego psychology and the problem of adaptation*. New York: International Universities Press. Pp.3-21 and 74-79 [Available in the [Library](#)].

Brenner, C. 1982. Affects and psychic conflict *and* Compromise formation. Chs.4 and 7 in *The mind in conflict*. Madison, CT: International Universities Press. Pp.55-71 and 109-119 [Available in the [Library](#)].

3. **March 12: Developmental perspectives: Spitz and Mahler**

Spitz, R.S. & Wolf, K.M. 1945. Hospitalism – an inquiry into the genesis of psychiatric conditions in early childhood. *Psychoanal. St. Child* 1:53-74. [PEP Web Link](#)

Mahler, M S. 1963. Thoughts about development and individuation. *Psychoanal. St. Child* 18:307-324. [PEP Web Link](#)

4. **March 19: Defense and resistance, different views: Gray, Schafer, and Schlesinger**

Gray, P. 1992. Memory as resistance and the telling of a dream. *Jl. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 40: 307-326 (also in Gray, *The ego and the analysis of defense*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. Pp.151-170).) [PEP Web Link](#)

Schafer, R. 1983. Appreciation in the analytic attitude, and Resisting and empathizing. Chs.4,5 in *The analytic attitude*. New York: Basic. Pp.58-81. [Available in the [Library](#)].

Schlesinger, H.J. 2003. Resistance. Ch.6 in *The texture of treatment: On the matter of psychoanalytic technique*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press. Pp.81-101[Available in the [Library](#)].

5. **March 26: Intersubjective ego psychology: Loewald**

Loewald, H.W. 1960. On the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis. Ch.14 in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. Pp.221-256 [Available in the [Library](#)].

Loewald, H.W. 1979. The waning of the Oedipus complex. Ch. 23 in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. Pp.384-404. [PEP Web Link](#)

Recommended: Chodorow, N.J. 2009. A different universe: Reading Loewald through “On the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis”. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* LXXVIII: 983-1011. [PEP Web Link](#)

6. **April 2: Intersubjective ego psychology, an American independent tradition: McLaughlin, Poland, and Chodorow**

(5:30-7) McLaughlin, J.T. 1988. The analyst’s insights. *Psychoanal. Q.* 57 370-389 (also Ch.6 in *The healer’s bent*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press. Pp.87-100). [PEP Web Link](#)

Poland, W.S. 2000. The analyst’s witnessing and otherness. *Jl. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 48: 17-34. [PEP Web Link](#)

(7-8) Chodorow, N.J. n.d. Toward an American independent tradition. Unpub. mss. [Available in the [Library](#)].

7. **April 9: Therapeutic action -- A layered approach: Harrison**

Harrison, A.M. 2014. The sandwich model: The “music and dance” of therapeutic action. *Internat. Jl. Psychoanal.* 95:313-340 [Available in the [Library](#)].