Neurotic Psychopathology and the so-called higher functioning patient.

Instructors: Jack Beinashowitz, Ph.D.; Susan Kattlove, M.D.

Freud’s psychological work began with the study of the neuroses and developed into a unique – psychoanalytic – perspective on these mysterious disorders. This psychoanalytic perspective, in turn, changed the very way we think of and define neurosis and, in addition, showed how it can be treated through psychoanalysis. What Freud discovered is that neurotic symptoms and behavior had a meaning – were a complex mixture that at one and the same time both expressed and defended against unacceptable impulses, thoughts, and wishes, which, most importantly, were largely unconscious, typically involved sexuality and aggression and originated in childhood. In this course we will examine the various neuroses and the distinct mechanisms that they each employ. We will read about hysteria and obsessional neurosis, and explore what they reveal about psychic functioning. Finally, we will examine the relationship between neurosis and character.

SESSION 1 (Sep 17): Introduction to Hysteria.


Learning objective: To review the early psychoanalytic thoughts about the concept of hysteria and the discovery of the “talking cure.”

SESSION 2 (Sep 24): Hysteria and its Etiology. Introduction to the psychoanalytic concept of neurosis and its place in the landscape of psychopathology.


Supplemental Reading:


Learning objective: To review the psychoanalytic view of hysteria and its treatment - the nature of conversion and the specific psychical mechanisms at play in hysteria. To examine the concept of neurosis including symptom formation, unconscious conflict and defense and their role in psychopathology.

SESSION 3 (Oct 1): Hysteria (continued)


Supplemental Readings:


Learning objective: To understand the relationship of psychosexual development, sexuality and bodily functions to symptom formation and the theory of the neuroses.
SESSION 4 (Oct 8): Hysteria and Dissociation


Learning objective: To examine the role of trauma in hysteria and to explore the relationship between hysteria and dissociation. To compare and contrast the difference between the repression model with the dissociation model.

SESSION 5 (Oct 15): Obsessional Neurosis

1. Freud, S. (1909), Notes upon a case of obsessional neurosis, S.E. 10, 153-249. PEP Web Link

2. Fisch, Marcia (1999 unpublished), Rat Man: The case. [Available in the Library]

Learning objective: Learning objective: To review the psychoanalytic view of obsessional neurosis and its treatment – the nature of obsessions, compulsions, isolation of affect and the specific psychical mechanisms at play in obsessional neurosis. To discuss the relationship between obsessional neurosis and the Oedipus conflict.

SESSION 6 (Oct 22): The Rat Man Reconsidered: Revisions of Freudian Theory and contemporary issues.


Learning objective: To review contemporary psychoanalytic views of obsessional neurosis and its treatment—a re-evaluation of what was therapeutic in the Rat Man case (Osman) and the role of developmental trauma in the formation of obsessional symptoms (Brandschaft). Bechdel provides a contemporary, and creative, example of the development of OCD symptoms and their transformation.

SESSION 7 (Oct 29): Neurosis and Character


Supplemental Readings:


Learning objective: To review and discuss the psychoanalytic view of character and psychological structure and its relationship to the neuroses. To explore the concept of neurotic character focusing on obsessional character and its various manifestations including in everyday life.

**SESSION 8 (Nov 5): Neurosis and Character Continued**


Supplemental Reading:


Learning Objective: To further investigate the concept of character and its relationship to neurosis focusing particularly on hysterical character.

The seminar is relevant for clinicians in that it provides an introduction to the psychoanalytic understanding and treatment of the neuroses (hysterical and obsessional) and other neurotic level disorders. Candidates will learn about symptom formation and the basic mechanisms of action of these disorders and how these inform treatment. The seminar will cover both theory and clinical practice and the discussion will be closely tied to clinical observations. Candidates will be encouraged to relate the theories to their clinical practice.