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 22): Introduction to Hysteria.


Learning objective: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to describe the role of trauma in the formation of hysterical symptoms.

SESSION 2 (Sep 29): Hysteria and its Etiology. Introduction to the psychoanalytic concept of neurosis and its place in the landscape of psychopathology.


Supplemental Reading:
Learning objective: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to list two psychical mechanisms involved in the formation of hysterical symptoms.

SESSION 3 (Oct 6): Hysteria (continued)


Supplemental Readings:


Learning objective: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to compare the way hysterical symptoms are understood from an object relations perspective with the way they are understood from the topographical model perspective.

SESSION 4 (Oct 13): Hysteria and Dissociation


Learning objective: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to name one difference and one similarity between the early model of hysteria and current concepts of dissociation.

SESSION 5 (Oct 20): 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 Fisch, Marcia (1999 unpublished), Rat Man: The case.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: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to list two psychical mechanisms involved in the formation of obsessional symptoms.
SESSION 6 (Oct 27): The Rat Man Reconsidered: Revisions of Freudian Theory and contemporary issues.


Learning objective: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to list two points of difference in the approach Brandchaft and Osman each take to the Rat Man case as compared to Freud's theory of the case.

SESSION 7 (Nov 3): Neurosis and Character


Supplemental Readings:


Learning objective: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to list three characteristics of obsessional character and describe the relationship between anality and obsessionality.

SESSION 8 (Nov 10): Neurosis and Character Continued


Supplemental Reading:


Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session candidates will be able to critique the construct of 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.