Like other social groups in the United States, Psychoanalysis is re-evaluating its attitudes and practices toward the sociopolitical world. In this seminar, we would like to contribute to and enhance this process by actively exploring the interaction of the personal and the sociopolitical in our own work.

In the past, psychoanalysts have tended to de-emphasize, if not pathologize the influence of the sociopolitical on the individual psyche. We will briefly consider some of the historical reasons for this trend before turning our focus to how race, class and culture affect current psychoanalytic practice. Together, we will attempt to illuminate how these issues affect transference and counter transference with an eye toward identifying how psychoanalysts (and psychoanalysis) may, consciously or un-, perpetuate some prevailing social realities.

September 28, 2017

Class One: Introduction to the course – Race, Class, Culture and Social Change

How do we distinguish prejudice from racism?

Reading: Morrison, Toni (1983) Recitatif in Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women, Baraka and Baraka eds. [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org]

Objective: Participants will be able to define and distinguish between personal prejudice and systemic racism.
October 5, 2017

Class Two: Politics and Power

Is the political development of the person a proper topic for inquiry in the clinical setting?


Walls, Gary (2006). The normative unconscious and the political contexts of change in psychotherapy in “Psychoanalysis, Class and Politics” pp.118-129. [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org]

Objective: Participants will be able to identify at least two potential ways of inhibiting political discussion in the clinical encounter.

October 12, 2017

Class Three: Race

“The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego.” Freud, The Ego and the Id (1923)

“There is really no mode of empathy that can replicate the daily strain of knowing that as a black person you can be killed for simply being black.” Rankine (2015)

Reading: Coates, Ta-Nehisi (2015). Between the World and Me. Spiegel and Grau. Pp.5-39. [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org]


Objective: Participants will be able to identify two potential power imbalances in and out of the therapeutic setting.
October 19, 2017

Class Four: Race

“Race, a biological fiction, is a social, cultural and political construct.” B. Stoute (2017)

“All transactions in our culture regarding race and social class are premised on the views that nondominant races and the poor are inferior, and that Euro-Americans are superior.” D. Holmes (2006)

Reading: Baldwin, James (1957). Sonny’s Blues in Going to Meet the Man, Dial Press. [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org]


Objective: Participants will be able to identify at least one example of how racism and classism influence self-valuation and success.

October 26, 2017

Class Five: Class

“Money matters are treated by civilized people in the same way as sexual matters with the same inconsistency, prudishness, and hypocrisy.” S. Freud (1913)


Objective: Participants will be able to illustrate at least one example of unconscious meanings of money in psychoanalytic work.

November 2, 2017

Class Six: Class

“In responding, if only unconsciously, to the widening chasm between rich and poor…analysts are merely noticing what has been there all along. “M. Dimen


Objective: Participants will be able to define “assimilation” as a potential negotiation between successful and unsuccessful mourning.

November 9, 2017

Class Seven: Culture

“But my mother did not understand, nor did the nurse, for the language I spoke was from the world from which I came.” K. Gibran

Reading: De Coster, N. (2017). The Other language: A few psychoanalytic thoughts about migration, the loss of culture and language. Psychoanalysis Today. [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org]


Objective: Participants will be able to identify three ways migration can impact identity.

November 16, 2017

Class Eight: Culture

“One shortcoming of multiculturism is that it renders the world more benign than it actually is by not taking sufficient account of power.” F. Dalal


Young-Bruehl, E. (2003). The Interpretation of an Architect’s Dream: Relational Trauma and Its Prevention, Journal for the psychoanalytic of Culture and Society, 8(1). [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org]

Objective: Participants will be able to identify and illustrate the concept of trauma prevention.