Seminar on Social Awareness

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Like other social groups in the United States, Psychoanalysis is reevaluating 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 countertransference with an eye toward identifying how psychoanalysts (and psychoanalysis) may, consciously or un-, perpetuate some prevailing social realities.

September 20, 2018

Class One: Introduction to the course – Race, Class, Culture

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. Download in the library, check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org.]

(Objective: Participants will define and distinguish between personal prejudice and systemic racism.)

September 27, 2018

Class Two: Politics and Power

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

Reading: Layton, Lynne (2006). Attacks on linking: the unconscious pull to dissociate individuals from their social context pp.107-118 [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org.]

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 identify at least two potential ways of inhibiting political discussion in the clinical encounter.)
October 4, 2018

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. [Available in the library. Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org.]


(Objective: Participants will identify different ego constituents and potential power imbalances in and out of the therapeutic setting.)

October 11, 2018

Class Four: Race

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 identify how racism and classism influence self-valuation and success.)

October 25, 2018

Class Five: Class


(Objective: Participants will be able to illustrate unconscious meanings of money in psychoanalytic work.)

November 1, 2018

Class Six: Class


(Objective: Participants will be able to define “assimilation” as a potential negotiation between mourning and melancholia.)

**November 8, 2018**

Class Seven: Culture

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. Download in the library, check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org.]


(Objective: Participants will be able to identify three ways migration impacts identity.)

**November 15, 2018**

Class Eight: Culture


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”.)