



B P S I

boston psychoanalytic
society & institute

Winter Elective, 2019-2020

Writing about Psychoanalysis

Instructor: Ellen Pinsky, PsyD

Psychoanalysis does not need any more abstruse or sentimental abstractions—any new paradigms or radical revisions—it just needs more good sentences.

—Adam Phillips (2001, xvi)

Welcome! This eight-week elective class is for anyone interested in writing about psychoanalysis, open to all members and all students – an inclusive mix that has worked well in the past. The range of writing, too, is wide, including papers, personal essays, clinical vignettes and case write-ups.

Here (below) is a description of this course, with the first week's assignment and suggested reading. I hope everyone will find our workshop format productive, and that you will all chime in with suggestions for reading. I look forward to our working together!

Writing About Psychoanalysis:

This is a writing course, with suggested reading each week. Your suggestions are welcome and we will incorporate them along the way. **Please note:** The suggested readings can be *anything you like*: a piece of writing about psychoanalysis, or one that reflects and enhances your interest in psychoanalysis. [The poem by Louise Gluck listed below is an example.] The suggested readings represent individual taste and are intended for pleasure.

We will consider together topics such as: What makes a successful piece of writing? A lively, effective argument? A vivid scene? What makes an article or essay worthy of publication? What are strategies to avoid jargon? We'll also discuss how the review process can help one improve a particular piece of writing with examples of revision, self-editing, and writerly attention to models.

Class members will have the opportunity to share their works in progress, or to submit one or two short writing exercises for class discussion.

Week 1 — November 21

Assignment:

For our first class, please select a brief passage that you value or admire from any piece of writing about psychoanalysis or (as above) that reflects your interest in psychoanalysis. The passage can be any length, from a sentence to (maximum) 750 words. Once you select your passage, email it to the rest of the class a day or two ahead of our meeting. We'll talk in the first class about the passages you selected and what you like or value about them as a psychoanalyst. We will also discuss your goals for the class.

Suggested Readings:

Freud, S. (1920). Beyond the pleasure principle [cot-reel game, pp. 14-16]. In *SE XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the pleasure principle, group psychology and other works* (pp. 1-64). [PEP Web Link](#)

Glück, L. (2013). Visitors from abroad. *Poetry* (December 2013). [Linked Here](#)

Seminar Learning Objectives:

1. At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to explain the writerly appeal of the passages brought for discussion by class members.
2. At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to demonstrate, with one example, how a clinical moment is brought alive in the prose.
3. At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to compare two versions of an essay's opening argument, assessing the effectiveness of each.
4. At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to compare and critique examples of active voice sentence construction contrasted with passive voice, assessing the effect of each.
5. At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to identify three improvements in a passage brought about through self-editing.
6. At the conclusion of the session students will be able to describe three strategies for avoiding jargon, and apply one strategy to improve a written passage.
7. At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to identify examples of dull, clichéd or confused phrasing transformed to clear and lively phrasing.
8. At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to demonstrate and explain, with an example, the usefulness of reading a passage aloud during the writing and revision process.