



DREAM SEMINAR

Seminar Year I

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“Don’t open that door,” she said. “The hallways are full of difficult dreams.” And I asked her: “How do you know?” And she said to me, “Because I was there a moment ago, and I had to come back when I discovered I was sleeping on my heart.”

– Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Welcome! This seminar will explore the ways in which our understanding of dreams shapes our clinical experiences of them. We’ll look at various models of dream formation and interpretation, from **The Interpretation of Dreams**, to contemporary views of the dream as part of analytic field. We have set a course through a vast terrain of dream theory guided by a single practical aim: to help prepare you to work with dreams in the clinical setting.

The Interpretation of Dreams is not only the fundamental book about dream interpretation, it is the foundation for all of psychoanalysis. You have already been introduced to it, and we will recap its central implications for working with dreams. If time permitted, we would read the entire book together. Since we don’t have the leisure to do that, we’ll have to content ourselves with recommending that you read the entire book through on your own.

Each week, we will provide a brief background for the readings, and then, we hope you will raise questions or relate experiences that can clarify or elucidate the readings. We’ll also have a clinical presentation each week. We hope that this combination of theoretical and clinical discussion will create animated conversations that will inform our dream work.

Class I: Telling Dreams, Hearing Dreams

What good are dreams? What makes them they valuable in treatment, in life, in theory making? How does our theory inform our clinical approaches to dreams?

Readings:

Kantrowitz, J. L. (2003). Tell me your theory. Where is it bred? A lesson from clinical approaches to dreams. *Journal of Clinical Psychoanalysis*, 12(2), 151-178. [PEP Web Link](#)

Lippmann, P. (2000). Why use dreams in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy? In *Nocturnes: On listening to dreams* (pp. 183-201). The Analytic Press. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session, the candidate will be able to discuss two major trends from the historical evolution of theories of dreams and their clinical use.

Class II: Freud's Theories

Now, about the appetites, here is the point I want to make plain. Among the unnecessary pleasures and desires, some, I should say, are unlawful. Probably they are innate in everyone.

What kind of desires do you mean?

Those which bestir themselves in dreams, when the gentler part of the soul slumbers and the control of reason is withdrawn; then the wild beast in us, full-fed with meat or drink, becomes rampant and shakes off sleep to go in quest of what will gratify its own instincts.

Plato *The republic* IX 571 c-d

Readings:

Freud, S. (1900). The method of interpreting dreams: An analysis of a specimen dream. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, volume IV (1900): The interpretation of dreams (first part)* (pp. 96-121). [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1911). The handling of dream-interpretation in psycho-analysis. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, volume XII (1911-1913): The case of Schreber, papers on technique and other works* (pp. 89-96). [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1923). Remarks on the theory and practice of dream-interpretation. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIX (1923-1925): The ego and the id and other works* (pp. 109-122). [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1923). Some additional notes on dream-interpretation as a whole. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIX (1923-1925): The ego and the id and other works* (pp. 127-134). [PEP Web Link](#)

Sprengnether, M. (2003). Mouth to mouth: Freud, Irma, and the dream of psychoanalysis. *American Imago*, 60(3), 259-284. [PEP Web Link](#)

Explanatory Note: We know that you read Irma in your Freud I course. The Irma dream has been called “Navel of psychoanalysis”, or “The dream from which psychoanalysis proceeds” – because of its historical importance in the development of Freud’s thinking. As the most important dream in psychoanalysis, it rewards repeat consideration. But we don’t want to simply repeat your Freud I discussion. Thus, after refamiliarizing ourselves

with the Irma dream, we will turn to the rich subsequent literature for a radically different understanding than the interpretation given by Freud. We will also take up some brief general comments by Freud on dream interpretation.

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to characterize Freud's understanding of the function of dreams and his process of uncovering the latent meaning as it is both represented and disguised in the manifest content.

Class III: Defense Analysis and Dream Technique

Freud famously viewed dreams as the royal road to the unconscious. Today we might call it a superhighway. Some dreams do make the route appear straight and clear, tempting us to step on the accelerator and race ahead with glee. But as Freud reminded us in the papers for last week, dream interpretation is subject to all the considerations applicable to any other part of analytic work.

Readings:

Goldberger, M. (1989). On the analysis of defenses in dreams. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 58, 396-417. [PEP Web Link](#)

Gray, P. (1992). Memory as resistance, and the telling of a dream. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 40, 307-326. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to describe two approaches to the analysis of defenses in dreams.

Class IV: Is Wish Fulfillment a Useful Idea Even When Dreams Are Painful?

Owen Renik illustrates how a thorough-going commitment to classical dream theory can yield insights even into dreams that seem most inhospitable to the idea of infantile wish fulfillment.

Reading:

Renik, O. (1981). Typical examination dreams, "superego dreams," and traumatic dreams. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 50, 159-189. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session, the candidate will be able to articulate and apply Owen Renik's work with Superego Dreams.

Class V. Dream Interpretation and Brain Science

Science has changed our understanding of sleep and dreaming since Freud's day, rendering some aspects of his theory no longer tenable. We will summarize relevant scientific findings, then explore a revised psychoanalytic dream theory that retains the clinical essence of Freud while being consistent with science.

Readings:

Greenberg, R., & Pearlman, C. A. (1999). The interpretation of dreams: A classic revisited. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 9(6), 749-765. [PEP Web Link](#)

Greenberg, R., Katz, H., Schwartz, W., & Pearlman, C. (1992). A research-based reconsideration of the psychoanalytic theory of dreaming. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 40, 531-550. [PEP Web Link](#)

The first of these articles is a concise critique of Freud's theory, followed by a summary of relevant dream lab research. The second reports a single study. You may skip the introductory material in the second paper and start at "The Present Study", p. 535, as the introductory material is included in the first paper.

Ray Greenberg is both a pioneer dream researcher, and a BPSI analyst who taught Dreams at BPSI for many years. His work exemplifies the melding of rigorous science with sophisticated psychoanalytic thinking.

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session, the candidate will be able to describe researched-based dream theory.

Class VI: Is It Possible to Objectively Validate Interpretations?

The problem of objective validation has bedeviled psychoanalysis since its inception and has rightfully been a focus of critics. Clinical work, including dream interpretation, is inherently an intuitive art. Yet French and Fromm undertook an ambitious project to develop a method for subjecting that intuitive art to criteria of objective validation. Their result is strikingly similar to the science-based theory we discussed in the last class, although their approach is purely clinical. Their book is a tightly reasoned single essay. We have selected excerpts that convey the essence of their approach, but we recommend you read the entire book (which mercifully is modest in size). The book is no longer in print, but can be found used online at reasonable cost, and our Library will provide copies of the selected excerpts.

Readings:

French, T. M., & Fromm, E. (1964). *Dream interpretation: A new approach*. Basic Books. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsi.org].

Chapter 1: Checking interpretations pp. 3-8

Chapter 3: Interpretations as working hypotheses pp. 28-36 top, 37-41

Chapter 4: Further examples: Reconstructing the cognitive structure of interpersonal relations pp. 42-62
Chapter 7: Further discussion of our interpretive approach pp. 86-95
Chapter 12: Questions concerning the development of thinking pp. 133-134
Chapter 14 (partial): The dream work from a new point of view pp. 163-top of 167

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session, the candidate will be able to describe and apply the clinical approach of French and Fromm to dream interpretation.

Class VII: The Dream as Lived Experience

Philip Bromberg endeavors to bring the dream alive in the analytic session, an experience being lived rather than a dream being reported and studied. In this clinical paper we have a window into his ideas about self-states and dreaming.

Reading:

Bromberg, P. M. (2000). Bringing in the dreamer: Some reflections on dreamwork, surprise, and analytic process. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 36(4), 685-705. [PEP Web link](#)

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session, the candidate will be able to discuss a clinical application of Bromberg's theory through dreamwork.

Class VIII: Sensory Experience and Empathic Resonance

Al Margulies carefully explores the phenomenology of lived dream experience. He demonstrates, in particular, how attention to the sensory/affective dimensions of the dream deepens resonance between the patient's "inscape" and the analyst's.

Readings:

Margulies, A. (1989). *The empathic imagination*. WW Norton & Company. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

Chapter 2: The sensory dimensions: On listening to a dream pp. 21-34

Chapter 4: Active empathy: The dormant inscape pp. 47-58

Learning Objectives: At the completion of this session, candidates will be able to explain the way attention to sensory/affective elements in dreams facilitates the analyst's resonance with the patient's experience, thereby deepening clinical understanding.