OBJECT RELATIONS CORE SEMINAR

DAVID JAMES FISHER, Ph.D. Instructor
djamesfisher@aol.com
(310) 552-0868

Course description: This fifteen week course introduces Object Relations Theory and Practice, focusing mainly on the British (Middle) Independent School. It will begin with an examination of the origins of object relations inside the classical Freudian conception. We will then read some seminal papers by Ferenczi, who will be seen as a bridge between classical psychoanalysis and the object relations school. The seminar will then turn to an intense study of Fairbairn because he was the most complete theory-builder in the development of object relations theory; we will also explore how Fairbairn’s perspective opens up ways of working with schizoid and depressed patients. We will move to a brief introduction to the theory of Klein and Bion, reading a number of seminal papers by these two major thinkers. These early object relations practitioners formally depart from the Freudian pleasure-seeking drives to a privileging of the importance of actual persons seeking connection to others. The course then moves to later theorists, including Winnicott, Balint, and Guntrip. Contemporary adherents to object relations theory, in particular Ogden, Bollas, and Phillips, will be considered. The course is designed mainly as a reading seminar; however close attention will be paid to the application of the concepts to clinical work, including candidates’ cases.

Course objectives: at the completion of the course, candidates will be able to:

1. articulate the connection and differences between classical Freudian drive theory and ego psychology and object relations theory.
2. Demonstrate competence in key concepts of object relations theory.
3. Identify key ideas from the British Independent School, including significant concepts by Fairbairn, Klein, Bion, Winnicott, Balint, and Guntrip.
4. Critically evaluate contemporary developments in object relations theory and practice.
5. Apply object relations theory to clinical work with patients.

Teaching method: Using the reading as a point of departure, I will facilitate active and engaging discussion of the material, including how ideas from object relations can be applied to the clinical process.

Evaluation: seminar attendance and class participation.

Session I  Freudian origins of object relations theory


**Session II  Ferenczi as a bridging figure between Freud and the relational approach**


**Recommended**


**Session III  Ferenczi on the therapeutic aspects of the child/mother relationship**


**Session IV  Fairbairn’s theory of the schizoid personality**

Recommended


Session V Toward a Relational Theory of the Personality

3) Sutherland, J. *Fairbairn’s Journey to the Interior*, pp. 118-130.

Session VI Structural and Clinical Implications of Fairbairn’s Theory


Session VII An Overview of Klein’s Theory


Recommended


Session VIII Bion Theory and Practice


Session IX  Winnicott on transitional objects and countertransference


Session X  Winnicott on the mother/child couple


Session XI  Object Usage and True and False Self

Session XII  Fairbairn and Winnicott in the Analytic Setting


Session XIII  Guntrip on the Theory and Technical Problems of Schizoid Phenomena


Session XIV  Balint on Deficits


Session XV  Phillips on Kindness and Aggression