No one involved in the planning or presentation of this course (activity) has any relevant financial relationships with a commercial interest to disclose.

“It was a great honor to be invited to re-consider Kohut's contributions to interpretation, 25 years after his death. . . . I was excited but daunted, for a great deal of what Kohut taught is now seamlessly woven into the fabric of my clinical sensibility. The empathic-introspective stance, the selfobject concept, the experience-near perspective, his understanding of how personality is organized, the pacing of interpretations—all of these concepts are implicitly integrated into the clinical work that I do. . . . The ideas that follow about patient–analyst interaction owe an incalculable debt to Kohut. Yet, although I am proud to link my clinical sensibility to Kohut's, and believe his understanding of the profound influence of the surround on all psychological experience is still not sufficiently recognized and credited, my dyadic, intersubjective systems (Stolorow 1997) perspective goes beyond Kohut's theoretical conceptualizations. A wealth of self psychological post-Kohutian contributions have influenced me. . .”


Prior to our interest in contemporary psychoanalysis, many of us in the mental health field were trained with a general, often un-articulated, theoretical orientation towards classical psychoanalytic theory and one of its derivatives, ego psychology. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, there were two major disruptions to this theoretical hegemony in the United States, Self Psychology and the expanding influence of Relational theories. This core course is devoted to an examination of the writings of Heinz Kohut, the founder of self psychology, and those who have been inspired by Kohut's theories to carry them forward in a wide variety of directions since his death.

When Kohut died in 1981, his ideas were still regarded as heretical by much of the American psychoanalytic establishment. And rightly so! For the significance of his theories about the psychology of the self lay not only in the new paradigms they presented for the clinician's work, but also in the many venerated classical paradigms they slowly, at times reluctantly, but in the end inexorably, came to reject. On reflection, it is little wonder that we who received “orthodox” (that is, sanctioned by the American Psychoanalytic Association) training in the mid-1980s were not offered even elective opportunities to study Kohut until we were “safely” in our third year as candidates (and that was a major concession). Nor was it surprising that even at the beginning of the 1990s, when ICP was founded by analysts committed to including core courses on self psychology and intersubjectivity theory in our curriculum, we were derisively ridiculed for having created an institute of supportive psychotherapy rather than a site for rigorous psychoanalytic training.

The transformation of self psychology from what the world of American psychoanalysis regarded as a subversive betrayal of Freud into one of the major currents of contemporary analytic thinking did not happen overnight. Nor are the results of that transformation necessarily static. In this course, we will track the unfolding of Kohut's ideas by reading the papers and monographs that marked his gradual public exposition of a new way to conceptualize the methodology and goals of analytic treatment. At the same time, we wish to examine Kohut's legacy to see what the position of self psychology is in today's world of contemporary psychoanalysis. Some wonder whether, in fact, its time has passed and its position in the core curriculum is no longer merited. As the quotation from Shelley R. Doctors above suggests, however, self psychology has become so integral a part of contemporary psychoanalysts' theoretical assumptions and clinical experience, that it may be in fact more necessary than ever before for us to be aware of the historical contexts shaping it, and its current
possibilities and limitations. (Doctors is the recent past president of the International Association for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology.)

SCHEDULE

You may wish to use some pre-Semester time getting started on The Restoration of the Self. (Since we will be reading both The Restoration of the Self and How Does Analysis Cure? in their entirety, you may wish to purchase one or both of them ahead of time.)

Please note that you have regular assigned readings that we will be discussing when classes begin on September 24.

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Readings for 9/24~25/2016 Contexts and Texts

The first two Kohut articles, "Introspection, Empathy and Psychoanalysis—An Examination of the Relationship between Mode of Observation and Theory" (1959) and "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism" (1966), are seminal (and frankly, harder to understand than later presentations of Kohut's ideas – don't worry about this), but are equally of interest as reflections of the agony Kohut felt instigating what would become a serious theoretical break with ego psychology and the psychoanalytic establishment. Kohut's reluctance to surrender the language and conceptualizations of classical analysis, and his place in the elite leadership of American psychoanalysis, is reflected in his cautious, even tortured, efforts to pour the new wine of self psychology into the old bottles of classical theory. This reluctance helps account for the great difficulty in understanding the radical message he was communicating in his writings prior to the 1970s (although the Kohut [1968] article is a bit easier). The dual contexts furnished by Kohut's personal and professional lives and his theories are inextricably linked, and understanding something of the former will help us to understand more of the latter. So, our first weekend (9/24~25) will look both at Kohut the man and Kohut, the author of the theories of self psychology. We start with Geoffrey Cocks' introduction to Kohut's correspondence. Then, before plunging into early Kohut density, it's helpful to begin with the Geist (2009) introduction to self psychology theory. The Curtis article gives a sense of the theoretical context in which self psychology emerged, defended itself, and grew.

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I(A) Contexts


I(B) Texts


Our second (11/5~11/6) and third (12/10~12/11) weekends will focus on a discussion of Kohut’s work between 1972 and 1979, most prominently marked by the publication of The Restoration of the Self in 1977.

II(A)(B) Readings for the second weekend: (11/5~11/6)

Optional: Heinz Kohut (1971), The Analysis of the Self. This book is difficult to navigate, and is therefore not assigned. I plan to discuss the book’s contents in some detail, so that you won’t need to read it for this course unless you wish to. Kohut (1972) below is in some ways an abridged version.


III(A)(B) Readings for the third weekend (12/10~12/11):


IV(A)(B) Reading for the fourth weekend (1/28~1/29/2017):

Heinz Kohut (1984), How Does Analysis Cure?, University of Chicago Press, ALL.

V(A)(B) Readings for the fifth weekend (3/25~26):

The final one-third of the course addresses certain aspects of the development of self psychology since Kohut’s death in 1981. Kohut’s work attracted the attention of many bright and creative psychoanalysts who were thereafter regarded as self psychologists,
but during the 1980s and early 1990s, many of them began building on his work to move in directions of their own. In some instances, they continued to regard themselves as adherents to Kohut's ideas; in other instances, they came to distinguish their work from Kohut's, even while acknowledging his impact on the formation and re-formulation of their identities. In following the world of post-Kohut self psychology for the final two weekends, we will draw selectively from a pool of authors who include, from ICP, Bacal, Brandchaft, Coburn, Shane and Shane, and Stolorow, and from beyond our own local ranks, Fosshage, the Ornstein(s), and the Tolpins. While far from being all-inclusive, their work demonstrates the breadth of the living legacy of self psychology at the cutting edge of contemporary psychoanalytic thought, at ICP, in the United States, and abroad—G. Berger

V(A) Overviews of post-Kohutian Self Psychology


V(B) Selected “Must Read” Contributions to Self Psychology


VI(A) Readings for the sixth weekend (5/6~5/7):

VI(A) Important New Currents in 21st Century Psychoanalysis: Changing Views on Self Psychology as a Two-Person Theory


VI(B) More Important New Currents in 21st Century Psychoanalysis


Magid, Barry and Estelle Shane (unpub.), “What Self Psychology and Relationality Can Learn from Each Other.”