

**Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis  
American Relational Theory**

**Instructors: Ilene Philipson, PhD, PhD; Ginna Clark, MA**

**Time: Fridays 2:30-5:00, Saturdays 2:30-5:00**

**Dates: 9/15, 9/16, 10/27, 10/28, 12/8, 12/9/17, 1/26, 1/27, 3/23, 3/24, 5/4, 5/5/18**

**Total Hours: 2 ½ hours x 12 classes = 30 hours**

**Course Description**

**“If the goal of psychoanalysis in Freud’s day was rational understanding and control over fantasy-driven, conflictual impulses, the goal of psychoanalysis in our day is most often thought about in terms of the establishment of a richer, more authentic sense of self. . . , a revitalization and expansion of [the patient’s] own capacity to generate experience that feels real, meaningful, and valuable.”**

**----*Stephen Mitchell***

**In *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis* (1993), Stephen Mitchell points out that the relational turn in psychoanalysis is characterized as both a revolution in understanding what our patients need, and in what the analyst knows. Increasingly over the latter half of the twentieth century, therapists have been confronted with patients who come to our offices with complaints of feeling unfulfilled, alone, dissatisfied, without meaning, fearful, anxious, unsuccessful. It is unusual to be asked to treat specific symptoms in the manner that Freud typically found himself employed. Working toward the “establishment of a richer, more authentic sense of self” is a far cry from the hysterical symptoms upon which Freud built his revolutionary technique called the talking cure.**

**Simultaneously, in our postmodern age characterized by uncertainty, distrust of authority, and the overthrow of grand narratives and universal truths, what the analyst knows has become suspect. For these reasons and others (e.g., the increasing authority of biological understandings of the mind, managed care, the oversupply of psychotherapists, the feminization of the field, the rise of evidence based treatment), our authority as psychoanalytic clinicians has been diminished. We start from assumptions that the fundamental nature of human experience is ambiguous, and that we, as mere mortals, can never know with certainty the meaning of either our own or others’ motivations.**

**Because of these twin transformations in what we believe patients need and what therapists are capable of knowing, our understanding of how to act and to be in the consulting room has become an intense object of theoretical interest in the Relational literature. This class then is intended to explore the multiple ways Relational theorists conceptualize the therapeutic encounter, therapeutic action, and the process of change.**

## Course Learning Objectives

The overall objective of this course is to allow candidates to listen, formulate and assess, work through and apply Relational thinking in their clinical work. Specifically candidates should be able to:

1. Assess the differences between models of the mind that see the self as unified as opposed to those that see it as multiply constituted.
2. Define dialectical constructivism.
3. Evaluate the role of interpretation from a Relational perspective.
4. Elucidate both how dissociated self-states in both patient and therapist are enacted in the therapeutic relationship and how such enactment can be constitutive of therapeutic action.
5. Explain how the creation of the analytic third enables movement through a treatment impasse.
6. Assess the ways in which implicit relational knowing are foundational to therapeutic action.
7. Delineate the ways in which the assumption of the therapist's co-creation of the therapeutic encounter differs from an objectivist stance toward the patient.
8. Evaluate the claim that "if a patient's life has been hell. . . then I sure expect their analysis to be hell, and [the analyst will] have to burn there with them, as their tormentor, fellow sufferer, witness, and rescuer."
9. Describe the benefits and limitation of empathy defined as "vicarious introspection."
10. Explain in what ways "holding" and "attunement" may be illusions held by the therapist.

## Class Goals and Readings

9/15/17: Stephen Mitchell:

9/16/17: The Foundations of Relational Theory

The objective of our first class will be to examine the origins of Relational theory in Object Relations, Interpersonalism, Self-Psychology, second-wave feminism, and postmodernism.

Our second class will focus on Mitchell's delineation of analytic attitude, dialectical thinking, tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, continuous curiosity and evaluation of the analyst's contribution to the intersubjective experience. Contrasting his work with that of self psychologist, Anna Ornstein's, will highlight how relational thinking is put into practice.

**Readings:**

Stephen Mitchell, *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis* (1988). Emphasis will be on Chapters 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10.

Anna Ornstein, "The Fate of Narcissistic Rage in Psychotherapy," *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* (1998); pp. 55-70.

Stephen Mitchell, "Commentary on Case," *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* (1998); pp. 89-99.

**10/27/17: Jessica Benjamin: Recognition, Intersubjectivity, and the Third**

The objective of this class is to apprehend the contribution of feminism to Relational theory, and understand Benjamin's concepts of the third, intersubjectivity, split complementarity, recognition and negation.

**Readings:**

Jessica Benjamin, "An Outline of Intersubjectivity: The Development of Recognition," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* (1990), pp.33-46.

Jessica Benjamin, "Beyond Doer and Done To: An Intersubjective View of Thirdness," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* (2004); pp. 5-46.

Stephen Mitchell, "Juggling Paradoxes: Commentary on the Work of Jessica Benjamin," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* (2000); pp. 251-269.

**10/28/17: Lewis Aron: The Third, Mutuality**

The objective of this class is to glean how Benjamin's concept of the third can be used in the resolution of analytic impasse. Aron sets forth what has become the basic understanding of the Relational frame and technique that is founded in mutuality and asymmetry, empathy and confrontation. His discussion of Weisel-Bath's case demonstrates how these dialectical concepts are used clinically.

**Readings:**

Lewis Aron, "Analytic Impasse and the Third: Clinical Implications of Intersubjectivity Theory," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2006); pp. 349-368.

Lewis Aron, "Aspects of Mutuality in Clinical Psychoanalysis," in Aron's *A Meeting of Minds: Mutuality in Psychoanalysis* (1996); pp. 123-158.

Joye Weisel-Barth, "The Case of Patient J," *Progress in Self Psychology* (2003); pp. 199-206.

Lewis Aron, "A Ruthless Examination of an Empathic Clinical Presentation: A Discussion of Joye Weisel-Barth's Clinical Case," *Progress in Self Psychology* (2003); pp. 207-216.

**12/8/17: Irwin Hoffman: Social-constructivism, Uncertainty, Hermeneutics**

Irwin Hoffman's critique of analytic neutrality and objectivism, and his formulation of dialectical constructivism are intrinsic building blocks of the Relational canon. After this weekend, candidates should be familiar with the ways in which the analyst can never fully know his/her contribution to the analytic encounter, the ways in which our understanding of our patients is the product of co-construction rather than discovery, the myth of free association, and how the frame and technique of psychoanalysis shifts between ritual and spontaneity.

**Readings:**

Irwin Hoffman, "Some Practical Implications of a Social-Constructivist View of the Psychoanalytic Situation," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (1992); pp. 287-304. Also Chpt.6 in Hoffman's *Ritual and Spontaneity*.

Irwin Hoffman, "The Myths of Free Association and the Potentials of the Analytic Relationship," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2006); pp. 43-61.

Peter Fonagy, "Miss A," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2004); pp. 807-814.

Irwin Hoffman, "Commentary 2," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2004); pp. 817-822.

**12/9/17: Donnel Stern: Hermeneutics, Unformulated Experience, Dissociation**

Donnel Stern has reformulated the concepts of the unconscious and repression with unformulated experience and disassociation, fundamental contributions to Relational theory. This class' objective is to understand and assess this reformulation and grasp Stern's goal for analytic treatment: the achievement of internal conflict over dissociative enactment.

**Readings:**

**Donnel Stern, “The Embodiment of Meaning in Relatedness,” in Stern’s *Partners in Thought* (2010); pp. 1-24.**

**Donnel Stern, “The Eye Sees Itself: Dissociation, Enactment, and Understanding,” in Stern’s *Partners in Thought* (2010); pp. 71-105.**

**Donnel Stern, “Opening What Has Been Closed, Relaxing What Has Been Clenched: Dissociation and Enactment Over Time in Committed Relationships,” in Stern’s *Partners in Thought* (2010); pp. 147-160.**

**1/26/18: Philip Bromberg: Multiple Self States, Trauma, Dissociation, Enactment**

**Philip Bromberg formulates the ways in which the mind is not unitary but multiple and how the goal of treatment rests in the capacity to hold multiple self-states in mind without disassociating. Bromberg delineates the ways in which trauma gives rise to disassociative “not-me” states that can only be resolved through the working through of enactments.**

**Readings:**

**Philip Bromberg, “Standing in the Spaces: The Multiplicity of Self and the Psychoanalytic Relationship,” in Bromberg’s *Standing in The Spaces* (1998), pp. 267-290).**

**Philip Bromberg, “Introduction: When Reality Blinks,” in Bromberg’s *Awakening the Dreamer* (2006); pp. 1-27.**

**Philip Bromberg, “The Gorilla Did it’: Thoughts on the Real and Really Real,” in Bromberg’s *Awakening the Dreamer*” (2006); pp. 65-82.**

**Philip Bromberg, “Shrinking the Tsunami: Affect Regulation, Dissociation, and the Shadow of the Flood,” *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (2008); pp. 329-350.**

**1/27/18: Darlene Ehrenberg: The Intimate Edge**

**The objective of this class will be to learn how Darlene Ehrenberg works in the here and now to effect therapeutic change. Through keen attention to both patient and analyst’s moment-to-moment alteration in affect and speech, analysts can use**

the transference-countertransference matrix for understanding, interpreting, confronting and containing.

**Readings:**

All readings will be from Darlene Ehrenberg, *The Intimate Edge: Extending the Reach of Psychoanalytic Interaction* (1992).

Chpt. 1

Chpt. 3

Chpt. 5

Chpt. 8

Chpt. 10

**3/23/18: Jody Davies: Self-Disclosure, Enactment, Analyst's Experience**

The objective of this class is to grasp how this one article of Jody Davies consolidated, demonstrated, and elaborated the basic tenets of the analytic paradigm as it had been evolving throughout the 1990s. In this exquisite case study, Davies highlights the analyst's contribution to impasse and utilizes Fairbairn's moral defense to elucidate how patients can sacrifice their sanity to feel loved, and forgo love to remain sane.

**Readings:**

Jody Davies, "Whose Bad Objects Are We Anyway?: Repetition and Our Elusive Love Affair with Evil," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2004); pp. 711-732.

Peter Fonagy & Mary Target, "Relationships to Bad Objects: Relationships to Bad Objects: Repetition or Current Self-Disorganization?: Commentary on Paper by Jody Davies," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2004); pp. 733-741.

Jessica Benjamin, "Escape from the Hall of Mirrors: Commentary on Paper by Jody Davies," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2004); pp. 743-753.

Jody Davies, "Reply to Commentaries," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2004); pp. 756-767.

**3/24/18: Sex and Gender**

In contrast to Object Relations, Self Psychology, and Intersubjective Systems Theory, Relational theory has contributed significantly to our contemporary understandings of sex and gender, subjects that formerly were at the core of psychoanalysis. Through reading four of the foremost contributors, we can grasp

**Relationalists' reworking of gender development, homosexuality, perversion, erotic subjectivity, and the dynamic role sex plays in our clinical work.**

**Readings:**

**Adrienne Harris, "Gender as Soft Assembly: Tomboys' Stories," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, (2000), pp. 223-250.**

**Virginia Goldner, "Ironic Gender/Authentic Sex," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* (2003), pp. 113-139.**

**Ken Corbett, "Faggot=Loser," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* (2001), pp. 3-28.**

**Muriel Dimen, "Perversion Is Us?: Eight Notes," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2001), pp. 825-860.**

**5/4/18: Relational Theory in Context**

**The objective of this class is to highlight the contexts in which Relational theory has been constructed. Candidates should understand that Relationality has been formulated by theorists living and practicing in a particular historical period. The class will utilize the work of various thinkers to explicate how particular contexts, e.g. postmodernism, neoliberalism, feminization, have affected and also been affected by Relational thinking.**

**Readings:**

**Stephen Mitchell, *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis* (1993).**

**Chpt. 1**

**Chpt. 2**

**Chpt. 3**

**Lynne Layton, "Dialectical Constructivism in Historical Context: Expertise and the Subject of Late Modernity," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2013); pp. 271-286.**

**Ilene Philipson, "Reupholstering the Couch: Women and the Refashioning of Psychoanalysis," in Philipson's *On the Shoulders of Women: the Feminization of Psychotherapy* (1993); pp. 108-136.**

**5/5/18: Conclusion**

**This class will be devoted to each candidate making a 10-15 minute presentation on how this class has and has not affected your thinking about contemporary psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice. Your presentation will be an opportunity for you to compare and contrast your thinking about Relationality with what you have learned in your other courses this year: Object Relations, Self Psychology and Intersubjective Systems Theory.**