

Gender and Sexuality

Fall 2019/Winter Trimester, 2020

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Course Description

This nine-week course is designed to give participants an overview of contemporary psychoanalytic theory and practice in the broad field of gender and sexuality. The evolution of psychoanalytic thought in the context of changes in society over the past half century will be illuminated as the following topics are explored: developmental aspects of psychosexuality and gender identity; homosexuality; transgender identifications; sexuality as an embodied experience; and perversion.

Learning Objectives:

1. Through gaining an understanding of how psychoanalytic theory and practice regarding gender and sexuality have evolved over the past half century, clinical associates will be able to provide more sensitive and relevant treatment.
2. While gaining knowledge regarding contemporary theories of psychosexual development, homosexuality, transgender experience, perversion and sexuality as an embodied experience, students will have an opportunity to deepen their philosophical understanding of how individuals, groups and society at large determine what is considered normal versus what is considered pathological. Such an understanding will allow clinical associates to listen to patient material with sensitivity to cultural blind spots which will increase treatment effectiveness.
3. Readings represent a broad range of clinical approaches and theory. Students will be encouraged to discuss their own clinical experiences. As a result, students will be better able to respond flexibly and creatively to their patient's material regarding gender and sexuality. Specifically, class discussion will include a consideration of different types of intervention which is informed by our study of gender and sexuality.

Reading Assignments:

Readings are available on PEP web. Those marked 'Hand Out' will be provided to you.

Week 1:

Introduction

This session will provide an introductory framework for the course. We will consider historical influences on the development of psychoanalytic theorizing on sexuality and gender identity. In addition, we will take time to determine individual learning objectives for members of the class.

Muriel Dimen and Virginia Goldner (2011). Gender and Sexuality, chapter 10 in *Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, second edition, pp. 133-152 (Hand out)

Nancy Chodorow (2011). Freud's Three Essays on Sexuality, chapter 4 of her book *Individualizing Gender and Sexuality*, pp 26-39. (Hand out)

Recommended:

Dagmar Herzog (2015) What happened to psychoanalysis in the wake of the sexual revolution? Chapter 1 Pages 19-40 in *Sexualities, contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, Edited by Alessandra Lemma and Paul E Lynch (Hand Out)

Week 2:

Psychosexual Development and Gender Identity

The development of sexual and gender identities have played a prominent role in psychoanalytic theory. In this class, we will consider revisions in psychoanalytic conceptualizations of how these core components of identity develop. Chodorow suggests that because heterosexuality is taken for granted as the outcome of normal psychosexual development that it has been insufficiently theorized. She makes her case by contrasting this approach to sexual identity development with that of homosexuality which has largely been viewed a symptom and considers the symptomatic aspects of heterosexuality. Target builds on earlier work with Fonagy which suggested that sexuality is no longer the primary basis and driver of character development and psychopathology. Target asserts that conscious and unconscious attachment needs are not only central in personality development, but also set the stage for psychosexual identity, erotic fantasy, and pleasure.

Nancy Chodorow (1992) Heterosexuality as a Compromise formation: Reflections on the Psychoanalytic Theory of sexual development. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 15: 267-304

Mary Target (2015). A developmental model of sexual excitement, desire and alienation. Chapter 2 pp 43-62 in *Sexualities, Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, Edited by Alessandra Lemma and Paul E Lynch (HAND OUT)

Recommended:

Adrienne Harris (2000). Gender as a Soft Assembly: Tomboys' stories. *Studies in gender and Sexuality* 1: 223-250

Week 3:

Homosexuality

Psychoanalysis has had a difficult history with regard to the conceptualization and treatment of persons with same gender sexual object choice. Contemporary views of homosexuality emphasize the meanings and experience of desire rather than the psychopathological origins of homosexual desire. Consequently, we will consider some unique aspects of the pathway to and experience of same gender

object choice. Elise operates from two primary assumptions: innate bisexuality and that the mother is the first love object for both girls and boys. Elise's ideas have implications for women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual. In a clinically oriented paper, Phillips provides an example of a nuanced theory regarding some unique dynamics of gay male development.

Diane Elise (2002). The primary maternal oedipal situation and female homoerotic desire. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 22(20): 209-228

Sidney H. Phillips (2001) The overstimulation of everyday life: 1. New aspects of male homosexuality. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 49: 1235-1267

Recommended:

Adrienne Rich. (1980) Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. In *Feminism and Sexuality*, Edited by Jackson and Scott, 1996. (Hand Out)

Ralph Roughton (2000). Sometimes a desire is just a desire: Gay men and their analysts. *Gender and Sexuality*, 5(3): 259-273.

Week 4:

Sexuality and Gender as an Embodied Experience

The focus of this session is on the manner in which the body mediates and influences our experience of our gender and sexuality. Benjamin and Atlas look at the relationship between sexual excitement and early affect regulation, showing how excitement becomes dangerous, thus impeding or distorting desire. Working with Laplanche's theory of infantile sexuality, Saketopoulou suggests that the sexuality of suffering is developmentally rooted in early interactions with caregivers.

Jessica Benjamin and Galit Atlas (2015) The 'too muchness' of excitement: Sexuality in light of excess, attachment and affect regulation. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2015) 96:39-63 (Hand Out)

Avii Saketopolu (2018) The Draw to Overwhelm: Consent, Risk, and the Re-translation of Enigma. Unpublished paper presented at the International Association of Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy. (Hand Out).

Recommended:

Rosemary Balsam (2013). (Re)membering the Female Body in Psychoanalysis: Childbirth. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 61/3: 447-470 (Handout)

Week 5:

Gender

Judith Butler (1995). Gender melancholia: Refused identification. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 5(2), 165-180.

Adam Phillips (1995). Keeping it moving: Commentary on Butler's Gender melancholia. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 5(2), 181-188.

Week 6:

Transgender

For the non-transgender analyst, there are few subjective experiences more difficult to understand in the consulting room. In this session, we will look at a broad, social constructivist view of transgender phenomena provided by Goldner. To compliment this approach, Lemma provides a developmental model for understanding transgenderism which is rooted in attachment and object relations theory. In addition, she offers a clinical example for working with these issues in treatment.

Alessandra Lemma (2013). The body one has and the body one is: Understanding the transsexual's need to be seen. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 94:277-292 (Hand Out)

Virginia Goldner (2011) Trans: Gender in Free Fall. Presenter Virginia Goldner. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 21:159-171.

Recommended:

Griffin Hansbury. (2011) King Kong and Golilocks: Imagining Transmasculinities through the Trans-Trans Dyad. *Psychoanalytic dialogues*, 21:210-220.

Melanie Suchet (2011) Crossing Over. *Psychoanalytic dialogues*, 21:172-191.

Week 7:

Perversion

How do we determine healthy from pathological sexuality when thinking about perversion? What do we do clinically when confronted with the sexuality of our patients that challenge our own beliefs and experiences? Both readings for this session will provide an opportunity to consider these questions in some depth.

Avgi Saketopoulou (2015). On sexual perversions' capacity to act as portal to psychic states that have evaded representation. Chapter 11 in *Sexualities, contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspectives* ed Alessandra Lemma and Paul E. Lynch pp 203-217 (Hand Out)

Muriel Dimen (2001). Perversion is Us? Eight Notes. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 11:825-860.

Recommended:

Otto Kernberg (1991) Sadomasochism, Sexual Excitement, and Perversion *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 39:333-362

Joyce McDougall (1986) Identification, Neoneeds and Neosexualities. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 67:19-30

Week 8:

Application to Case Material

In this session, we will select two cases from class member and spend extended time applying the ideas we have studied thus far to the case material.

Week 9:

To Be Determined

Given the dynamic nature and cultural change around issues of gender and sexuality, we will leave this lack week open before selecting readings. We will allow the evolution of the class and resulting interests and needs of class members to inform our selection of the readings for our final session together.