



COMMUNITY

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY
FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPIES

Syllabus:

Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis

Kevin R. Smith and Laure Swearingen

April 14, 2026

Time: 6:15 pm – 9 pm

Seminar

2.75 CE Credits

Fee: Free to Members; Pay-What-You Can Model to Non-Members per our
Seminar Series Guidelines

For general programming questions email: inquiries@wpacommunity.org

Description: John Bowlby's attachment theory represents an important turn in psychoanalytic ideas about development. Attachment theory also represents a new emphasis upon the scientific examination of emotional life in human relationships, an emphasis that is not always easily integrated with classic views of the mind derived from clinical experience in the consulting room. This class will provide an overview of attachment theory, of secure and insecure forms of attachment, and of a few representative samples of attachment research. While many have written about the value of attachment theory for therapeutic practice, there is no "school" of attachment therapy. We'll examine some of the implications of attachment theory for therapy that are outlined in Jeremy Holmes paper, "Attachment theory and psychoanalysis: A rapprochement."

Required Readings:

Holmes, J. (2000). Attachment theory and psychoanalysis: A rapprochement. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 17, 157-172.

Smith, K. R. Handout on attachment classifications (1 page)

Smith, K. R. Handout: Three classes on attachment theory, mentalization, and shared intentionality. (5 pages)

Eliza-Christie, A. Handout: What is analytic listening? (1 page)

Recommended Readings:

Castellano, R. (2025). The psychoanalytic facet of attachment theory and research: “Behind” and “beyond” attachment disorganization. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 42, 199-206.

Doi.org/10.1037/pap0000556 (This paper examines the relevance of infant research and attachment theory to theories of psychopathology, with a clinical vignette that applies these ideas to a couple’s relationship.)

Karen, R. (2018). Review of: *Attachment across clinical and cultural perspectives: A relational psychoanalytic approach*. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 105, 237-248. (A review of an edited book on attachment theory and psychoanalysis that begins with a brief history of the relationship between the two, followed by a summary of the book’s chapters that provides some perspective on the range of topics that arise at the intersection of attachment theory and psychoanalysis.)

Seligman, S. (2017). Recognition and reflection in infancy and psychotherapy: Convergences of attachment research with psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 37, 298-308.

Doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2017.1322424 (Seligman summarizes the relationship between attachment theory, mentalization theory, object relations theory, contemporary relational psychoanalysis, and infant observational research—with some illustrative clinical vignettes.)

Program Objectives:

Learners will be able to:

- 1) Describe the scientific rationale for attachment theory.
- 2) Identify different forms of attachment relationships (secure attachment and the three principle forms of insecure attachment).
- 3) Utilize attachment concepts in assessing therapeutic relational patterns and describe their implications for attunement to process and content.

Kevin Smith is a psychodynamic psychotherapist in independent practice and Adjunct Associate Professor of Psychology at Duquesne University. He has worked in a variety of clinical settings, including as a therapist in multi-site studies on the efficacy of psychotherapy. He currently supervises the psychotherapy training of psychiatry residents and doctoral students in clinical psychology. He is the author of two books on the distinct ethical aims of different schools of therapy, *The Ethical Visions of Psychotherapy* and *Therapeutic Ethics in Context and in Dialogue*.

Laure Swearingen is a licensed psychologist in private practice. Her interest in attachment stems from graduate research work on a couple of projects that studied various aspects of how attachment is expressed in different relationships, particularly in preschool and school aged populations; this included training in the measurement/coding of attachment in preschoolers. Laure was in the first two year program cohort.

For additional information on the background and experience of the speakers, or to request the speaker's CV, please contact inquiries@wpacommunity.org or see our faculty section on our website at www.wpacommunity.org

Who Should Attend and Instructional Level of Activity: Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors with interest in advancing their understanding and application of contemporary psychoanalytic concepts. Instructional level is suited for practicing mental health clinicians. Intermediate level of instructional programming.

Continuing Education Credits: 2. *The Western Pennsylvania Community for Psychoanalytic Therapies is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Western Pennsylvania Community for Psychoanalytic Therapies maintains responsibility for this program and its content.*

Attendance: To receive continuing education credit, you must sign in and be present for the entire seminar. You will be asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the session.

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