COMMUNITY
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPIES

Syllabus:

Exploring situatedness and thinking critically about psychoanalysis

"We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context', positioned."

"The displacement of the 'centered' discourses of the West entails putting in question its universalist character and its transcendental claims to speak for everyone, while being itself everywhere and nowhere."

[Stuart Hall, Cultural Identity and Diaspora]

Speaker: Patricia Donohue, PhD
Date: Tuesday 14 October 2025
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: This class serves as an introduction to critical thinking about psychoanalysis. The quotes from Stuart Hall capture two interrelated dimensions of this critical work. In the first, Hall brings to mind the fact that we are all located in geographies and histories (places and stories both singular and shared); embedded in cultures (webs of languages, values and meanings); and situated at social, political and economic intersections. These complex dimensions of reality deeply inform and restrict what we perceive and know and feel and desire, both consciously and unconsciously. Especially unconsciously. The second reminds us that the authoritative voices in psychoanalysis have until recently been Western (white European and American, mostly men) and continue to be privileged by social class. How can we

expand our awareness of these complexities in ways that deepen our explorations of self and others? How can this awareness provide a basis for critical thinking about the implicit, unconscious assumptions of psychoanalytic thinking and practice? How is our awareness enriched and expanded when we 'decenter' normative experiences and learn with and from voices speaking critically from the margins?

Program Objectives:

At the end of the program, participants will be able to:

1. Work with the concepts of embeddedness, locatedness, and situatedness in thinking about the self and others, the possibilities and limits of interpersonal understanding, the partiality of knowledge claims, and the importance of learning with and from each other.

2. Functionally define concepts of the social/normative unconscious and explore their explanatory power in relation to situatedness

3. Engage in the practice of critical reflexivity through a brief writing exercise and discussion modeled by the writings of L.S. Crane, A.L. Jones and B. Burch.

References/Readings (see note below about number of readings):

Required:

1. Crane, L. S. (2020). Invisible: A mixt Asian woman's efforts to see and be seen in psychoanalysis. Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 21(2), 127-135.
2. Jones, A. L. (2020). A Black woman as an American analyst: Some observations from one woman's life over four decades. Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 21(2), 77-84.
3. Burch, B. (2021). Engaging the whitewashed countertransference: Race unexpectedly appears for therapy. Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 31(1), 28-37.

Supplemental (we will use these in class)

4. Dajani, K. G. (2022). The social unconscious: Then and now. International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, 19(2), 179-186.
5. Layton, L. (2006). Attacks on linking: The unconscious pull to dissociate individuals from their social context. In Psychoanalysis, class and politics (pp. 107-117). Routledge.
6. Aron, L. (2000). Self-reflexivity and the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic psychology, 17(4), 667.

The Speaker: I think, teach, and learn at the intersections of feminist philosophy, gender studies, and psychology. I am preoccupied with themes of embodiment, social location, and enactments of power, and the ways these inform, enable, constrict, and deform knowing and feeling. Within the last decade, I have been immersed in critical whiteness studies, reflecting on

the emergence of gendered and racialized subjectivities within racist and sexist social/cultural worlds. I currently teach courses in culture and identity, and ethics in the Counseling Psychology program at Chatham University, Pittsburgh.

For additional information on the background and experience of the speaker, 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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