COMMUNITY
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPIES

Syllabus:

A Cultural Context for Psychoanalysis

Speaker: Kevin R. Smith
Date: April 15, 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
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Description: In prior classes we have examined the ways in which socio-cultural contexts promulgate demands for people to shape themselves according to particular norms, often impeding their capacity to live an authentic life. But the ideal of authenticity also has a socio-cultural context. In today's class we are going to look at one thread in the complex weave of Western culture that has given rise to an ethic of authenticity, an ethic that is often valorized in psychoanalysis. We'll examine the cultural location of this ethic cross-culturally (especially in comparison with contemporary China) and historically (looking at the rise of a deep interest in emotional introspection in the modern West). We'll broach some of the questions this raises about the role that psychoanalysis plays in promoting particular cultural values while also challenging other contemporary norms.

Program Objectives:

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

1. Discuss the different attitudes toward affective attunement in Chinese and Euro-American childrearing practices.
2. Briefly describe the rise in early Western modernity of two values that support psychoanalytic aims: affectionate bonds in family life and individualistic personal expression in the arts.
3. Identify how psychoanalysis, as culturally located and influenced, promotes ideals that are themselves culturally specific.

Required Readings:

1. Harlem, A. (2009). Thinking through others: Cultural psychology and the psychoanalytic treatment of immigrants. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, *14*, 273-288.

2. Smith, K. R. (2025). Psychoanalytic aims and psychological health: Illustrative Quotations.

Optional readings:

Gone, J. P. (2021). The (post)colonial predicament in community mental health services for American Indians: Exploration in alter-native psy-ence. *American Psychologist*, *76*, 1514-1525.

Hamamura, T., Chen, Z., Chan, C. S., Chen, S. X., & Kobayashi, T. (2021). Individualism with Chinese characteristics? Discerning cultural shifts in China using 50 years of printed texts. *American Psychologist*, *76*, 888-903.

Levine, H. B. (2016). Uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts: Romanticism and the analytic attitude. By Robert Snell. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *85*, 242-247.

The Speaker

Dr. Smith is a psychodynamic psychotherapist 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*.

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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