Mourning as transformation: the creative edge of traumatic and "ordinary loss"
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Course Syllabus
This course focuses specifically on the dynamics of unresolved mourning in the consulting room. Freud’s view of mourning will be reviewed and reconsidered. For those of you unfamiliar with the basic literature on mourning a list of useful background readings* is included at the end of this syllabus. Art, film and literature references will be utilized during class to illustrate and enrich the psychoanalytic literature.

Week 1: Part A.
Grieving lessons for the analyst: the experience(s) of loss and mourning in and out of the consulting room

In order to engage and support the candidates’ confrontation with significant loss I begin by describing my clinical and community work with combat veterans, second -generation Holocaust survivors, and those with early and/or traumatic loss. A central aim of this mourning process is to help the patient surrender (Ghent) to the changes that loss brings. Candidates will be encouraged to discuss their personal encounters with and professional attitudes towards loss, death and mourning. Our discussion will attend to the difficulties working with extreme grief and loss. When relevant, I will address candidates’ concerns regarding personal exposure.

Required Reading and Viewing


Harris,A. (2009). “You Must Remember This”. Psychoanal.Dial., 19:2-
Suggested Readings

Week 1: Part B.
How unresolved mourning presents: a continuum from “everyday” to traumatic loss

The multiple (and sometimes co-existing) dynamic strategies used to cope with mourning will be discussed and illustrated with case material. These range from mild anxiety and/or depression to manic and/or dissociative responses, “rebellious” melancholia, the fracture of time and space, partial and/or indescribable memories, collapse of the third, psychic deadness, rigid adherence to ritual, and attempts at creative psychic transformations. The film, Manchester by the Sea as well as the Case of Miss A (Bassin, 2011) will be used to explore traumatic loss and its relationship to unresolved mourning in the context of more ordinary expectable losses. Candidates will be encouraged to raise relevant clinical vignettes.

Required Reading and Viewing

**Suggested Reading and Viewing**


**Week 2: The therapeutic and restorative aspects of non-analytic memorial spaces and aspects of “memorialization” in the clinical setting.**

A variety of public memorials, religious, and secular rituals of burial, mourning, and commemoration (e.g., the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial, the World Trade Memorial, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., The Day of the Dead, and *Shiva* ritual) will be psychoanalytically deconstructed in order to illuminate the needs of the mourner and the co-created strategies employed by patient and analyst to support mourning. We will explore the creative use of these kinds of structures and inter-subjective activities as they potentiate therapeutic action in the analytic dyad. The therapeutic function of collective memorial and traditional mourning rituals will be considered as they inform the
treatment process. Can we apply these rituals to therapeutic dialogue? Can we reinvent or creatively make them over? Using both my own case material and examples from candidates’ clinical experience, we will explore how to enhance the therapeutic processes central to work with unresolved mourning.

**Required Reading**


**Suggested Reading**


**Week 3: The re-instatement and co-creation of relational structures as they appear in treatment, dreams and artistic products**

In this final week, we will explore the emergence and continuities/ discontinuities of states of resilience, renewal/remembrance and despair/hopelessness/emptiness as they are enacted in the analytic dyad as well as in dreams and other artistic/literary production. Creative products and processes can represent attempts to contain experiences of loss that cannot be fully verbalized. They reflect the re-emergence of subjectivity, the re-integration of a new identity, as well as movement towards re-
engagement with others. The work of artists Kathe Kollwitz, Maya Linn, Shimon Attie, Horst Hoheisel and others will be examined and discussed. Their work represents attempts to create opportunities for re-integration and remembrance for themselves and others. Candidates will be required to re-visit a clinical case in light of new understanding and treatment of mourning.

**Required Reading**

**Suggested Reading**


**Background Readings**
