Gender as/in Psychoanalysis

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2 credits (divided into two 1 credit courses) spaced among four weekends over one year / meeting on Friday afternoon from 4:00PM-7:00PM and Sunday morning from 9:00AM to 12:30PM.

This seminar takes up psychoanalytic gender theory with an emphasis on relational psychoanalytic approaches to gender. At the same time, the course has as a meta-level of analysis, the study of gender’s role in the unfolding story of relational psychoanalysis. By examining how “gender” and “psychoanalysis” work hand in hand, we can frame a contemporary goal: to read current events informed by psychoanalytic gender theory so as to further elaborate relational gender theory in view of current events.

We will trace concepts that were deployed to describe gender and gender relations and at the same time, to summon evidence for the relational perspective about mind, body, and human relations. Further, by studying how gender was used in the formulation of a relational psychoanalysis, we will study how gender works as a bridge from the psychic to the social that positions psychoanalysts to participate in culture. Psychoanalysis and gender thus map the iteration of psychic and social structure in an effort to make sense of how bodies occupy personal, clinical, and political space.

We will also examine how the questionable materiality of gender comes to bear in psychoanalytic considerations of transgender experience as well as discussions about the online representation of the body and desire. In these recent debates, gender and psychoanalysis are once again partners in staking out mutually useful theoretical and political positions.

As a consequence of feminist and queer interventions in the discipline, psychoanalysis began to consider subjectivities that had heretofore been repressed or relegated to the liminal margins of white male privilege. Theoretical advances were grounded in this regard by the telling of clinical stories that included the personal reflections of no-longer tight-lipped clinicians. We will make a special effort to bring memoires and clinical material into our discussions so that postmodern positions about “the subject” can be reconciled with in-person subjectivities.
The course is divided into four sections. Rather than survey all the subtle transformations that occurred in the history of psychoanalytic gender theory to compose a master narrative, each section aims to study approaches to how to tell gender’s story. Please do not get bogged down in the intricacies of theory or the historical details unless they fascinate you (particularly for readings marked with an * that are rich in detail). Our goal is to examine ways gender has been used in order to think about what kind of work a psychoanalytic gender story can do.

1. gender’s history: fixed or fluid? (first weekend)

How does the concept “gender” come into psychoanalytic discourse, and how does the way theorists tell this history matter? How was gender put to use? And how do theoretical imperatives render gender to psychoanalysis?

a. composing a psychoanalytic history

_Dimen and Goldner and Corbett survey frameworks that psychoanalysts have used to describe gender as a path toward articulating their particular relational spin. In addition, by reading Starr and Aron’s account of gender’s emergence in clinical psychoanalysis, we will discuss how “gender stories” demarcate moments in psychoanalytic time. We will use Leavitt’s and Coates’ memoires, my clinical example, and Goldner’s blog post to ask how personal experience might best be used to foster interventions in the narrative of psychoanalysis?_


b. gender in use

_Historically, by studying how was gender being used to argue a psychoanalytic case, we can map gender’s usefulness to psychoanalysis. Ahmed's canny lecture is being used here to set a tone that is at once curious and subversive._


2. relational uses of gender (second weekend)

Psychological feminists advanced relational theory while advocating for clinical populations or dyadic pairings that might otherwise go un-served or unmarked for their particularity by the mainstream. The personal political expressly became part of the relational approach to gender.

a. gender relations

Accounting for others as subjects and objects.


b. gender states and the State of gender—intersectional encounters

The postmodernism suspicion of metanarratives led relational psychoanalysts to theorize gender in terms of shifting self-states and as one register in an intersectional view of the subject. Recently, political realities have led theorists to ask how intersectionality fares when threatened by ideology.


3. bodies that matter (third weekend)

As the materiality of the body becomes contested turf and biology is no longer destiny, links between gender and “the social” come increasingly into view.

a. unconscious bodies: sameness, difference, mystery, and lack

How bodies perform gender carries many legacies and traces psychic and social currents in the unconscious. How does gender’s unconscious life give psychoanalysis a self-conscious text?


b. rogue bodies

How does the Other-ed body look, feel, find itself among others as anything other than lacking? Adding to that inquiry, trans studies help us factor in the questionable materiality of the body.


4. **gender's currency (fourth weekend)**

Gender happens in a psychic economy and it works in a social economy based on neoliberal values of individualism and the renunciation of dependence. By contextualizing gender in material, social, political, racial, and tech contexts, how are our gender stories given a run for their money?

a. political gender

*As gender becomes a manner of engaging in the political world, how does it change the way we encounter bodies and choices about lifestyles? How is gender used to give psychoanalysts a political voice? In turn, how does that political voice open up new clinical space?*


b. Cybergender and the non-human

Gender enters the next frontier with a mix of excitement, trepidation and, once again, wrangles with the problem of lack. What role ought psychoanalysis play in a post-gender / post-human world?


