

COURSE OUTLINE
COMPARING MODELS OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY
FROM DIFFERENT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Steven H. Knoblauch Ph.D.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course consists of a review of different theories of intersubjectivity with emphasis on clinical utility. The first part of the course consists of readings from theorists who have had a significant influence on the conceptualization of intersubjectivity in psychoanalysis from several different theoretical perspectives. The second and third parts of the course consist of readings by authors involved in comparative analysis. The fourth part introduces a field model of intersubjectivity strongly in use in parts of Europe and South America. The course will cycle through and recycle various approaches to comparative intersubjectivity based on a variety of different standards for comparison. These standards will include philosophical, empirical and clinical considerations for reading and evaluating the various models. Part II of the course focuses on models of intersubjectivity based on symbolizing activity. Part III of the course focuses on newly emergent models arguing for an expanded perspective on intersubjectivity to include nonsymbolic activity. Part IV emphasizes the field concept underlying intersubjective processes. This texturing and retexturing of comparative activity is designed to facilitate an approach of multi-perspectival reflection, organization and reorganization for the student as s/he moves through the readings and course discussions adding complexity and depth to her sense of the relative value of each model for clinical practice. Clinical applicability of the theories will be part of each class discussion.

PART I: INFLUENTIAL THEORISTS OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

WEEK #1: “Symposium on the Meaning and Practice of Intersubjectivity in Psychoanalysis. Lewis Aron (1996), *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. 6: 591-597.

Recognition and Destruction: An Outline of Intersubjectivity. Jessica Benjamin (1992), in *Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis*. Eds. N. Skolnick, and S. Warshaw. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press. 43-60.

The Analytic Third: Working With Intersubjective Clinical Facts. Thomas Ogden (1994), *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*. 75, 3-10.

Principles of Psychoanalytic Exploration. Robert D. Stolorow, Bernard Brandchaft, George E. Atwood (1987) in *Psychoanalytic Treatment: An Intersubjective Approach*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press. 1-14.

These readings provide an introduction to the topic by Aron and explication of three leading models for working intersubjectively in psychoanalysis. Many additional contributions build on or augment the three influential perspectives of Benjamin, Ogden and Stolorow and colleagues.

PART II: SYMBOLIC INTERSUBJECTIVITY

WEEK #2: Intersubjectivity in Psychoanalysis: A Critical Review. Jonathan Dunn (1995) *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 76: 723-738.

This reading questions what changes, if any, intersubjectivity brings to clinical activity and process as compared with the classical model. Dunn argues that the same “ideal” that intersubjectivity critiques in the classical model is not intrinsically absent from an intersubjective perspective.

WEEK #3: The Intersubjective Turn in Psychoanalysis: A Comparison of Contemporary Theorists: Part I: Jessica Benjamin. Julie Gerhardt, Annie Sweetnam and Leann Borton (2000) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 10(1):5-42.

This reading is the first of three “representational texts” designed to produce the “arguments” of different intersubjective theorists along with “clinical examples to demonstrate their claims.” The central ideas of Benjamin’s contribution to intersubjectivity theory are outlined, illustrated clinically and critiqued.

WEEK #4: Intersubjective Distinctions: Subjects and Persons, Recognitions and Breakdowns: Commentary on Paper by Gerhardt, Sweetnam, and Borton. Jessica Benjamin (2000) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 10(1):43-55.

Recognition of Difference in the Author-Discussant Relation. Julie Gerhardt (2000) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 10(1): 57-63.

These readings following up on the paper read in week 3 allow the original theorist and discussants to sharpen their differences and similarities. Benjamin clarifies distinctions between the terms subject and person as well as the terms recognition and breakdown, each of which is central to her thinking.

WEEK #5: The Intersubjective Turn in Psychoanalysis: A Comparison of Contemporary Theorists: Part II: Christopher Bollas. (2001) Julie Gerhardt and Annie Sweetnam. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 11(1):43-92.

This second “representational text” attempts to “foreground Bollas’ theorizing as related to the intersubjective turn...indeed, to get lost in the dense foliage of his rich and

generous theoretical-clinical thinking, as he in turn gets lost in the underground maze of his patient's inner world.”

WEEK #6: Freudian Intersubjectivity: Commentary on Paper by Julie Gerhardt and Annie Sweetnam. Christopher Bollas (2001) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 11(1):93-105.

The Particularities of Form: Reply to Commentary. Julie Gerhardt and Annie Sweetnam (2001) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 11(1): 107-114.

In these readings Bollas further clarifies how he sees his contributions elaborating the Freudian frame of reference, while Gerhardt and Sweetnam, appreciating Bollas' distinction between form and content, consider the “particularities of form and how these...affect the analytic process.”

WEEK #7: The Intersubjective Turn in Psychoanalysis: A Comparison of Contemporary Theorists: Part 3: Darlene Bregman Ehrenberg. Julie Gerhardt, Annie Sweetnam, Leann Borton (2003) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 13(4):533-577.

In this reading the authors explicate and critique Ehrenberg's “painstaking exploration of the processes of mutual influence in the ongoing therapeutic interaction...,their bearing on the analytic process” and “the manner in which Ehrenberg... uses the interpersonal as a way of locating the intrapsychic.”

WEEK #8: A Radical Shift in Thinking about the Process of Change. Commentary on Paper by Gerhardt, Sweetnam, and Borton. Darlene Bregman Ehrenberg (2003) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 13(4): 579-603.

In this reading Ehrenberg focuses on specific clinical moments to clarify disagreements she has with the reading of her work by Gerhardt, Sweetnam and Borton. Her basic premise is that analytic interaction is not the “starting point” for her approach but the *condition* of doing analytic work, a radical shift in thinking leading to different assumptions about the process of change.

WEEK#9: Varieties of Interaction in *Influence & Autonomy in Psychoanalysis*. Stephen A. Mitchell (1997) The Analytic Press: Hillsdale, NJ. 143-168.

The Patient's Experience of The Analyst's Subjectivity in *A Meeting of Minds. Mutuality in Psychoanalysis*. Lewis Aron (1996) The Analytic Press: Hillsdale, NJ 65-91.

In these readings, two additional comparative analyses are offered for ways in which a number of analysts work intersubjectively including the theorists whose work has already been visited in previous readings. Assumptions about what is therapeutically mutative and the processes that are central to analytic activity are textured with additional considerations in these two different comparative analyses.

WEEK #10: Thomas Ogden's Phenomenological Turn. Bruce E. Reis, (1999) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 9(3): 371-393.

A Note on the Dialectic: Commentary on Paper by Bruce E. Reis. Jessica Benjamin (1999) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 9(3):395-399.

Toward Post-Cartesian Psychoanalytic Theory: Commentary on Paper by Bruce E. Reiss. Robert D. Stolorow, Donna M. Orange, George E. Atwood (1999) 9(3):401-406.

Adventures of the Dialectic. Bruce E. Reis (1999) *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 9(3):407-414.

In the first reading “the author illustrates how Ogden’s solution to the problem of alterity transcends the debate over one-person versus two-person psychologies by producing a truly dialectical, postclassical psychoanalytic theory of intersubjectivity.” He shows how Ogden’s use of Hegel “to deconstruct the Cartesian objectivist assumptions of classical psychoanalysis, goes beyond Hegel to create...a new synthesis that is similar to aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of intersubjectivity.” In the subsequent readings both Benjamin and Stolorow and colleagues offer corrective readings to Reis’s readings of their work in comparison to Ogden’s. Reis takes up their points and notes the bias of authors such as his discussants to be “more caught up in the content of words and the insight and incisiveness of their paradigms than in the texture or feeling of the gestural communication or the need it is expressing.” Reis’s concern for the neglect of this mode of experiencing in intersubjective theorizing is further taken up in the following series of readings.

PART III: EXPANDING INTERSUBJECTIVITY THEORY TO INCLUDE NONSYMBOLIZED INTERACTIVE DIMENSIONS: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONTROVERSIES FROM INTERSUBJECTIVE MODELS OF INFANCY

WEEK #11: Symposium on Intersubjectivity in Infant Research and Implications for Adult Treatment, Part I: A Systems View: Introduction, Beatrice Beebe, Steven Knoblauch, Judith Rustin and Dorienne Sorter (2003), *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 13(6):775-807.

In this reading the authors develop an integrative perspective, a systems view, for integrating explicit/linguistic with implicit/nonverbal theories of intersubjectivity. A comparison of five adults theorists of intersubjectivity is offered in order to highlight the different aspects of the interactive exchange which each theorist privileges as mutative in her/his particular model.

WEEK #12: A Comparison of Meltzoff, Trevarthen, and Stern. Beatrice Beebe, Doriene Sorter, Judith Rustin and Steven Knoblauch (2003), *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 13(6):809-836.

In this reading theories of intersubjectivity emerging from infant research are compared and contrasted for how they conceptualize how infants sense the state of the other, and how each theory uses the concept of cross-modal correspondences as a central aspect to infant intersubjectivity, a key consideration in the controversy over the applicability of these models to adult treatment.

WEEK #13: An Expanded View of Intersubjectivity in Infancy and its Application to Psychoanalysis. Beatrice Beebe, Judith Rustin, Doriene Sorter and Steven Knoblauch (2003), 13(6)837-873.

In this paper the authors build on key ideas from infant intersubjectivity models, i.e. the dialogic origin of mind, the role of correspondences, and the idea that symbolic forms of intersubjectivity are built on presymbolic forms. A fourth position is articulated addressing the place of interactive regulation, problems with the concept of matching, the role of difference, and the “balance model” of self- and interactive regulation as a way of arguing that all forms of interactive regulation are relevant and applicable to adult treatment, not just correspondences.

WEEK #14: The Development of an Understanding of Self and Agency in *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*. Peter Fonagy, Gyorgy Gergely, Elliot L. Jurist, and Mary Target Other Press: New York. 203-251.

In this reading the authors argue “that intersubjectivity is an emergent phenomenon whose establishment is a function of early interactive processes within an attachment context.” They argue that there is no compelling evidence for infant introspection or attribution of intentionality or feeling states to the other’s mind. Their definition of awareness of subjective state sharing is based on the capacity for comprehension of “‘representational’ and ‘causally self-referential’ properties of intentional mind states’.”

PART IV: FIELD THEORY AS A VISION OF INTERSUBJECTIVE PROCESS

WEEK #15 The Analytic Situation as a Dynamic Field. Madeleine Baranger and Willy Baranger, *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 89:795-826.

The Meaning and Use of Metaphor in Analytic Field Theory, Giuseppe Civitarese and Antonino Ferro, *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 33:190-209. 2013.

In the first reading, the basic concepts of Field Theory as a model of Intersubjectivity developed in the Rio de la Plata region of South America is presented in all its complexity. In the second paper, the most influential adaptation of a field model to a neo-Bionian approach is presented with careful clinical illustrations by the two most prominent European theorists of this approach. Within a field model interpreting

unconscious meanings is subordinated to a reorganization of the field. The idea of field as an internal experience vs. an interactive experience becomes a critical understanding for this model's clinical utility.