

Psycho-Technology

NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis

Instructor: Danielle Knafo, Ph.D.

*Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.
--Arthur Clarke*

This is a 1-point 7-week course that will adopt a contemporary Freudian perspective to explore the sea change that is taking place in our lives and clinical practices due to the impact of advanced (communication) technology. The ways we view the concepts of development, the unconscious, the self, ego, id, superego, truth and reality, gender and sexuality, as well as the quality of internal and external object relations will be examined in light of our expanded consciousness and immersive experiences in the technological universe.

As we welcome technology into our homes and offices, we find it to be both a life-enhancing partner and a nefarious intruder. Technology's many benefits are obvious: limitless information is available to anyone with a computer and internet connection. People at a distance can collaborate for artistic, professional, or political purposes. Friends, family members, and businesses can keep in touch through texting, email, Skype, Zoom, and social media. On the other hand, cybercommunication has opened a Pandora's box of novel problems. Specifically, the internet has created ghost worlds where virtual meetings take place and secrets are exchanged, without the intervening presence of two bodies sharing the same space. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, cyberspace has extended not only the possibilities available to the human self but the possibilities of being *for* a human self.

New forms of therapy and analysis are emerging as a result of these new technologies. COVID has forced many to move their practices online, and many have moved permanently away from in-person to virtual platforms. What are the repercussions of these changes to the frame? No analytic horizon yet exists in which to properly predict the individual and social impact inherent in these latter possibilities. But here we hope to shed as much light as we can to the psychological, social, and clinical challenges presented at the threshold of a brave new world. The instructor will present a number of cases from her practice to illustrate the various themes and their challenges to psychoanalytic treatment. Candidates will be invited to do so as well.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Candidates will become cognizant of the degree to which our ever-increasing access to technology is profoundly influencing our lives.
2. Candidates will be able to indicate how child and adolescent development is being affected by technological changes.
3. Candidates will learn about new forms of intimacy and sexual expression due to technological advances.

4. Candidates will recognize the changes to the clinical frame and relational modifications (e.g., self-disclosure, transference-countertransference) that arise in teletherapy.
5. Candidates will be able to delineate benefits and limitations to online treatment.

7 classes—Required Readings have asterisks

Weeks 1 & 2. Technology and Psychoanalysis

Week 1: The place of psychoanalytic thought in a changing technological world

*Turkle, S. (2004). Whither psychoanalysis in computer culture? *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 21(1): 16-30.

*Hartman, S. (2011). Reality 2.0: When loss is lost. *Psychoanalytic dialogues*, 21(4): 468–482.

*Zizek, S. (2004). What can psychoanalysis tell us about cyberspace? *Psychoanalytic Review*, 91(6): 801–830.

Lingiardi, V. (2008). Playing with unreality: Transference and computer. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 89, 111–126.

Szollosy, M. (2017). Freud, Frankenstein and our fear of robots: Projection in our cultural perception of technology. *AI & Society*, 32(3): 433-439.

Learning Objectives:

1. Candidates will appreciate the broad and deep changes taking place in our world and in our daily lives as a result of technological advancements.
2. Candidates will be conversant with the necessary changes psychoanalysis must make to keep up with technological changes.

Week 2. How new pathologies emerge from new technologies

*Kahoud, D. (In press). The Rise of Oedipus Tech: Life in the Shadow of the Digital Object.
Psychoanalytic Inquiry.

*Toronto, E. (2009). Time out of mind. Dissociation in the virtual world. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 26(2): 117-133.

Bird, J. (2003). 'I wish to speak to the despisers of the body': The internet, physicality, and psychoanalysis. *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society*, 8(1): 1217.

Gibbs, P. (2007). Reality in cyberspace: Analysts' use of the internet and ordinary everyday psychosis. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 94(1): 11–38.

*Watch Netflix: The Social Dilemma Orłowski, Jeff (Producer), & Rhodes, Larissa (Director). (2020). The Social Dilemma [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.netflix.com>

Objectives:

1. Candidates will become aware of specific types of pathologies that are emerging as a result of new technologies.
2. Candidates will consider the fate of the body in a world that increasingly lives virtually.

Week 3. Technology and Developmental Concerns

*Lemma, A. (2010). An order of pure decision: Growing up in a virtual world and the adolescent's experience of being-in-a-body. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 58(4), 691–714.

*Kieffer, C. (2011). Cyberspace, Transitional Space, and Adolescent Development. In *The electrified mind: Development, psychopathology, and treatment in the era of cellphones and the internet*. Ed. Salman Akhtar. (pp. 43-62.) Jason Aronson.

Lemma, A. (2015). Psychoanalysis in times of technoculture: Some reflections on the fate of the

body in virtual space *Int J Psychoanal* (2015) 96:569–582

Graham, R. (2013). The perception of digital objects and their impact on development

Psychoanalytic Psychology, 27(4): 269-279.

Ehrmann, M. (2004). On medial identity. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 13: 275-283).

Learning Objectives:

1. Candidates will become conversant with the ways children and adolescents are influenced by advanced technology.
2. Candidates will become informed of ways developmental trajectories are changing as a result of children's and adolescents' increased immersion in virtual worlds and social media.

Weeks 4 & 5. Technology and Intimacy

Week 4. New Relational Forms in a Technological Age

*Knafo, D. (2015). Guys and Dolls: Relational Life in the Technological Era.

Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 25: 481-502.

*Knafo, D. (2021). Digital Desire and the Cyber Imposter: A Psychoanalytic Reflection on Catfishing. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*.

Knafo, D. (2017). Soul in Silicone (How dolls become real). In *The Age of Perversion: Desire and Technology in Psychoanalysis and Culture*. (pp.84-117) Routledge.

Learning Objectives:

1. Candidates will learn about new forms of intimacy—e.g., relationships with dolls,

robots, and other advanced technological inanimate objects.

2. Candidates will become conversant with the many forms of deceit, imposterdom, and romantic play that takes place on the internet. They will explore how these forms change the way we think about the self.

Week 5. Technology, Sex, and Perversion

*Knafo, D. & Lo Bosco, R. (2017). Techno Sex. In *The New Sexual Landscape and Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. (pp. 145-171) Confer.

*Knafo, D. and LoBosco, R. (2017). Internet Pornography. In *The New Sexual Landscape and Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. (pp. 116-144) Confer.

Eissig, T. (2015). The gains and losses of screen relations: A clinical approach to simulation entrapment and simulation avoidance in a case of excessive internet pornography use. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 51(4): 680-703.

Leonoff, A. The unlikely fate of the ideal. *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 8(2): 153-166.

Learning Objectives:

1. Candidates will learn about changes in sexual practices due to advanced technology (i.e., digisexuality, technosex).
2. Candidates will understand the extent and reasons behind internet pornography addiction and ways to treat it.

Weeks 6 & 7. Virtual Psychoanalysis: Modifications in the Frame

Week 6. Virtual psychoanalysis and its discontents

*Turkle, S., Eissig, T, & Isaacs Russell, G. (2017). Reclaiming psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic*

Perspectives, 14: 237-248.

*Wolson, P. (2021). Some pros and cons of psychoanalytic teletherapy. *Psychoanalytic*

Psychology, 38(2), 109-110.

Trub, L. & Magaldi, D. (2017). Left to our own devices. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 14: 219-236.

Swales, S. (2017). Neurotic treatment resistance in screen- or phone-based analysis.

Psychoanalytic Perspectives, 14(2): 175-192.

Learning Objectives:

1. Candidates will examine the changes in our clinical practices due to technological advances
2. Candidates will consider the impact of COVID, a shared experience, on treatment (e.g., transference-countertransference, self and other-disclosure).
3. Candidates will appreciate the benefits and limitations of telehealth therapies.
4. Candidates will increase their attention to issues of self-other, inside-outside, privacy-intrusion as they consider changes due to texting, emailing, googling, etc.

Week 7. Modifications in the therapeutic frame.

*Contreras, P. (2021). The magical and the my-person in psychoanalysis during the Covid pandemic. *JAPA*, 68(6): 1113-1126.

*Bomba, M, Alibert, J-F, & Velt, J. (2021). Playing and virtual reality: Teleanalysis with children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal*

of Psychoanalysis, 102(1): 159-177.

Rossi, R.S. & Ferro, M. (2020). Skype as a protected means to live a relationship

International Forum of Psychoanalysis, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0803706X.2020.1738549>

Gabbard G. O. (2001). Cyberpassion: E-Rotic transference on the Internet. *Psychoanalytic*

Quarterly, 70(4), 719–737.

Learning Objective:

1. Candidates will be able to explain the consequences of the analytic frame having changed its locale to the screen.
2. Candidates will discover ways of maximizing the positive aspects of virtual treatments.
3. Candidates will learn how to most effectively use technology to facilitate aspects of psychoanalytic treatment.