

**Sexuality and Polymorphous Perversity:
Enigma, Transgression and the Sexual Body**

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COURSE SYLLABUS

This course surveys a body of psychoanalytic thought on the infantile sexual in general and on sexuality in particular. A varied set of readings will help us flesh out the distinctions between psychosexuality as a broad topic that interests psychoanalysis in general, from how the psychosexual can precipitate in specific sexual relationalities/practices/orientations. We will be asking what psychic and relational work these precipitations attempt to do, and track how the psychosexual funnels into what we understand as *sexuality*. This will permit us to wonder about the binding work done by identity- psychic labor which at times helps and, at others, restricts psychic life.

During the course of the semester we will trace a history of psychoanalytic ideas regarding sexuality; discuss some of the scholarship regarding questions of normality vs. pathology; explore infantile sexuality's relationship to the unconscious; ask after psychosexuality's relationship to representation; think about the bids that the sexual and sexual acts make on memory; and look into what clinical purchase these ideas may have in the consulting room. We will be doing our work in ongoing conversation with questions asked today around sexuality in the general culture, questions that have to do with the nature/function of consent; with how categories of difference like race and ability become implicated in the sexual (from the getgo, but what does that mean/look like?); what (if anything) gender has to do with sexual excitement; and whether disaggregating gender from the sexual makes analytic/clinical sense. The questions that inflect this course will help us to think why the sexual and its embodiments become sites of entwinement for psychic interiority, relationality and sociohistorical forces.

While you will recognize some of the readings in the syllabus as pertinent to sexuality, others may seem more surprising. In some sections, seminal psychoanalytic essays mate with extra-analytic texts that have been formative in their respective fields. These readings have been carefully selected and purposefully paired; they illustrate that when it comes to thinking about psychosexuality, the intercourse between psychoanalysis and other disciplines is not only generative, but absolutely necessary. This cross-pollination offers protection against the blindspots of our field, but also against its bright spots. And since so much of the sexual traffics in the ineffable, you will also find that some weeks include pieces of art and literature to further our study.

In our readings, we will generally keep to the syllabus. But the syllabus is by no means comprehensive and you will, as a group, develop your own distinctive interests. I have left the last week intentionally blank for those areas you will want to pursue further. You will decide jointly on what you want to

explore and I will select texts in these areas to send to you in advance to be discussed in class.

This course is demanding; but it is also exciting, contemporary, and (gasp!) fun. You can hope to gain a solid knowledge base in the major theoretical trends and some of the controversies in this area. The hope is that it will also help you with sitting with sexual material with your patients. That is not a small thing: talking and thinking about sex is almost always accompanied with ecstatic anxieties. Retaining one's ability to think, and inquire/listen for/attend to sexual material is not easy. The class will create a space to think in ways that you can carry with you to create an internal space that you, as the analyst, might be able to turn to for respite when sitting with a patient. I will bring clinical vignettes to our discussions to help clarify the concepts and to illustrate what we discuss infiltrates the transference and countertransference. And you are welcome/encouraged to do the same.

WEEK 1:

What is the infantile sexual and what does it have to do with sexuality?

- a. Freud, S. (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. *Standard Edition VII*: 125-245.

WEEK 2:

Early Freud: was he radical? And does it matter?

- a. Van Haute, P. & Westerink, H. (2016). Sexuality and its object in Freud's 1905 edition of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 97, 563-589.
- b. Green, A. (1995). Has sexuality anything to do with psychoanalysis? *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 76, 871-883.

WEEK 3:

Is sexuality separable from the social and why should we as analysts care about biopower?

- a. Foucault, M. (1980), *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I* (pp. 1-115). NY: Vintage.
- b. Kulick, D. & Rydstrom, J. (2015). Chapter 3: How to Impede and how to Facilitate the Erotic Lives of People with Disabilities (pp. 78-90). *Loneliness and its Opposite: Sex, Disability and the Ethics of Engagement*. Duke University Press.

WEEK 4: Psychic representation, Part I: is there a relationship between psychic representation and/or representability with the sexual?

- a. Freud, S. (1915). The Unconscious. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, *Volume XIV*, 159-215.
- b. Dimen, M. (2005). Sexuality and suffering, or the Eew! Factor. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 6, 1-18.

WEEK 5:

Psychic representation, Part II: is there sexuality without normative trauma?

- a. Scarfone, D. (2013). A brief introduction to the work of Jean Laplanche. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 94, 545-566.
- b. Scarfone, D. (2014). The *Three Essays* and the Meaning of the Infantile Sexual in Psychoanalysis. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 83(2), 327-344.

WEEK 6:

Psychic representation, Part III; excess and adult sexuality.

- a. Davies, J.M. (1998). Between the disclosure and foreclosure of erotic transference-countertransference: can psychoanalysis find a place for adult sexuality? *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 8, 747-766.
- b. Stein, R. (2008). The otherness of sexuality: Excess. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 56, 56-71.
- c. Fonagy, P. (2008). A genuinely developmental theory of sexual enjoyment and its implications for psychoanalytic technique. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 56, 11-36.

WEEK 7:

And what about attachment?

- a. Goldner, V. (2003). Ironic gender/authentic sex. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 4(2), 113-129.
- b. Davies, J.M. (2003). Falling in Love with Love. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 13, 1-27.
- c. Atlas, G. (2015). The enigma of desire, Chapter 5. NY: Routledge.

WEEK 8:

Sexuality and Trauma, Part I: How does personal and structural trauma inflect sexuality?

- a. Freud, S. (1915). Remembering, repeating and working-through. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works, 145-156.
- b. Take a look at the following links to Catherine Opie's work-

'Self-portrait/cutting'
<http://whitney.org/Collection/CatherineOpie>

'Dyke' & 'self-portrait/nursing'
<http://www.lacan.com/grancover27.htm>

'Self-portrait/pervert'
<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/12201>

then read:

Saketopoulou, A. (2013). Catherine Opie: American photographer, American pervert. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 14, 245-252.

Recommended: Read/Watch: Dorothy Allison, Bastard out of Carolina
Read/Listen to: Anonymous, The incest diary

WEEK 9:

Sexuality and Trauma, Part II: if the sexual is a carrier historical trauma, what is its psychoanalytic scene of address?

- a. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/24/arts/music/a-composer-and-his-wife-creativity-through-kink.html>
- b. Reis, B. (2009). Performative and enactive features of psychoanalytic listening: the transference as scene of address. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 90(6), 1359-1372.
- c. Script to be circulated; By playwright, Jeremy O. Harris, "Slave Play"

WEEK 10:

Queer sexualities, Part I: what can the margin can tell us about working through in general?

- a. Bronski, M. (2002). Doctor Fell. In: Fairfield, S., Layton, L., & Stack, C. (Eds.) *Bringing the plague: Toward a postmodern psychoanalysis* (pp. 279-294). New York: Other Press.
- b. Dimen, M. (2002). The disturbance of sex: a letter to Michael Bronski. In: Fairfield, S., Layton, L., & Stack, C. (Eds.). *Bringing the plague: Toward a postmodern psychoanalysis* (pp. 295-308). New York: Other Press.
- c. Bronski, M. (2002). Sex, death and the limits of irony: a reply to Muriel Dimen. In: Fairfield, S., Layton, L., & Stack, C. (Eds.). *Bringing the plague: Toward a postmodern psychoanalysis* (pp. 309-323). New York: Other Press

WEEK 11:

Queer sexualities, Part II: what can the sexual death drive do other than destroy?

- a. Hansbury, G. (2018). The masculine vaginal; working with queer men's embodiment on the transgender edge. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 65(6), 1009-1031.
- b. Saketopoulou, A. (2019). The draw to overwhelm: consent, risk and the re-translation of enigma. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*.

WEEK 12:

Is it still relevant to ask about the relation of psychopathology to sexuality?

- a. Parsons, M. (2000). Sexuality and perversion a hundred years on. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 81, 37-49.
- b. McDougall, J. (1986). Identifications, neoneeds and neosexualities. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 67, 19-30.
- c. Ted-Budy tapes, Netflix

WEEK 13:

Eroticism in the Consulting Room: Transference and Countertransference

- a. Davies, J. (1994). Love in the afternoon. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*.
- b. Gabbard, G. O. (1996). The analyst's contribution to the erotic transference. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 32, 249-273.
- c. Celenza, A. (2010). The guilty pleasure of erotic countertransference: searching for radial true. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 11, 175-183.

WEEK 14:

Sexual transgressions in the analytic situation

- a. Bersani, L. & Phillips, A. (2008). On a more impersonal note (pp. 89-115). In: *Intimacies*. University of Chicago Press.
- b. Celenza, A. and Gabbard, G. O. (2003). Analysts Who Commit Sexual Boundary Violations: A Lost Cause? *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 5(1), 617-636.
- c. Dimen, M. (2016). Rotten apples and ambivalence: sexual boundary violations through a psychocultural lens. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 64(2), 361-373.

WEEK 15:

To be decided.