

Arthur Fox, PhD
1133 Broadway Suite 1600
NYC 10010
DrArthurFox@gmail.com

Sexual Desire and Object Choice

(8 weeks; one credit)

This course is about patients for whom love and erotic fascination don't go together. For example, some patients say they find it easy to *fall* in love but difficult to *stay* in love. Others say they are deeply in love with their long-term partners, but have little interest in having sex with them. Other patients wonder why they can't seem to fall in love with *anyone*, despite feeling comfortable with their sexuality ---whether that be hetero-, homo-, bi-, or a-.

The course hews closely to clinical practicality and we use case material throughout. Our guiding question is: What do we gain clinically when we understand love and sexual desire as, sometimes, separate personality functions with separate developmental lines? We'll also explore whether the traditional Freudian distinction between narcissistic and anaclitic types of object choice can help us understand and communicate with patients who worry that their sexuality is not helping them find or sustain love.

We will be looking at unconscious determinants of sexual desire—theories of how sexual object choice gets channeled and shaped. Readings will range from Freudian foundations to the contemporary discourse on love and sexuality that is burgeoning internationally among Freudian writers of diverse backgrounds.

Overall course objectives: At the end of this course, candidates will be able to use Contemporary Freudian theory to (1) create useful clinical models for patients who complain of discrepancies between their sexual and romantic desires (2) listen for subtle vicissitudes and interactions of sexual and dependent feelings in the transference/countertransference (3) understand how ordinary forms of repression and dissociation shape Oedipal and post-Oedipal sexuality (4) see the continuities and discontinuities between 20th-Century Freudian theory and contemporary postmodern thinking, and (5) use both bodies of theory in more creative, flexible, ecumenical and context-sensitive ways.

Week 1: Sexuality, Politics, Prejudice

Freud, S. (1914). On Narcissism, an introduction. In J. Strachey (Ed. and Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 7, pp. 67-102). London : Hogarth Press.

Fox, A. (2018). Gay-friendly psychoanalysis and the abiding pleasures of prejudice. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 19(4), 265-278.

Recommended

Bach, S. (2002). Sadomasochism in clinical practice and everyday life. *Journal of Clinical Psychoanalysis*, 11(2), 225-235.

Bach, S. (2016). Problems of narcissistic love. In *Chimeras and other writings* (pp.199-216). New York , NY : IPA Books.

Fox, A (2018) Freudian Homophobia and the Invention of Narcissism, unpublished ms from a presentation at NYU Postdoc.

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will understand (1) how in Freud's time "narcissism" was considered an aspect of sexual expression and (2) how Freud drew from prevailing ideas in art history, criminology and sexual psychology in formulating his theories about narcissism in human development.

Week 2: Despising and Glorifying the Instinct

Freud, S. (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. In J. Strachey (Ed. and Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 7 pp. 173-206, **Infantile sexuality**). London : Hogarth Press.

Groskreutz, D. J. (2015) The Naturalizing of Narcissistic Neuroses: Delineating the Contribution of Narcissism within the Trajectory of Freudian Thought. *IJP Open - Open Peer Review and Debate* 2:1-16

Recommended

Reich, A. (1953). Narcissistic object choice in women. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 1, 22-44.

Chasseguet-Smirgel, J. (1984). Narcissism and perversion. In *Creativity and perversion* (pp.24-34). New York , NY : Norton.

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will be able to (1) understand the theoretical distinction between anaclitic and narcissistic types of object choice (2) see how both types present clinically and (3) comment on the ways, both useful and prejudicial, that this distinction can be used.

Week 3: Finding, Losing and Re-finding the Object

Blass, R.B. (2016). Understanding Freud's conflicted view of the object-relatedness of sexuality and its implications for contemporary psychoanalysis: A re-examination of Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 97(3), 591-613.

Freud, S. (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. In J. Strachey (Ed. and Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. (Vol. 7, pp. 134-172, [The sexual aberrations](#)). London : Hogarth Press.

Recommended

Phillips, S.H. (2014). Sexual aberration or instinctual vicissitude? Revisiting Freud's "The Sexual Aberrations". *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 83(2), 315-325.

Kitron, D.G. (1991). Narcissism and object love as separate but dependent developmental Lines. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 46, 325-336.

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will be able to (1) see the role of autoerotism as an organizing principle in all modalities of sexual experience, and (2) use this idea to better understand conscious and unconscious forms of desire in the transference/ countertransference.

Week 4: Desire and Object Choice in Freud, Laplanche and Lacan

Stein, R. (2007). Moments in Laplanche's theory of sexuality. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, [8\(2\)](#), 177-200.

Gullestad, S.E., (2020) The otherness of sexuality: Exploring the conflicted nature of drive, desire and object choice, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 101:1, 64-83, DOI: [10.1080/00207578.2019.1686390](https://doi.org/10.1080/00207578.2019.1686390)

Recommended

Scarfone, D. (2014) The Three Essays and The Meaning of the Infantile Sexual in Psychoanalysis, *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 83:2, 327-344,

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will (1) know the theoretical foundations that link Freud with contemporary theories of sexuality, and (2) consider the clinical utility of Laplanche in Contemporary Freudian practice.

Week 5: The Oedipus Complex and Object Choice 1: Desire, Identity, and the Social

Gonzalez, F. (2012). Loosening the bonds; Psychoanalysis, feminism and the problem of the group. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, [13\(4\)](#), 253-267.

Hartke, R. (2018). The Oedipus complex: A confrontation at the central crossroads of psychoanalysis. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 97, 893–913.

Recommended

Balsam, R.H. (2010). Where has Oedipus gone? A turn of the century contemplation. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 30(6), 511-519.

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will know (1) how present-day Freudians use the Oedipus Complex in their thinking about love and sex, and (2) how contemporary psychoanalysts outside the Freudian world think about what is and is not clinically useful in the Oedipal model.

Week 6: The Oedipus Complex and Object Choice 2: The Kleinians and the Great Submission

Perelberg, R.J. (2015). The structuring function of the Oedipus complex. In *Murdered father dead father: Revisiting the Oedipus complex* (pp. 125-160). London : Routledge.

Recommended

Blass, R.B. (2019) Freud's view of death and repetition as grounds of a Kleinian approach to narcissism: Implications for clinical practice, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 100:6, 1286-1305,

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will know how contemporary Freudians and Kleinians use the idea of Oedipal authority in the shaping of desire, personality organization and sexual identity.

Week 7: The Oedipus Complex and Object Choice 3: Castration and the Fate of the Infantile

Rudden, M.G. (2018). The castration complex. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 38:1, 51–58.

Davies, R. (2018). No sex please, we're British: Bisexuality in contemporary clinical theory. In Jozef-Perelberg, R. (Ed.), *Psychic bisexuality: A British-French dialog* (pp. 258-276). London : Routledge.

Recommended

Knafo, D. (2018). Desiring castration: A reformulation of castration theory illustrated with a transgender case. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 38(1), 34–50.

Balsam, R.H. (2015). Oedipus Rex: Where are we going, especially with females? *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 84(3), 555-588.

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will know (1) how contemporary Freudians understand the roles of fear, repression, and dissociation in the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, and (2) how to listen for their physical and emotional sequelae in the transference\ countertransference.

Week 8: Sexuality in Contemporary Freudian Theory and Practice

Mitchell, J. (2004). The difference between gender and sexual difference. In Matthis, I. (Ed.), *Dialogs on sexuality, gender and psychoanalysis* (pp.67-78). London : Karnac.

Freud, S. (1912). On the universal tendency to debasement in the sphere of love (Contributions to the psychology of love II). In J. Strachey (Ed. and Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. XI, pp. 177-190). London : Hogarth Press.

Recommended

Green, A. (2018). The neuter gender. In Jozef-Perelberg, R. (Ed.), *Psychic bisexuality: A British-French dialog* (pp. 258-276). London : Routledge.

Learning Objective: At the end of this class, candidates will be able to (1) use contemporary and historical Freudian theory to model an interaction among sexuality, love, and reproduction (2) apply this model to contemporary discourse on gender and (3) consider the moral and intellectual pressures that restrict free thinking about sexuality in psychoanalytic practice.