

Writing Psychoanalytically
New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and
Psychoanalysis

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COURSE SYLLABUS

This 8-session, 1-credit course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to write about a psychoanalytically informed topic for presentation or publication as an independent writing project. Each class will begin with a brief didactic portion addressing the subject matter of the assigned readings; the remainder (majority) of the class will be used for students to workshop their writing projects with the group. Students will discuss their ideas for a paper, refine them, and develop them in class. Students will take turns bringing in three to five pages of writing to the class every week, with the goal of each student having at least two opportunities to present during the duration of the class. It is expected that (with the exception of the first class), in each session, at least two and at most three, students will be given the opportunity to present their writing. Students will receive constructive feedback from the instructor and class members regarding form, style, and other aspects of paper structure. The focus of the class will be on developing voice, formulating clinical narrative, and integrating research and past contributions from the field to the writer's topic. The emphasis will be on providing a supportive atmosphere in which students feel comfortable presenting their work and are encouraged to give and receive constructive feedback.

As an adjunct to developing their writing project in class, students will have the option of choosing from a pool of faculty writing mentors affiliated with the different tracks to help them develop their paper during and/or after the class, for a total of up to four meetings at the current supervisory rate (additional sessions may be scheduled at the discretion of the writing mentor and student). Each of these writing mentors is a faculty member who has published in a psychoanalytic journal, written a psychoanalytic book, or served in an editorial capacity for a psychoanalytic journal. The provisional list of faculty members who have agreed to serve as writing mentors is provided at the end of the syllabus. Additional writing mentors may be added.

Class 1: The Process of Psychoanalytic Writing

Learning Objective: In this class, we will discuss the *process* of writing psychoanalytically. Where does one begin? What can one write about? How does the writing process work? Students will use this initial class as a starting point for discussing their ideas for a writing project with the group, with the goal of refining their topic. Students who have already begun a writing project may bring in 3-5 pages of writing to class in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 2 students).

Readings:

Ogden, T.H. (2005). On psychoanalytic writing. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 86, pp. 15-29.

Bassin, D. (2002). I'm in the milk and the milk is in me. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 3, pp. 297-308.

Class 2: The Action of Psychoanalytic Writing

Learning Objective: In this class, we will examine the *action* of writing psychoanalytically. We will explore the ways in which writing may be a means for the author to retrospectively process a clinical experience; a form of self-supervision; and/or an enactment. Students will bring in 3-5 pages of writing in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 3 students).

Readings:

Altstein, R. (2016), Finding words: How the process and products of psychoanalytic writing can channel the therapeutic action of the very treatment it sets out to describe. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 13:1, 51-70.

Starr, K. E. (2020). Summoning Spiritis, Bridging Worlds: Writing, Dreaming, Working Through. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*.

Class 3: Experimenting with Language, Rhythm, and Style

Learning Objective: In this class, we will examine how language, rhythm, and style may be used to evoke experience. Students will bring in 3-5 pages of writing in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 3 students).

Readings:

Sweetnam, A. (2001). Talking about talking about patients. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 11, pp. 861-884.

Jones, A.A. (2001). The floating "I"—an experience of shifting form. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 11, pp. 885-889.

Class 4: Structure and Form: Journal Articles

Learning Objective: We will begin a brief review of the variety of forms of psychoanalytic writing. In this class, we will examine traditional and non-traditional ways of structuring a psychoanalytic journal article. Students will bring in 3-5 pages of writing in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 3 students).

Readings:

Starr, K.E. & Aron, L. (2011). Women on the Couch. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 21, pp. 373-392.

Goldman, D. (2007). Faking it. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 43, pp. 17-36.

Class 5: Structure and Form: Literary Approaches

Learning Objective: We continue our review of the variety of forms of psychoanalytic writing. In this class, we will examine more literary approaches to clinical writing, including the short story form and autobiographical narrative. Students will bring in 3-5 pages of writing in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 3 students).

Readings:

Carl, P. (2020, January 21). Becoming a man: What I learned about masculinity from my father, my father-in-law and my own transition. *The New York Times Magazine*.

White, C. J. (2015). Strangers in Paradise: Trevor, Marley, and Me: Reggae Music and the Foreigner Other. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 25, pp. 176-193

Luepnitz, D. (2003). A Darwinian finch. In *Schopenhauer's Porcupines: Intimacy and its Dilemmas*. New York: Basic Books.

Class 6: Beyond the Consulting Room: Writing Psychoanalytically for a Non-Psychoanalytic Audience

Learning Objective: We continue our review of the variety of forms of psychoanalytic writing. In this class, we how psychoanalytic writers can bring psychoanalytic ideas to the world outside the consulting room. Students will bring in 3-5 pages of writing in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 3 students).

Readings:

Saketopoulo, A. (2018, October 11). Using psychoanalysis to understand #MeToo memories. *The New York Review of Books*.

<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/10/11/psychoanalysis-and-metoo-memories/>

Gentile, J. (2018). Beyond #MeToo: Female agency as heroine in *The Tale*.

<http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/beyond-metoo-female-agency-as-heroine-in-the-tale/>

Class 7: Overcoming Obstacles to Writing

Learning Objective: In this class we will examine the anxieties and conflicts that often arise during the writing process and explore ways of understanding and overcoming them. Students will bring in 3-5 pages of writing in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 3 students).

Readings:

Slochower, J.A. (1998). Illusion and uncertainty in psychoanalytic writing. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 79, pp. 333-347.

Grundy, D. (1993). Parricide postponed—A discussion of some writing problems. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 29, pp. 693-710.

Class 8: The Ethics of Psychoanalytic Writing: Consent, Disclosure, and Disguise

Learning Objective: In this class, we will examine the ethical issues that arise in writing about our patients. We will discuss the pros, cons, and clinical implications of consent, disclosure, and disguise. Students will bring in 3-5 pages of writing in order to receive feedback from the group (limited to 3 students).

Readings:

Aron, L. (2016) Ethical considerations in psychoanalytic writing revisited. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 13, pp. 267-290.

Gabbard, G.O. (2000). Disguise or Consent. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 81, pp. 1071-1086.

Writing Mentors:

Interpersonal Track

Chris Bonovitz
Sarah Schoen
Shelley Itzkowitz

Relational Track

Joyce Slochower
Jill Salberg
Velleda Ceccoli
Lisa Director
Lauren Levine

Contemporary Freudian Track

Andrew Druck
Marsha Levy-Warren
Isaac Tylim

Independent Track

Leanne Domash
Jill Gentile
Steven Botticelli