

Jeffrey Guss, MD
77 Park Avenue, Suite 1C
New York, NY 10016
(212) 481-1665
jrguss77@gmail.com

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NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis
Independent Track

Course Title: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Psychedelic Experience: Clinical and theoretical Implications of the integration of psychoanalysis and psychedelic therapy
15 weeks, virtual format
90-minute duration

Course Instructor: Jeffrey Guss, MD
jrguss77@gmail.com

Time/Place: Online
Day/Time TBA

Rationale

We are in the midst of a resurgence of interest in psychedelics as medicines for psychological and psychiatric difficulties. These compounds are used in diverse settings and contexts, current research is focusing on the treatment of depression, alcoholism, and trauma, among other conditions, utilizing psychedelic assisted therapies. I suggest that psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts are unusually well-suited as settings for understanding psychedelic experiences and therapy. There exists a mutual guardedness between the two, multiply determined; and this course is intended to encourage a rapprochement. They have a reciprocal need for one another: first, psychedelics hold great promise as tools which will transform psychoanalytic inquiry into self, identity, transformative processes, and consciousness itself. Second, psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts need to take our place as a setting and context and container for psychedelic therapy, and in doing so extend psychedelic theory and practice.

Course Description

This course aims to teach candidates about the present, past, and future of psychedelics and psychoanalysis.

The first week of the course offer a brief review of psychedelics' origins in indigenous cultures, and then, their historical and contemporary use as a treatment for psychiatric conditions and as a method of self-exploration and spiritual growth. An overview of contemporary clinical scientific research focuses on psychedelic assisted therapy for treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and existential distress related to cancer.

Next, a careful study of the phenomenology of psychedelic experience, illuminating egolysis, ego dissolution, primary process and hyperassociative states from the perspective of

neuropsychanalysis. A look bac at the history of psychedelic psychoanalysis in the US and Europe follows, focusing on neglected researcher and clinician Betty Eisner, PhD.

This is followed by study of narrative identity, minimal self, “drug induced experiential death” and mystical experience, from a psychoanalytic perspective. One week will be devoted to writings of Jungian analysts who practice psychedelic therapy and following this, there is an examination of psychoanalysis, itself, as a non-ordinary state of consciousness and the implications of this for analysts interested in psychedelic therapy. Finally, the most current (21st Century) theories regarding psychedelic effects on consciousness will be taught. We will imagine future paths for a cross-fertilization between psychedelic therapy and psychoanalysis, with an invitation to develop both clinical and theoretical projects dedicated to this integration.

Pedagogical Methods

Course length: 15 weeks

Course Structure: Initial week: Introductions, outline of course

Weeks 2-15: Didactic Paper Study

Introductory week invites student to introduce themselves to one another and, course readings are reviewed, outline of class structure.

Didactic weeks: 1-2 papers assigned/week; supplemental papers, as detailed below.

Each week’s readings between 20 and 40 pp. Supplemental reading is offered.

Each class begins with a brief mindfulness/music listening experience to invite a shift in consciousness as preparation for class. Next, I offer summary of assigned readings (about 25 minutes) teaching central points from papers and maybe some story telling. Then, about 45 min discussion.

Course Syllabus

Week 1	Welcome Overview of course, elements of each class, syllabus review Introductions	
Week 2	<p><u>Starting out:</u></p> <p>Patrick Murphy, Director Hard Rain Films</p> <p>Pål-Ørjan Johansen Teri Suzanne Krebs</p>	<p>“Psychedelia: The History and Science of Mystical Experience” An hour-long documentary film about psychedelic drugs and their ability to induce mystical, or religious experiences. The film explores this relationship by chronicling their use in controlled research studies prior to the cultural upheaval of the 1960s, at a time when LSD was regarded as one of the most promising discoveries in the field of psychiatry</p> <p>“Psychedelics not linked to mental health problems or suicidal behavior: A population study” <i>Journal of Psychopharmacology</i>, 2015 Mar; 29(3); 270-279.</p>
	Learning Objectives:	

	<p>1) The student will acquire basic knowledge of psychedelics as chemical compounds, their use in indigenous cultures and the contemporary research using psychedelic assisted therapy for treatment of psychiatric disorders</p> <p>2) The student will understand contemporary meta-analytic research of 130,000 adults regarding mental health risks associated with psychedelic use.</p>	
Week 3	<p><u>Phenomenology Part 1</u></p> <p>Lawrence Fischman</p> <p>Monnica Williams, Sara Reed, Jamilah George</p>	<p>“Seeing without Self: Discovering new meaning with psychedelic assisted psychotherapy” <i>Neuropsychoanalysis</i>, 2019. pp. 1-6, 8-14.</p> <p>“Culture and psychedelic psychotherapy: Ethnic and racial themes from three Black women therapists” (pp. 1-11). <i>Journal of Psychedelic Studies</i> 2020.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) The student will learn how primary process, hyperassociative states, softening of defenses and changed self-other boundaries are understood through the lens of neuropsychoanalysis</p> <p>2) The student will be able to describe how race can affect psychedelic experience, understand the concept of the “hyperwhiteness” of psychedelic space, and learn about culturally and racially sensitive components of psychedelic therapy.</p>		
Week 4	<p><u>Phenomenology Part 2</u></p> <p>Lawrence Fischman</p> <p>Rafael Milliere</p>	<p>“Seeing without Self: Discovering new meaning with psychedelic assisted psychotherapy” <i>Neuropsychoanalysis</i>, 2019. pp. 15-23, 30-32.</p> <p>“Looking for The Self: Drug-Induced Ego Dissolution” <i>Frontiers in Human Neuroscience</i> 2017. Intro and Phenomenology of DIED: The Significance of DIED for Philosophy of mind; Minimal Selfhood. (pp. 2-5, 13-16)</p>
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) The student will learn how primary process, drug induced ego dissolution, hyperassociative states, softening of defenses and changed self-other boundaries are understood through the lens of neuropsychoanalysis (second part of paper begun in Week 3)</p> <p>2) The student will learn basic concepts of DIED (drug-induced ego dissolution) as it relates to narrative identity the reduction of psychological inflexibility in psychedelic therapy.</p> <p>3) The student will learn about the unitive experience, the experience of oneness and the mystical experience from a neuropsychoanalytic perspective.</p>		

<p>Week 5</p>	<p><u>Contemporary clinical research on psychedelic assisted therapy</u></p> <p>Albert Garcia-Romeu William Richards</p> <p>Alexander Belser, et al: Agin-Liebes, Swift, Terrana, Devenot, Friedman, Guss, Bossis, Ross</p> <p>Michael Bogenschutz, et al: Podrebarac, Duane, Amegadzie, Malone, Owens, Ross, Mennenga</p>	<p>“Current perspectives on psychedelic therapy: use of serotonergic hallucinogens in clinical interventions” (2018). <i>International Review of Psychiatry</i>. Volume 30, Issue 4.</p> <p>“Patient Experiences of Psilocybin-Assisted Psychotherapy: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (2017). <i>Journal of Humanistic Psychology</i>, Vol 57(3) pp354-388.</p> <p>“Clinical Interpretations of Patient Experience in a Trial of Psilocybin Assisted Psychotherapy for Alcohol Use Disorder” (2018) Volume 9, Article 100.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) The student will learn the basics of contemporary (1995-present) clinical research using psilocybin-assisted therapies (psilocybin) for Cancer Related Existential Distress, Alcohol Use Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.</p> <p>2) The student will be able to list the major themes (experiential and subjective mechanisms of action) that emerged from a qualitative study of participants in a randomized clinical trial using psilocybin assisted therapy.</p> <p>3) The student will list the range of experiences of participants in a psychedelic therapy research trial of treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder.</p>		
<p>Week 6</p>	<p><u>History of Psychoanalytic Psychedelic Therapy Part 1</u></p> <p>Stanislav Grof, MD</p> <p>Christopher Bollas</p>	<p>“Theoretical and Empirical Basis of Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy: Observations from LSD Research” <i>Journal of Transpersonal Psychology</i>, 1973.</p> <p>“The Transformational Object” <i>The International Journal of Psychoanalysis</i>. 60:97-107. (1979)</p>
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) The student will learn the major contributions by Stanislav Grof, MD to the field of psychedelic therapy. These include the emergence of transpersonal therapy in the context of psychoanalytic psychedelic therapy, Grof’s system of “perinatal matrices” and his “COEX” system.</p> <p>2) The student will understand Christopher Bollas’ concept of the transformational object and how this has valuable implications for understanding psychedelic assisted therapy.</p>		

	<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) Heriot-Maitland: the student will learn about “oneness” or “unity” as a core experience of the mystical state, and acquire a nuanced understanding of the overlap between mystical states and “madness” or psychotic states</p> <p>2) Johnson and Friedman: the student will learn practical, clinical guidelines for differentiating mystical, transpersonal growth experiences from those associated with diagnosed psychopathological conditions</p>	
<p>Week 9</p>	<p><u>Psychedelics and the analytic theory of mind</u></p> <p>Szummer, Harvath, Szabo, Frecska, Orzoi</p> <p>Andreas Mayer</p>	<p>The “hyperassociative” mind: The psychedelic experience and Merleau-Ponty’s “wild being” <i>Journal of Psychedelic Studies</i>. 1(2) pp 55-64.</p> <p>“The Development of our sense of self as a defense against invading thoughts: From Buddhist psychology to psychoanalysis” <i>New Ideas in Psychology</i> 2020 pp 1-6).</p>
	<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) The student will understand the essentials of perception as described by French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and describe how his theories of perception (The Phenomenology of Perception, 1945) grew from his experimentation with mescaline</p> <p>2) the phenomena of “hyperassociative” or “unconstrained” mind and relate this understanding to free association and psychoanalytic change mechanisms.</p>	
<p>Week 10</p>	<p><u>Race in Psychedelic Space and Discourse</u></p> <p>Logan Neitzke-Spruill</p> <p>Jamilah George Sara Reed Monnica Williams</p> <p>Monnica Williams and Beatriz Labate</p>	<p>“Race as a component of set and setting: How experiences of race can influence psychedelic experiences”. <i>Journal of Psychedelic Studies</i> 4(1), pp51-60 (2020)</p> <p>“People of color in North America report improvements in racial trauma and mental health symptoms following psychedelic experiences” <i>Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy</i>. (2021) Volume 28, No. 3, pp 215-226.</p> <p>“Diversity, equity and access in psychedelic medicine” <i>Journal of Psychedelic Studies</i>. Volume 4, Issue 1. Pp1-3.</p>
	<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) The student will acquire an understanding of psychedelic experience as described by three African American therapists, learning the centrality of race as an aspect of</p> <p>2) The student will learn about the history of exclusion of BIPOC voices in the</p>	

	<p>contemporary psychedelic “renaissance” and the pernicious effects of exclusion of indigenous voices and the extractive practices of some psychedelic research/practices.</p> <p>3) The student will learn about the concept of the ‘hyperwhite” space of contemporary psychedelic research and discourse, and critique its limitations</p>	
Week 11	<p><u>The Self, Boundlessness and Oneness</u> Chris Letheby</p> <p>Andreas Chirban</p>	<p>“Self unbound: ego dissolution in psychedelic experience”. <i>Neuroscience of Consciousness</i> 2017, 1-11.</p> <p>“Oneness Experience: Looking through Multiple Lenses <i>Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies</i> 20000. pp 247-263</p>
	<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1)The student will be able to describe DIED (Drug Induced Ego Dissolution) in phenomenological and psychoanalytic language, and describe its role I the mystical experience and in the alteration of narrative identity</p> <p>2) The student will learn about unity/oneness/boundlessness as it is expressed in in religious, literary, philosophical and psychoanalytic narratives.</p>	
Week 12	<p><u>Jung and Psychedelic Therapy</u> Scott J. Hill (Chapter author)</p> <p>Sessa B, Luke D, Adams C, King D, Tollan A, Wyrd N, (Book editors)</p> <p>Marissa Swank</p>	<p>“Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious: Jungian insights into Psychedelic Experience”, pp 1-12. Published as Chapter 1 of (2017) <i>Breaking Convention: Convention: Psychedelic Pharmacology for the 21st Century</i>. London: Strange Attractor Press; 2017.</p> <p>“Mercurius Ubiquitous: A Jungian Approach to Psychedelic Therapy”. 2020 <i>International Journal of Jungian Studies</i>. (pp. 1-28)</p>
	<p>Supplemental/Optional D J Moores</p> <p>Greg Mahr JamieSweigart</p>	<p>“Dancing the Wild Divine: Drums, Drugs and Individuation” <i>Journal of Jungian Scholarly Studies</i> 2015(1) 2020. (pp. 64-83).</p> <p>“Psychedelic Drugs and Jungian Therapy” <i>Journal of Jungian Scholarly Studies</i>, 15(1), 2020. (pp 86-98)</p>
	<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <p>1) describe Jung’s perspectives on psychedelics as a path toward spiritual awakening and their risks</p> <p>2) critique models for psychedelic integration therapy that have been advanced by several prominent Jungian analysts.</p>	

Week 13	<u>Primary Consciousness, Primary Process and the “minimal self”</u> Michael Lifshitz Eli Sheiner Laurence Kirmayer Robin Carhart Harris KJ Friston	“Cultural Neurophenomenology of Psychedelic Thought, Guiding the “unconstrained mind” through Ritual Context” <i>Oxford Handbook of Spontaneous Thought: Mind-Wandering Creativity and Dreaming</i> (2018) “REBUS and the Anarchic Brain Toward a Unified model of the Brain Action of Psychedelics”. <i>Pharmacological Reviews</i> July 2019. 71:316-344. (pp. 330-336 only)
Learning Objectives: 1) discuss the concept cultural neurophenomenology, and describe how culture gives context to the “hyperassociative” state of mind occasioned by psychedelics. 2) list the core principles of Carhart-Harris’ REBUS model and relate this theory to psychoanalytic states of mind and psychoanalytic therapeutic action.		
Week 14	<u>Psychoanalysis as Alternate States of Consciousness</u> Lew Aron and Annabella Bushra Kerry Gordon	“Mutual Regression: Altered States in the Psychoanalytic Situation” <i>Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association</i> 1998 46(2) pp389-412. The Tiger’s Stripe: Some thoughts on Psychoanalysis, Gnosis and the Experience of Wonderment” <i>Contemporary Psychoanalysis</i> (2004) 40(1):5-45.
	Supplemental/Optional Marie Badaracco Raymond Prince	“Psychoanalysis as Altering States of Consciousness” (1975), <i>Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry</i> 3(2) 205-210. “Psychotherapy as the Manipulation of Endogenous Healing Mechanisms: A Transcultural Survey” <i>Transcultural Psychiatry</i> (1976) 13:115.
Week 15 First 45 minutes	<u>Bringing it all Together: Grand Unifying Theories</u> Link Swanson	“Unifying Theories of Psychedelic Drug Effects <i>Frontiers in Pharmacology</i> ”, 2018(1-23)

Second 45 minutes	Ending, Goodbyes, Next Steps
	<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The student will be able to explain six unifying theories of psychedelic drug effects: 20th Century models (model psychosis, psychoanalytic defense reduction and depth exploration, reduced filter theory) and 21st Century models (predictive processing, integrated information theory, and Carhart-Harris' (entropic brain theory).2) The student will integrate theories reviewed with his/her/their personal identity as a practicing psychoanalyst in an act of imagining the future of the interface between psychoanalysis and psychedelic therapy

