

**Bryn Mawr College**  
**Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research**  
**and**  
**Pennsylvania Society for Clinical Social Work (PSCSW)**

**Clinical Certificate Program:**  
**Psychodynamic Psychotherapy**  
**Syllabus**

Winter/Spring 2012

**Program Description:** This course will explore several complementary psychodynamic theories which emphasize the clinical relationship as central to the work. Understanding and sensitively handling the vicissitudes of the therapeutic relationship are hallmarks of effective treatment. The course will begin by tracing the evolution of relational approaches within psychoanalytic thought, considering Freudian and post-Freudian theories and techniques. We will use object relations, attachment, intersubjectivity and trauma theories, among others, to formulate strategies for assessment and intervention. We will discuss how to meaningfully integrate neurobiological knowledge, cognitive behavioral strategies and mindfulness techniques within a psychodynamic approach. The course aims to deepen and expand participants' understanding of key theoretical concepts such as: holding environment, containment, transference/countertransference, affect regulation, enactment and self-disclosure.

The program is designed for all levels of clinicians and is relevant to practitioners working in a variety of agency settings as well as those in private practice. The course will focus primarily on clinical interventions with individual adult clients. Practitioners working with children and teens will find the course relevant. The program's faculty and supervisors include faculty from Bryn Mawr's Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research as well as senior members of the Pennsylvania Society for Clinical Social Work (PSCSW), a professional organization which promotes and advances the specialization of clinical practice within the social work profession.

**Program Objectives:** Participants in this certificate program will: 1) explore the therapeutic process from several complementary psychodynamic frameworks including Object Relations, Intersubjectivity, and Attachment Theories; 2) use these and other theories to formulate strategies for assessment and intervention; and 3) discuss how to meaningfully integrate neurobiological knowledge, and cognitive behavioral strategies and mindfulness techniques within a psychodynamic approach.

## **Program Outline**

### **Sessions 1-6: Evolution of Psychodynamic Relational Thought**

Instructor: Sara Bressi Nath, PhD, LSW

The first six sessions of the program will lay out the theoretical underpinnings of psychodynamic assessment and treatment. Students will be oriented to core concepts underlying a psychodynamic practice sensibility, as well as controversial and emergent issues in theory and practice. We will trace the evolution of relational approaches, highlighting key historical, social, and theoretical junctures in psychoanalytic theory.. Students will be introduced to theoretical perspectives on human development, trauma, and diversity.

### **Session 7: Empathy and Defensive Processes**

Instructor: Miriam Field, MSS, LCSW

In the safe zone of a therapeutic space both therapist and client begin to understand the client's unique mental processes and how early-formed and strongly held characteristic defenses continue to be used for better and worse. Our most powerful tool in creating a therapeutic space is empathy, the capacity to listen to another with both thought and feeling. This session will focus on difficulties we may experience understanding the individualized histories of our clients, as well as on how a therapeutic space assists our clients to adjust enough of their characteristic defensive processes to allow more conscious choices in their lives.

### **Sessions 8-9: Transference and Countertransference**

Instructor: Miriam Field, MSS, LCSW

By maintaining an awareness of our experiences in the room with our clients, we can learn a great deal about their early experiences and the quality of their relationships with others. We will discuss how understanding the transferences in the therapeutic relationship can enhance our work with clients, looking carefully at what we mean when we talk about transference and how can we use transference as a technique to further growth. The second session will focus on countertransference. Awareness of our own emotional reactions to the client provides further insight and understanding in our work. We will take up the technical question of how countertransference differs from the therapist's transference to the client. In addition we will look at enactments which occur as a result of the intense interaction between the therapist and the client, considering their inevitability as well as their usefulness if they are understood and handled thoughtfully.

## **Sessions 10-12: Attachment Theory in Clinical Practice**

Instructor: Leda Sportolari, LCSW

“The therapist’s role is analogous to that of a mother who provides her child with a secure base from which to explore the world.”--Bowlby

Attachment Theory provides an overarching framework from which to understand our clients’ distress and their attempts to cope with that distress, as well the reparative potential of the therapy relationship. We will consider the centrality of attachment in early development, our ongoing attachment needs throughout life, and the attachment styles which typically develop when a child or adult is not securely attached. We will explore the neurobiological underpinnings of attachment and consider its central role in early affect regulation and neural integration. We will apply our knowledge of attachment theory to our clinical work by taking a view of the therapeutic relationship as an attachment relationship with goals of promoting self integration, reflectiveness, and the capacity for healthy dependency. The role of nonverbal, unconscious communication will be emphasized, as well as the inevitability and handling of enactments in the intersubjective clinical space. We will discuss the importance of establishing and maintaining the therapeutic frame to securely hold our clients, as well as how to understand and sensitively attend to frame disruptions.

## **Sessions 13-15: Enhancing Relational Psychodynamic Therapy with CBT and Mindfulness Practice**

Instructor: Peggy Vogt, MSW, LCSW

The demands of contemporary clinical practice require flexibility in the use of self and choice of interventions. These three sessions will present an approach for using cognitive-behavioral techniques within a relational psychodynamic framework. The first and second classes will present an overview of the cognitive-behavioral therapies, from traditional behavior therapy through contemporary developments that integrate mindfulness meditation. The third class will include a case presentation that illustrates the application of these strategies within a psychodynamic approach to trauma treatment. The case presentation will integrate trauma, attachment, and neurobiological theory from earlier classes.

## **Faculty and Supervisor Bios and Contact Info**

**Miriam Field, MSS, LCSW** has an active private practice treating individuals of all ages and couples in Merion and Center City. She provides clinical supervision on a sliding scale basis. A psychoanalyst on the faculty of the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia, she teaches in the adult and child psychotherapy training programs. She is a past president and founder of the Alliance for Psychoanalytic Thought. Additionally she is a mental health consultant to preschools in Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties.  
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**Sara Bressi Nath, PhD, LSW** is an Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. She received her MSW and PhD from the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice. Sara's research focuses on exploring the quality of health and mental health services received by adults and older adults with serious mental illnesses. She has a private practice in Bryn Mawr, and is an alumna of the Adult Psychotherapy program at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia. She teaches the foundation year practice course, a theory course covering social and behavioral theory, and a course in adult development and aging at the GSSWSR.  
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**Leda Sportolari, MSW, LCSW** is in private practice in Bala Cynwyd, working with children, adolescents, adults, couples and families. Her specialty areas include: child and adolescent assessment and treatment; parenting guidance; relationship concerns; and helping children and families negotiate divorce and remarriage. She has a particular interest in working with young children and their families, using an attachment-based perspective to understand and treat social-emotional-behavioral problems. Leda teaches parenting classes at local nursery schools. Leda is past-president of the Pennsylvania Society for Clinical Social Work and is an adjunct faculty member at the Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. She offers sliding scale clinical supervision to MSWs pursuing LCSW licensure.  
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**Peggy Vogt, MSS, LCSW** is on staff at the Drexel University College of Medicine Outpatient Psychiatry Service, where she practices psychotherapy and provides supervision to trainees from a range of mental health disciplines. Her professional interests include trauma and abuse; mindfulness in psychotherapy; and clinical supervision. Peggy has a Certificate in Advanced Clinical Supervision from the Smith College School for Social Work and is also adjunct faculty for Smith's M.S.W. program. In addition, she is currently an adjunct instructor for Drexel University's Creative Arts in Therapy program and a former member of PSCSW's Education Committee.  
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