Attachment Theory in Clinical Practice
With Adults
Winter 2016

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Office Hours:
   Monday 1:30 – 3:00
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Course Text
Available on e-links through UM:

Course Description
Understanding the implications of early childhood relationships on adult functioning can provide a powerful framework for creating goals and intervention in adult psychotherapy. Using attachment theory as the foundation, this course will address relationship-based intervention with adults. Students will learn the role of attachment in the development and maintenance of strategies that adults use to manage needs for autonomy and connection, in social, family and romantic relationships.

Course Objectives
By the end of the course, students will understand:
• The theoretical construct of attachment patterns and styles of attachment
• The clinical utility of attachment theory
• An understanding of the cultural norms in development of attachment
• The clinical correlates of adolescent and adult attachment organization
• Attachment-related defensive processes
• The neurobiology of attachment
• How to use an understanding of the dynamics of attachment to inform clinical thinking and intervention with diverse populations
• The role of transference and countertransference
• Conscious use of self in mentalization-based practice
• The limitations and gaps in attachment research

Course Design
Designed as an integrative seminar, this course will involve extensive participation on the part of the students. To promote clinical skills including critical thinking, emotional attunement and thoughtfully derived interventions, this course will employ a variety of pedagogical strategies, including experiential exercises, small and large group discussion, didactic lectures, videos, role plays, fishbowl supervisions, and reflective writings.

Links to CSWE Practice Behaviors
Practice Behavior 3
• Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
• Distinguish, appraise and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom
• Demonstrate effective oral and written communication
• Analyze models of assessment, prevention, and intervention

Practice Behavior 4
• Engage diversity and difference in practice
• Recognize and communicate understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
• Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate (I would say “manage”) the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups

Practice Behavior 7
• Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
• Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention and evaluation
• Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment

Practice Behavior 10
• Engage, assess, intervene and evaluate...
• Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
• Collect, organize and interpret client data
• Select appropriate intervention strategies

**Relationship of the Course to Ethics and Values**
Social work ethics and values will be addressed within the course as they pertain to issues related to working with clients in a relationally-based intervention. Awareness of transference, countertransference, and the necessity of reflective supervision will be highlighted as ways to maintain appropriate boundaries and to prevent compassion fatigue. We will look at how attachment is understood across cultures and the role of cultural humility in exploring the attachment-related needs and behaviors of clients.

**Accommodations**
If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities and the way that the course is taught can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress throughout the semester. The earlier that you make me aware of your needs the more effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, and the like. If you do decide to disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information as private and confidential. Also, please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Course Requirements**
(1) Attend each session (20 points); absences will lower your grade since:
• Some material considered essential to the objectives of the course will only be presented in class;
• The application of key concepts and student co-learning requires participation in class discussions and exercises.
• Predictability, reliability and consistency are core to any strong relationship… “being there” is incredibly important to clients, so it is important in this class
• Attendance means participating and attending to others. Using computers or mobile devices to text, shop, Facebook, etc. will **significantly reduce** your attendance points. Unless you have a family emergency, (and please speak to me about it ahead of time) please put your phones away.
(2) Completion of Three Assignments

- Discussion Response (20 points) – due by April 3 by midnight (can be uploaded at any point after the end of January).
- Mid-term Paper (40 points) – Due February 21 by midnight
- Final Paper (20 points) – Due April 10 by midnight

Assignment Description:

- Attachment goes to the Movies (20 points) - due by April 3 by midnight (can be uploaded at any point after the end of January).

During the course of the semester, you must post (in the discussion tab) at least one detailed account of your understanding of a movie or TV character(s). Choose a character/scene (can be an interaction between two or three people) from a movie or TV show (you might have to give some background to set the context. Describe the show/scene fully so the rest of us can get a sense of what is occurring. Then write about the scene/person in attachment terms. What nonverbal cues do you notice? What emotion regulation or cognitive tendencies do you see? Is there a clear attachment style? If not, do you have any guesses? Do you notice any defensive strategies? Describe what you would want to explore if the character were your client. What, if any, barriers due to identity (race, class, culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation) might exist in developing or sustaining a therapeutic relationship with the character? These are only some of the questions you can ponder and respond to – feel free to also elaborate other reactions/ideas/connections.

Given the length of time you have for this assignment, no late entries will be accepted.

- Mid-term Paper (40 points) - Due February 21 by midnight

Using a compilation of the readings so far, provide a detailed example of how you can apply what you are reading to your clinical work. Be specific. For example, how are you listening for attachment themes? Have you thought about any of your clients differently and if so, how? How is Attachment Theory informing your interventions? What has been difficult? Use the chapters to help elaborate your points and use specific examples from your work. You should be able to write at least three pages about application of attachment theory to your work.
Finally, end with at least a paragraph or two connecting what you are learning about yourself in relation to attachment theory and the way in which you think your own relational style may be impacting your clinical work. Again, be specific. For example, if you assume you have a relatively autonomous state of mind regarding attachment, how do you think that plays out in your work? What benefits, specifically, may it afford you? What might be something of a limitation, if any, of having an autonomous state of mind (or any other state of mind)? I grade papers based on evidence of understanding of markers of attachment-related behavior, and ability to construct a strong therapeutic hypothesis and frame for intervention, as well as evidence of beginning level of understanding of transference and countertransference, including how your own attachment history may impact your work with clients.

Excellent papers (A papers) will show strong writing, strong clinical thinking and marked evidence of having read and integrated course materials. ‘B’ papers will show understanding of same concepts and at least some level of clinical thinking. Students’ whose papers that do not show such evidence will be asked to meet with me and to re-write their paper. ONLY Papers under a B- will be accepted for revision and the revised grade can only be as high as the lowest passing grade in the class.

Papers are expected on time. If you have an unavoidable emergency, let me know. In all cases, I will deduct 2 points if turned in with 5 days. Paper submitted more than five days late will not receive any feedback and will be subject to a deduction of 5 points. I will not accept any papers more than 10 days late.

- Final Paper (20 points) - Due April 10 by midnight
To be discussed in class. Due to the proximity of end of term, papers can only be given a two-day extension for an emergency, and 2 points will be deducted.

Course Agenda

Class One - January 7
Introductions
Class orientation
Development of Attachment
• Prep for Class One
  Complete the Relationship Style Questionnaire
•  http://www.web-research-design.net/cgi-bin/crq/crq.pl
Class Two - January 14 (Group 1)
Foundations of Attachment Theory
Reading
• Wallin –
  o Chapter 1 – Attachment and Change
  o Chapter 2 – Foundations of Attachment Theory
  o Chapter 3 – Mary Main – Mental representations
  o Chapter 4 – Fonagy and Forward

Class Three - January 21 (Group 2)
Styles of Attachment
Adult Attachment Theory
Therapist as a Secure Base
Reading
• Obegi and Berant –
  o Introduction - (Beyond pg. 6 is optional),
  o Chapter 2 – An Overview of Adult Attachment Theory
  o Chapter 3 – The Therapist as a Secure Base

Class Four - January 28 (Group 3)
Attachment and the Developing Self
Reading
• Wallin –
  o Chapter 5 – The Multiple Dimensions of Self
  o Chapter 6 – The Varieties of Attachment Experience
  o Chapter 7 – How Attachment Relationships Shape the Self

Class Five - February 4 (Group 4)
Attachment and Emotion Regulation
Reading
• Wallin – Chapter 8 – Nonverbal Experience and the “Unthought Known” – Accessing the Emotional Core of the Self
• O & B – Chapter 13 – An Attachment Perspective on Crying in Psychotherapy
• Canvas – Siegel – The Neurobiology of Psychotherapy
Class Six - February 11 (Group 5)
Mentalization and Attachment
Reading
  • Wallin –
    o Chapter 9 – The Stance of the Self toward Experience: Embeddedness, Mentalizing and Mindfulness
    o Chapter 10 – Deepening the Clinical Dimension of Attachment Theory: Intersubjectivity and the Relational Perspective
  • O & B – Chapter 4 – Attachment, Mentalization and Reflective Functioning

Class Seven - February 18 (Group 1)
Clinical Correlates of Attachment Assessment
Intersubjectivity
Reading
  • O & B –
    o Chapter 5 – Clinical Correlates of Adult Attachment Organization
    o Chapter 6 – Using Interviews to Assess Adult Attachment
  • Wallin – Chapter 11 – Constructing the Developmental Crucible

Class Eight - February 25 (Group 2)
Guest Lecture
  Karol Wilson and Gillian Ogilvie – Starfish Human Services
  Using Attachment Theory in serving people in poor, urban communities
Reading
  • Canvas – Bennett, Sheridan & Soniat – Attachment and Caregiving for Elders with African-American Families
  • Canvas – Bettman & Jasperson – Attachment Research: Contributions of Social Workers
  • Canvas – van Ijzendoorn and Sagi-Schwartz – Cross-cultural Patterns of Attachment

NO CLASS - March 3 – Enjoy Spring Break!

Class Nine - March 10 (Group 3)
Attachment Patterns in Psychotherapy
Defense Mechanisms
Reading
- O & B –
  - Chapter 10 – An Attachment Approach to Adult Psychotherapy
  - Chapter 11 – Transference and Attachment
  - Chapter 12 – Attachment-Related Defensive Processes

Class Ten - March 17 (Group 4)
Romantic Relationships
Reading
- O & B – Chapter 16 – Attachment Theory and Emotionally Focused Therapy for Individuals and Couples: Perfect Partners
- Canvas – Mohr – Same-Sex Romantic Attachment

Class Eleven - March 24
Watch D. Wallin clips:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLYdiLpUj6Y
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPlj-kOHOK4
Attachment Patterns in Psychotherapy
Reading
- Wallin –
  - Chapter 12 - The Dismissing Patient: From Isolation to Intimacy
  - Chapter 13 - The Preoccupied Patient: Making Room for a Mind of One’s Own
  - Chapter 14 – The Unresolved Patient: Healing the Wounds of Trauma and Loss
  - Canvas – Slade – Imagining Fear: Attachment, Threat and Psychic Experience

Class Twelve - March 31 (Group 5)
Verbal and Nonverbal Realms
Reading
- Wallin –
  - Chapter 15 – The Nonverbal Realm I: Working with the Evoked and the Enacted
  - Chapter 16 – The Nonverbal Realm II: Working with the Body
- O & B – Chapter 17 – Attachment Theory and CBT