**Psychology UN3623: Topics in Clinical Psychology**

**Spring 2025**

**Time: Wednesday 12:10-2:00pm**

**Location: 200B SCHERMERHORN**

**Instructor: Irit Felsen, Ph.D.**

**Email:** Irit.Felsen@gmail.com

**Office hours**: Wednesday, 11:00-12:00

Please make an appointment to speak with me if you have questions, or just want to chat. I would be delighted to meet with you. Email is the most efficient contact method. Please use this email:

[Irit.felsen@gmail.com](mailto:Irit.felsen@gmail.com)

*Please include your* ***full name*** *in all emails.*

*If you have to reach me urgently, you can call and leave a message on my cell phone at 201-682-5603.*

**Course Overview:**

This course offers a review of selected clinical issues and conceptual models in clinical psychology, reflecting some of the pertinent issues that bring individuals and couples to seek psychotherapy, and how we treat these problems.

This course places the practice of clinical psychology within its wider socio-ecological context, highlighting the importance of racial, ethnic, socio-economic differences and intergroup relations in the encounter between patient and therapist, in assessing goals for treatment, and in choice of interventions. There is a strong focus on the embeddedness of individuals, couples, and families within their particular socio-cultural environment, and on the forces that shape multi-generational relational patterns, including both unique vulnerabilities and resiliencies.

This course emphasizes the imperative for practitioners of mental health to develop awareness of our own embeddedness within our personal and socio-cultural context: our families of origin, the relational experiences that have shaped our sense of self and our relational paradigms, and how to develop the necessary self-regulation skills to identify and counter our automatic responses and emotional biases.

Basic concepts related to the therapeutic encounter such as the treatment alliance, transference, countertransference, and the intersubjective turn in psychology will be introduced. We will review how these have been influenced by recent theoretical contributions that changed the way we understand the nature of the interaction in the patient-therapist dyad as mutually co-constructed, and how the position and the functioning of the therapist have changed in contemporary practice in comparison to earlier models of psychodynamic psychotherapy.

We will explore the evolution of the concepts of cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural safety and discuss some of the complex benefits and drawbacks related to the application of these perspectives. We will review empirical data about the impact of differences between patient and healthcare provider on clinical decisions, and the perspective offered by evolutionary psychology regarding the roots of non-conscious, automatic social categorization processes and emotional biases, as well as how to develop the skills to counter such automatic processes.

We will review the basic concepts of Bowen’s Family System Theory with a focus on differentiation of self and multigenerational transmission processes. The concept of trauma and collective historical trauma will be presented, as well as empirical evidence for the intergenerational transmission of effects related to ancestral trauma. Students will become familiar with the perspective of ‘person-centered trauma informed care’.

We will review videos and empirical studies from research in mother-infant non-verbal interaction and discuss attachment theory, how early attachment styles are related to development in later life, and how attachment styles manifest in adult romantic relationships. Internal Family Systems Therapy will be presented as a clinical intervention that builds upon previously introduced concepts. Students will also learn and practice in class (and then outside of class, as a paper/project) the “Imago Dialogue”, one of the central techniques in the “experiential couple therapies”, and establish the connections between its elements and concepts discussed in Family Systems theory, Internal Family System Therapy, Attachment theory and research, and Mother-infant research.

Additional lectures will include treatment of specific problems in long-term intimate relationships, including some of the central techniques for treatment of inhibited sexual desire, addressing infidelity, and the impact of neurodiversity (ADHD; Autism Spectrum Disorders) on couple and family relationships.

Some lectures in this course will be presented by Dr. Felsen, the others will be student-led. In student-led meetings, depending on the size of the class, one or two students will present a short overview of the *main* points in the weekly readings, and will lead class discussion.

**Course Objectives:**

The objectives of this course can be summarized as follows: (a) presenting basic concepts relevant to clinical psychology and clinical practice and the way they have evolved and changed our understanding of the process of psychotherapy, (b) locating the practice of clinical psychology, individual and couples’ problems, and the therapeutic relationship within the context of intersubjective and inter-group differences and systemic discrimination, (c) gaining exposure to some of the salient theories that describe how the sense of self and relational patterns are shaped through development, and how they continue to impact our adult relationships (d) exploration of research and psychotherapeutic interventions related to specific areas of clinical practice.

**Requirements:**

**Class attendance and active involvement in class discussion are a central requirement and are expected of all students**. **One** unexcusedabsence is allowed during the semester (this does not include excused absences in cases of illness, religious observance, or other extenuating circumstances). Please email me **before** any missed class. During class, you are expected to refrain from any activity online and on your screens, except note taking.

**Assigned readings** can be found in this syllabus, and the syllabus will be posted on Canvas/Courseworks. The syllabus and the reading assignments are, however, open to changes during the semester. All students are expected to read the assigned articles and to post a comment/question about the reading each week. Please post your comments by **Monday at 7:00pm**, **prior** to the upcoming meeting of class. Your discussion posts should reflect thoughtful consideration of the readings and you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and your comments. In total, your discussion posts will count for **15% of your final course grade.**

**Class Participation:**

Your participation is essential for creating an enriching learning experience, especially since this is a class that encourages self-reflection and self-awareness, which are critical qualities in good clinical work. In addition to your regular attendance, it is expected that you will actively participate in class discussions on a regular basis. **Your participation in class will count for 25% of your final grade.**

You will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions, based on the following criteria:

* The student participates actively in class discussions
* The student demonstrates knowledge and understanding of reading assignments
* The student’s comments are relevant and not tangential or ambiguous
* The student demonstrates a willingness to connect the material to their own contextuality and locate oneself in relation to the issues discussed.
* The student is an active listener who addresses and integrates comments from classmates
* The student is courteous and respectful of classmates during class discussions

**Introductory Assignment: Transcultural Psychiatry and Psychology**

The introductory assignment is worth **5% of your final course grade**. Write a one-to two-page description of two or three of your “social locations” (based on the reading for the first class, as specified on the course syllabus), when and how you became aware of these social locations, and how they impact you as a person and/or psychotherapist. Obvious social locations include gender, for example, but you are invited to describe any unique social location that you would like. Be prepared to discuss some of these issues in class. This assignment is NOT to be posted on the Discussion forum. You should send it directly to my personal email at [irit.felsen@gmail.com](mailto:irit.felsen@gmail.com).

**Leading Class discussions**

This class is a seminar, and students will be expected to take turns, working in pairs, presenting the weekly readings and leading a class discussion of the topics. This will count for an additional **15%** of your grade.

Each presenter will be expected to speak for a total of 15-20 minutes. The presentations will be evaluated as follows:

* Ability to choose the most important messages/points from the weekly readings and present them in 5-10 powerpoint slides
* Clarity of the presentation in terms of the content
* Clarity of the presentation in terms of public speaking skills
* Offering thoughtful points for stimulating discussion in class.

**Imago Dialogue and Paper:**

This is a practical assignment that is based on learning a structured technique for couple therapy. After learning in class how to conduct an Imago dialogue, you will conduct such a dialogue with a person with whom you have a close relationship (a significant other, a sibling, a friend). In the dialogue you will practice being one time the ‘sender’, the other time the ‘recipient’. The topic for the dialogue will be either the one suggested in class or one of your choice. You will submit a transcript of the dialogue and a reaction paper describing what your observations and experiences in the dialogue were like, according to a few questions that will be outlined for you. Write a paper that is no longer than 5 pages (not including the transcript). This assignment will count for **20% of the final grade**.

**Research Review Paper:**

You will need to conduct a real life-review interview with someone of your choice.

A questionnaire will be provided for a semi-structured interview, in which interviewees will be allowed to expand on each question as they wish.

The interview will include questions about significant aspects of life and about both risk and protective factors that the interviewee experienced at different times while growing up, stressful experiences which they might have endured, people who supported them, and resilient role models they have identified with. The recording of the interview will be submitted to me.

Students will be expected read three papers of their choice from peer reviewed psychology journals that have relevance to issues/challenges or other salient aspects that the interviewee shared. You will then write a report that includes:

(a) a summary of what you learned about the person’s life from the interview (regarding formative life experiences and important others, challenges, risk and protective factors that the interviewee experienced at different times, traumatic or stressful experiences which they might have endured, and resilient role models they have identified with.

(b) a summary of the findings and conclusions from the peer reviewed papers, which students will relate to the interviewee’s experiences,

(c) integration of relevant concepts from class lectures that the student can apply to what they learned about the author’s life.

This assignment will make up **20% of your final grade**.

**General Guidelines for Writing Assignments:**

Writing assignments are due in class on the assigned dates. Points might be taken off due to late submission.

To maximize points for written assignments:

* Turn the paper in on time.
* Write in a clear, organized manner. Avoid grammatical and spelling errors.
* Include introductory and concluding paragraphs.
* Include all required elements in the paper (as will be articulated in class).
* Keep to the standard page and formatting requirements (i.e., double spaced, 12 font, regular page margins).
* Follow APA style (use *Publication Manual of the APA: Sixth Edition* as your guide).

**Honor Code:**

All students are required to uphold their commitment to the academic integrity standards of the university, and to uphold the Student Honor Code, which can be found at: <http://www.college.columbia.edu/facultyadmin/academicintegrity>. Barnard College students commit themselves to the same Honor Code upon registering for a Columbia course.

**Digital Technology:**

Use of digital technology for non-class related purposes is at best distracting and at worst impolite and disrespectful, both to your classmates and to the professor. Even during Zoom sessions, should we need to have them, your attention is expected to be focused on the class. If we meet via Zoom, please try to ask family members to avoid appearing in the space where they might be seen, if possible. Students are expected to refrain from using phones *in any capacity* during class. Please turn phones to silent or vibrate during class. If you need to use your phone for any reason, please leave the classroom.

While in the classroom, please use your screen only for purposes related to the lecture.

**Summary of Grading:**

Your final grade in this course will be based on the weighted combination of the following:

Introductory assignment 5%

Class participation 25%

Written weekly assignments 15%

Leading class discussion 15%

Imago dialog transcript and paper 20%

Interview and final paper 20%

**Plan of Weekly Lectures**

**Lecture 1, Jan 22: Fundamental Concepts in Psychotherapy**

The treatment alliance, transference, countertransference, process and content, family narratives, and the “intersubjective turn” in psychological theory and practice.

**NO reading is required for the first meeting of this class.**

**Lecture 2, Jan 29: Cultural Competence in the Practice of Psychology.**

**Readings:**

1. Brown, Laura S., (2009) “Cultural Competence: A New Way of Thinking about Integration in Therapy,” Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 19(4), 340-356
2. Kirmayer, Laurence J., (2014) “Rethinking cultural competence”, Transcultural Psychiatry 49(2) 149–164.

# Safran, Jeremy D. and Kraus, Jessica (2014) Research on Therapeutic Impasses and Ruptures in the Therapeutic Alliance, *Psychotherapy*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 381–387.

# *The Introductory Assignment is due Monday January 27th, before our next meeting. This assignment replaces the usual weekly reading comments/posts, so you don’t need to do that this week.*

**Lecture 3, February 5: Bowen Family System.**

**Readings:**

1. The Essentials of Family Therapy, Nichols, Michael P. Seventh edition, Chapter 4: Bowen Family Systems Theory, pp. 56-71
2. Skowron, Elizabeth A. and Friedlander, Myrna L. (2009) Errata, *Journal of Counseling Psychology Vol. 56, No. 4, 597–598.*
3. The Essentials of Family Therapy, Nichols, Michael P. Seventh edition, Chapter 6: Structural Family Therapy, pp. 90-104.
4. Jeanine M. Vivona (2007) Sibling Differentiation, Identity Development and the Lateral Dimenssion of Psychic Life. Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, Vol. 55(4):1191-1215-

*Please fill out for yourself the DSI, you will NOT be asked to share it with me or with the class but be prepared to share some of your thoughts about the dimensions that the scale taps into, and your experience having used it.*

**Lecture 4, February 12**: **The Two-Person Unconscious Communication.**

**Readings:**

1. Tronick, Edward Z. (1989) Emotions and Emotional Communication in Infants. *American Psychologist 44 (2): 112-119*.
2. Brandschaft, B. (2007) Systems of Pathological Accomodation and Change in Analysis. *Psychoanalytic Psychology,* 24 (4): 667-687.
3. Please watch this documentary: [Mother-Infant Communication: The Research of Dr. Beatrice Beebe](http://www.pep-web.org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/toc.php?journal=pepgrantvs&volume=1#11) [http://www.pep-web.org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/document.php?id=pepgrantvs.001.0011a&type=hitlist&num=1&query=fulltext1%2CKaren+Dougherty%7Czone1%2Cparagraphs%7Czone2%](http://www.pep-web.org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/document.php?id=pepgrantvs.001.0011a&type=hitlist&num=1&query=fulltext1%2CKaren+Dougherty%7Czone1%2Cparagraphs%7Czone2%25)

Or: Decoding Mother-Infant Interaction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-60yYJvztJ8>

**Lecture 5, February 19: The history of the concept of Trauma in Mental Health and the acknowledgement of Intergenerational Trauma.**

**Readings:**

1. Felsen, Irit (2020) Patient and Psychotherapist Meeting in Shared Intergenerational Transmission of Genocidal Trauma*.*
2. Felsen, Irit (2017) Adult-Onset Trauma and Intergenerational Transmission: Integrating Empirical Data and Psychoanalytic Theory*, Psychoanalysis, Self andContext,* 12:1, 60-77, DOI: 10.1080/15551024.2017.1251185
3. Please watch the movie “Born on the 4th of July”.

**Lecture 6, February 26: Intergenerational Transmission of Historical Trauma.**

**Readings:** Please choose 2 from the 4 papers:

1. O’Neill, L. , Fraser, T., Kitchenham, A. and McDonald, V. (2018) Hidden Burdens: A Review of Intergenerational, Historical and Complex Trauma, Implications for Indigenous Families.Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma (2018) 11:173–186 DOI 10.1007/s40653-016-0117-9
2. Halloran, M. J. (2019) African American Health and Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome: A Terror Management Theory Account*. Journal of Black Studies Vol. 50(1) 45–65*
3. Mohatt, Nathaniel Vincent; Thompson, Azure B.; Thai, Nghi D.; Kraemer Tebes, Jacob (2014) Historical trauma as public narrative: A conceptual review of how history impacts present-day health
4. Fitzgerald, Johnson, Allen, Villarruel, Baolian Qin (2021) Historical and Race‑Based Trauma: Resilience Through Family and Community. *Adversity and Resilience Science* (2021) 2:215–223.

*Psychoanalysis, Self and Context, 15:2, 170-186.* [*https://doi.org/10.1080/24720038.2019.1612405*](https://doi.org/10.1080/24720038.2019.1612405)

1. Please watch the animated movie “Encanto”

**Lecture 7, March 5: Internal Family System Therapy.**

**Readings:**

1. Internal Family Systems Therapy, second edition, by Richard Schwartz and Martha Sweezy (2020) Chapter 2, Individuals as systems, pp.24-42 and chapter 3, The Self, pp. 43-54: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/columbia/reader.action?docID=5841923&ppg=20>
2. Please watch the animated movie “Inside Out.”

**Lecture 8, March 12: Imago and Encounter-Centered Couple Therapy.**

**Readings:**

1. Hendrix, Harville and LaKelly Hunt, Hellen (1988, 2008, 2019) Getting the Love You Want, a guide for couples, chapter 1: pp. 3-59. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.04.006>
2. Robbins, Carol Ann, (2016) Imago Relationship Therapy Adapted for ADHD. In: Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy (Eds. Gina Pera and Arthur L. Robin) pp. 143-162.
3. Please watch this TED Talk by Hedy Schliefer : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEaERAnIqsY>

**Spring Break: March 19**

**Lecture 9: March 26: Attachment in Adult Romantic Relationships.**

**Readings:**

1. Williams, Lee, Edwards, Todd M., Patterson, JoEllen and Chamow, Larry. (2011) Essential Assessment Skills for Couple and Family Therapists, chapter 11: pp.184-210. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/columbia/reader.action?docID=655563&ppg=202>
2. Simpson, Jeffrey A. and Rholes, W. Steven. (2017) Adult Attachment, Stress and Romantic Relationships. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.04.006>
3. Tuckman, Ari. (2020). ADHD after dark: Better sex life, better relationship. Chapter 2, pp.26-63, you can access the book through the Columbia library link at: <https://resolver.library.columbia.edu/clio14752421>

The Imago Dialogue assignment is due by Tuesday April 1st.

**Lecture 10, April 2: Intimacy in Long-Term Relationships.**

**Readings:**

1. Esther Perel. (2010) The Double Flame: Reconciling Intimacy and Sexuality, Reviving Desire. *Treating Sexual Desire Disorders: A Clinical Casebook*.  
   Edited by Sandra R. Leiblum, pp. 23-43.

## Sheff, Elizabeth E. (2015) *The Polyamorist Next Door: Inside Multiple-Partner Relationships and Families*, Chapters 7 and 8 (pp. 191-254).

1. Avery-Clark, Constance and Weiner, Linda (2017), Sensate Focus in Sex Therapy, chapter 1: pp. 1-7 and chapter 2: pp. 8-14.

**Lecture 11, April 9: Couple Therapy**

**Readings:**

1. Leone, Carla, (2013) The Unseen Spouse: Pitfalls and Possibilities for the Individual Therapist. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues,* 23(3):324-339
2. Leone, Carla (2017) Differences in Desire and Other Sexual Problems: helping couples improve their sexual connection
3. Halford, W. Kim; Lizzio, Alf; Wilson, Keithia L. and Occhipinti, Stefano Occhipinti, *(2007)* Does Working at Your Marriage Help? *Journal of Family Psychology Vol. 21, No. 2, 185–194.*

**Lecture 12, April 16 : “Difficult People”**

**Readings:**

Stuart Yudofsky, (2005) “Fatal Flaws: Navigating Destructive Relationships with People with Disorders. Chapters 1 through 7

**Lecture 13, April 23: Helping Parents with Parenting Issues.**

**Readings:**

1. Novick, K.K. and Novick, J. (2014) Psychoanalysis and Child Rearing, Psychoanalytic Inquiry 34: 440-451.
2. Novick KK, Novick J. Building emotional muscle in children and parents. Psychoanal Study Child. 2011;65:131-51. doi: 10.1080/00797308.2011.11800835. PMID: 26027142.
3. Sanders M.R., Kirby J.N., Tellegen C.L., Day J.J. (2014) The Triple P-Positive Parenting Program: a systematic review and meta-analysis of a multi-level system of parenting support. Clinical Psychology Review 2014; 34(4): 337-357.

# Scudder, Ashly, Wong, Cassandra, Ober, Nicole, Hoffman, Megan, Tscolani, Jodi, Handen, Benjamin L. (2019) Parent–child interaction therapy (PCIT) in young children with autism spectrum disorder. Child and Family Behavior Therapy, Vol. 41 (4): 201-220.

# Recommended: Kazdin, Allan E. (2009) The Kazdin Method for Parenting the Defiant Child.

**Lecture 14, April 30:**  **Neurodiversity – “The perspective of one member of the last lost generation of autism” (Guest Speaker)**

**Readings:**

1. Please read before this meeting several posts in the blog https://amongsthumans.com/, including one of the early posts, entitled “letting him out”.
2. Ken’ichi Nixima, Maiko Fujimori, Kazuo Okanoya. (2013) An ERP Study of Autistic Traits and Emotional Recognition in Non-Clinical Adolescence. Psychology Vol. 4, No.6, 515-519. Published online June 2013 in SciRes <http://www.scirp.org/journal/psych>; <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/psych.2013.46073>
3. Kim J Y, Son M J, Son C Y, et al. (2019) Environmental Risk Factors and Biomarkers for Autism Spectrum Disorder: An Umbrella Review of the Evidence. Lancet Psychiatry; 6: 590–600.
4. Please listen to Theresa Regan, Autism, Apple podcasts :

<https://www.adultandgeriatricautism.com/participant-page/introduction-autism-adult?programId=c44838c3-a013-4f2e-89f7-8e6d11228d3b&participantId=3c841263-ccd8-4bb3-a5b1-d18d0fa43ffa>

The final paper is due by May 11.