

The New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis

#S404 - Psychoanalytic Theory of Depression

Instructor: Sheldon Weiss, LCSW

Spring 2025

Via Zoom

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine depression in terms of intrapsychic dynamics including inter-and intra-systemic conflicts, etiology, and clinical manifestations. Differing analytic ideas regarding depression will be described, including drive theory, object relations, ego psychology, and interpersonal or relational approaches. Other theories and their adherents, not easily described as falling under one theoretical umbrella will also be considered. Clinical material introduced by students is always encouraged and will be utilized to differentiate and delineate this ubiquitous manifestation. The quintessential questions of whether the depression that is manifested represents a patient's core pathology, a symptom of another primary diagnosis, a resistance, or whether it represents a normal, adaptive stage of development will be raised and will be open for discussion.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To distinguish at least 3 differences between depression and the normal mourning process.
2. To differentiate how depression is manifested in people who are on the neurotic, borderline or psychotic spectrum.
3. To use at least 3 types of psychoanalytic therapeutic interventions for treating people suffering from depression.
4. To apply their knowledge of patients' differences in loss and mourning in treating their clients from various ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Due by the last class: a 4-6 page paper integrating clinical material with at least 2 concepts/theoretical orientations discussed and read for this course.

CLASS AND READINGS:

Class 1- We will study two of the early classical works in Depression. We will attempt to shed new light on the concepts of melancholia and manic depression.

Readings:

Freud, S. (2024). Mourning and melancholia. In Solms, Michael (Ed). *The Revised Standard Edition 14*, 243-58.

Abraham, K. (1911). Notes on the psychoanalytical investigation and treatment of manic-depressive insanity and allied conditions. *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*. (pp137-156). The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis.

Sadowsky, J. (2021). Turned inwards. *The empire of depression a view in history* (pp 48-66). Polity Press.

Class 2- We will study Abraham's later formulations on depression and contrast to those of Rado. We will comment on the relevance of understanding melancholic experience in families and couples.

Readings:

Abraham, K. (1924). A short study of the development of the libido in the light of mental disorders. *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*. (pp. 418-464). The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis.

Rado, S. (1928). The problem of melancholia. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 9, 420-438.

Optional:

Fattori, L. (2021). Unconscious rancour and melancholic depression. *The Italian Psychoanalytic Annual*, 15, 27-45.

Class 3. We will contrast the approaches of Melanie Klein and Edward Bibring. We will review a more contemporary view of understanding bipolar disorder., and how Melanie Klein's ideas could be helpful in treating couples.

Readings:

Klein, M. (1940). Mourning and its relation to manic - depressive states. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 21, 125-163.

Bibring, E. (1953). The mechanism of depression. Phyllis Greenacre Eds. *Affective disorders -psychoanalytic contributions to their study*. (pp13-48). International Universities Press.

Optional

Vedat Ş. (2023). Dissociative depression: a psychodynamic view. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 37, 4, 381-428.

Goldblat, J.M. (2024). Abrupt terminations in the treatment of suicidal and self-harming young people: The negative in the therapeutic relationship. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 40, 1, 76-93.

Class 4. We will focus on understanding Edith Jacobson's unique contributions to understand depression. Since she worked with severely depressed patients we will also discuss the therapist's reactions to the suicide of a patient.

Readings:

Jacobson, E. (1953). Contributions to the metapsychology of cyclothmic depression. *Affective disorders- psychoanalytic contributions to their study*. International Universities Press.

Jacobson, E. (1940). Transference problems in the psychoanalytic treatment of severely depressed states. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 595-606.

Class 5. We will discuss the experience of loss as a normal issue in life and the attachment theories of Bowlby. We will contrast this with the difficulty of mourning in survivors of trauma.

Readings:

Bowlby, J. (1961). Processes of mourning. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 42, 317-340.

Pine, F. (1989). The place of the object in normal development. In David Dietrich and Peter Shabad Eds. *The problem of loss and mourning- psychoanalytic perspectives*. (159-173). International Universities Press.

Class 6. We will explore treatment options and perspectives in the psychoanalytic treatment of depression. There will be ego psychological perspectives as well as contemporary and cultural issues.

Readings:

Blank, G. & Blank, R. (1974). Some suggestions for treating the depressed patient. *Ego Psychology*. (pp. 256-280). Columbia University Press.

Levin, S. (1965). Some suggestions for treating the depressed patient. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 34, 37-65.

Pelladeau, E. (2021). On the threshold of loss and its representations: masochism as a safeguard against depressive disorder. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 102(6), 1174-1189.

Optional:

Long C., Mattee, H., Jwili, O., & Vilakazi, Z. (2021). Racial difference, rupture and repair: A view from the couch and back. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 30, 698-715.

Class 7. We will look at the treatment of depression from self psychological and relational perspectives. We will also explore the issues of treating adolescent depression.

Readings:

MacIssac, D. (2007). Treatment of a severely depressed patient: a self psychological perspective. *International Journal of Self Psychology*, 2 (1), 27-51.

Bose, J. (2016). Dissociative processes and the depressed patient. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 52(1), 51-75.

Acheson, R., Verdenhalven, N., Avdi, E., & Midgley, N. (2020). Exploring silence in short-term psychoanalytic psychotherapy with adolescents with depression. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 46, 224-240.

Optional:

Watt, D.F. (2023). The separation distress hypothesis of depression - an update and systemic review. *Neuropsychoanalysis*, 25, 2, 103-159.

Otto F. Kernberg (2023) Commentary on “The separation distress hypothesis of depression – an update and systematic review” *Neuropsychoanalysis*, 25, 2, 169-170.

Barton J. Blinder (2023) Commentary on Douglas Watt's “The separation distress hypothesis of depression - update and systematic review” with some additional thoughts on rumination and object loss, *Neuropsychoanalysis*, 25, 2, 165-168.

Class 8. In this final class we will discuss psychoanalytical overviews of depressive and manic personalities. This will again be from a few contemporary perspectives.

Readings:

McWilliams, Nancy (2011). Depressive and manic personalities. *Psychoanalytic Diagnosis, Second edition*. Chapter 11, (pp 235-266). The Guilford Press.

Shedler, J. (2021). The personality syndromes. In R. Feinstein Eds. *A Primer on Personality Disorders: Multi Theoretical Viewpoints*. Oxford University Press

Bollas, C. (2021) The manic depressive. *Three Characters Narcissist, Borderline, Manic Depressive*. (pp. 43-65 & pp71-75). Phoenix Publishing House.

