Object Relations Theories (PSY 877)

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Catalogue Description: This course will provide a historical perspective and conceptual models of object relations theories and focus on the role of object relations in the etiology, development, and expression of psychopathology from childhood to adulthood. The course will survey the object relations theories of everyone from Melanie Klein to Peter Fonagy and the relational theorists, paying particular attention to the conceptual differences and similarities among these various theories. Empirical justification of object relations theories and the assessment of object relations as well as controversies and critiques of these theories will be considered. Case formulation using object relations models will also be covered. Finally, the course will introduce students to new directions in object relations theories offered by contemporary object relations theorists.

Readings are accessible at the link below:
http://www.cwpost.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/reserve/index.html

Podcasts of each class lecture are accessible at the link below:
http://myweb.cwpost.liu.edu/ggoodman/courses.htm

Course Outline

Class 1: Theoretical and Historical Overview


Class 2: Melanie Klein and Her Followers


Class 3: The Independent or “Middle” School


Class 4: North American Object Relations Theories


**Class 5: Interpersonal-Relational Theories**


**Class 6: Attachment Theory I**


**Class 7: Attachment Theory II**


Class 8: Mentalization/Reflective Function


Class 9: Empirical Perspectives on Object Relations Constructs


Class 10: Case Formulation Using Object Relations Theory


**Class 11:** Controversies and Critiques


**Class 12:** New Directions


**Class 13:** Student Presentations
Class 14: Student Presentations

Course Requirements

The course will be graded pass/fail. Each student will write a maximum five-page, double-spaced conceptualization of a patient applying one of the object relations models. Please use APA Publication Manual format. The paper is due at the beginning of Class 13. Each student will also make a 10-minute presentation of his or her conceptualization during Class 13 or Class 14. Brief group discussion will follow each presentation. Order of presentation will be alphabetical.

Academic Competencies

1) Students will be able to explain what “object relations theories” are and how they relate to the etiology, development, and expression of psychopathology as well as the underlying psychic structures (i.e., self and object representations) that contribute to psychopathology.

2) Students will be able to distinguish conceptually among the various object relations theories (e.g., Kleinian vs. Fairbairnian, Kernbergian vs. Kohutian).

3) Students will be able to provide examples of different dimensions of object relations related to various diagnostic categories (e.g., split-off object representations related to borderline personality organization).

4) Students will be able to identify and discuss nativist versus environmentalist object relations theories and the implications for diagnostic conceptualization and clinical work.

5) Students will be able to formulate their clinical cases applying object relations models in anticipation of their Clinical Competency Examinations in their third year in the program.

6) Students will become familiar with the empirical justification of object relations theories and the assessment of object relations and understand how object relations theories could inform their dissertation research.

7) Students will be able to identify and discuss new directions in contemporary object relations theories.

Diversity

1) Students will be able to understand traditionalist as well as feminist and Marxist interpretations of object relations theories.
2) Students will be able to use object relations theories to help account for social and cultural phenomena.

3) Students will be able to identify and criticize object relations theories from non-Western perspectives (e.g., individualistic vs. collectivist social/cultural perspectives).

**Ethics**

1) Students will explore object relations theories with an attitude of openness, understanding, and nonjudgment.

2) Students will complete their class presentations honestly and independently of others.

**Professional Development**

1) Students will contact me prior to class if they cannot attend or will be late.

2) Students will make a good-faith effort to complete the assigned readings on time and participate in class discussions.

3) Students will prepare their class presentations on time, applying both diligence and a viable conceptual organization.

4) Students will prepare creative and poignant class presentations.

**From Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program Student Handbook 2007-2008**

The grades and definitions listed below are used in doctoral courses:

- **A** work is excellent; student not only demonstrates high achievement but also superior intellectual initiative beyond the objectives of the course; superior test performance; consistent superior performance across all work and tests.”

- **A-** Work is excellent; student demonstrates either high achievement (by going beyond the requisites of the course) or surpasses expectations for a student at this level; clearly demonstrates knowledge and competence beyond course requirements.

- **B+** Work is very good; student demonstrates clear understanding of the material and work is generally proficient and relatively free of errors; very good test performance.

- **B** Work is acceptable; student has applied requisite understanding of the material; acceptable test performance.

- **B-** Work is acceptable but lacking precision or understanding of the material; below average test performance.

- **F** Work is unacceptable for a graduate student; work errors greatly exceed those of the class, student has not effectively applied knowledge at this level from readings, class; poor performance on tests. Course must be repeated.

- **INC** Work which, as far as it has progressed, is of B or higher quality, but is incomplete because of illness, accident, or other serious extenuating circumstances. All incompletes must be
completed before the end of the next semester or the grade will automatically be changed to an **F**.

From the *Graduate Bulletin* (2003-2005, p. 15), “Academic Irregularities”: “In the case of a minor infraction that is the student’s first disciplinary offense, the Dean may authorize the faculty member to dispose of the charges, limiting the maximum penalty to failure in the course….In the case of a major infraction, or in the case of repeat academic offenses, the student may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the campus.”