description: Across cultures and throughout historical epochs the aim of psychotherapy, counseling, and other psychological healing techniques is to free an individual from forces perceived to be beyond his or her control, thereby transforming a patient (“suffering, enduring”) into an agent (“doing, taking action”). This aim is accomplished through a process by which a therapist (“serving, tending, nurturing”) offers a safe, supportive, responsive, and professional relationship that provides a patient with the opportunity to alter his or her experience of symptoms and disturbed characterological patterns in such a way as to transform the self. “Patient” becomes “agent” through processes provided by the four major models of psychotherapy, which make different assumptions and utilize different interventions for the alleviation of emotional suffering and disturbance:

• Psychoanalytic/psychodynamic: promotion of conscious acknowledgment and full experience (through clarification and interpretation) of private, often unconscious, emotions, desires, and memories that had previously generated anxiety and rigid defenses;

• Experiential/humanistic: development of a client’s natural potential for self-healing, self-direction, and self-regulation (through reflection and meaning-making);

• Behavioral: process of learning and practicing control over formerly overwhelming or seemingly out-of-control behaviors or habits (through operant or classical conditioning); and

• Cognitive: awareness, articulation, and intentional alteration of automatic and self-defeating patterns of thinking (through Socratic questioning and empirical testing of assumptions).

Restoration of meaning, control, or awareness results in broadening of thought, deepening of feeling, alteration of action: that is, re-expansion of one’s horizons, re-engagement with one’s unique development, and renewed capacity for enjoying life.

This course explores a range of techniques for responding to and alleviating unnecessary suffering used in 20th and 21st-century Western schools of psychotherapy. We shall

• understand current principles and practices of different models of therapy;

• determine the differential value of particular approaches and techniques for specific life dilemmas or forms of psychopathology;

• explore recent convergence among the disparate viewpoints in integrative, eclectic, and pluralistic approaches;

• examine the scientific and empirical understanding of how psychotherapy works; and

• evaluate curative processes and general efficacy of psychotherapy.

Prerequisites and Resources: The course presupposes a general curiosity about individual human problems and some working knowledge of personality theories and psychopathology. No PSYC E-2488 Syllabus, Fall 2007 specific past coursework is required, although past courses will naturally help with general familiarity and specific terminology. Readings should be completed by the date of the lecture under which they are listed. “Required” readings consist of a textbook and other books obtainable at the Harvard Coop, a coursepack or sourcebook of articles [SB], and chapters from books on
“Recommended” supplemental readings are available at Grossman or for purchase at the Coop.

Requirements: (1) Analysis of one of the following cases to understand the concepts and process of therapeutic change: Jim Zurf (Basch, 1988, pp. 154-192); Roger Flynn (Basch, 1988, pp. 193-235); or the Imaginary Patient (Malan, 1995, pp. 91-102). How do these men get better, according to psychodynamic models? Do not take up precious space summarizing the case, but provide evidence in support of assertions you make in your analysis. Your paper should adhere to the following strictures: three (3) pages in length, and in no event more than four (4) pages; typeface no smaller than 12-pitch; margins no narrower than one inch; and references in accordance with the simplified style for writing in psychology (American Psychological Association [2001], Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: Author [paperback]). This paper is due on 10/29/07.

(2) A one-hour closed-book test, comprised of short-answer, multiple-choice, and brief-essay questions on course material covered to that point (given on 11/5/07).

(3) A two-hour final examination, comprised predominantly of multiple-choice, brief-answer, and discussion questions, which will assess your capacity to integrate the concepts and approaches from course readings and lectures (given on 1/14/08).

(4) (Graduate students only) A final paper that is an original, comparative, and integrative analysis of two different theoretical/therapeutic schools’ approaches to a particular human dilemma, problem, or form of adult psychopathology of your choice. Your analysis should include

• presentation of the dilemma, problem, or psychopathology and the schools or approaches you have chosen to compare;
• your point of view on how each approach addresses and resolves—or fails to do so—that dilemma, problem, or psychopathology, supported by logical argument and theoretical grounding;
• empirical and scientific evidence to support your analysis of the differential value of these different approaches for the problem, dilemma, or symptom (in addition to Gurman & Messer [2003], use Bergin & Garfield [1994], Lambert [2003], and Roth & Fonagy [1996], listed on the syllabus for the last two classes, as sources for empirical research); and
• clinical case examples from the readings (Basch; Malan; Gurman & Messer; and Wallerstein [1986], on syllabus for last class) and/or from your own experience to illustrate your assertions.

You may of course make an argument that different approaches are useful in addressing different aspects of the same problem, dilemma, or form of psychopathology. Your essay is expected to be clearly written and typed, using the same guidelines and strictures as outlined above under the first paper, except that this paper is expected to be no more than ten (10) pages. This paper is due on 1/7/08, at the final class.

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Sequence of Course Topics and Readings

9/17/07: OVERVIEW: AIMS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

9/24/07: HISTORICAL, CROSS-CULTURAL, AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES


10/1/07: PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY: INTRAPSYCHIC


10/8/07: NO CLASS (COLUMBUS DAY)

10/15/07: PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY: SELF/DEVELOPMENTAL


10/22/07: PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY: RELATIONAL

Required: Malan (2002), Chapters 13-14 (pp. 137-165).


10/29/07-11/5/07: EXPERIENTIAL AND HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPIES

10/29/07: PSYCHODYNAMIC CASE ANALYSIS DUE

11/5/07: ONE-HOUR TEST ON VERBAL PSYCHOTHERAPIES

11/5/07: Film: Three Approaches to Psychotherapy: Client-Centered Therapy


11/12/07: NO CLASS (VETERANS DAY)

11/19/07: BEHAVIOR THERAPY


11/26/07: COGNITIVE THERAPY

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12/3/07-12/10/07: INTEGRATIVE APPROACHES TO THERAPY


12/17/07: PSYCHOTHERAPY OUTCOME RESEARCH


1/7/08: PSYCHOTHERAPY PROCESS RESEARCH

1/7/08: FINAL PAPER ON COMPARATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPIES DUE


1/14/08: FINAL EXAMINATION