

***“Coming Apart and Coming Together”***

**Contemporary Intersectional Feminist Theory and its  
Application to the Body, Society, and Identity**

Wednesdays • Online • March 23 – May 18 • 6-8pm ET • 18 CEUs • \$550

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## Module I: Body

March 23, 2022

Class 1

### Embodied Presence: Cultivating a Resourceful Internal Relationship

Tulasi Jordan, LCSW and Marisa Mabli, LCSW

Many contemporary approaches in psychotherapy emphasize the importance of mind-body integration as a key element of mental health. Even though analyzing and interpreting have played a central role in psychoanalysis, the body has a much more significant role in a modern feminist approach. This class looks at ways the body and somatic experience can be welcomed into the healing process, and how essential this is for progress in therapy to be sustained. When a client can develop a relationship with their body that is resourceful, she/he/they build the capacity for increased affect tolerance, improved emotional regulation, and resilience. Likewise, when we as therapists have a relationship with our body that is attuned and resourceful, we support our clients' healing process while strengthening resonance and attunement with them.

#### Learning Objectives

1. Explore and learn the benefits of integrating bodily/somatic experience into psychotherapy
2. Identify five ways that the body can be incorporated into therapy
3. Learn and practice dual awareness and understand how it is important in the therapeutic relationship
4. Learn ways to help cultivate openness and self-compassion

March 30, 2022

Class 2

### The Body, Outside and Inside: An Exploration of Appearance, Size, Food, and Eating

Marisa Mabli, LCSW and Rebecca Brown, LCSW

As clinicians we are often exposed to the same socialization about bodies, fatness, and the thin ideal as our clients. It is crucial to critique assumptions about bodies and recognize the harmful effects of stigma against fat bodies. We will explore the body ideal, the prevalence

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of cosmetic procedures, and the burgeoning fat liberation movement. This class offers an introduction to WTCl's model of attuned eating and challenges the myths of diet culture.

## Learning Objectives

1. Examine body weight/size as an area of human diversity that is subject to privilege and discrimination which intersects with other systems of oppression based on gender, race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability
2. Help clinicians to work on their own and their clients' internalized body size hatred while promoting body size acceptance and a multidimensional view of health for people of all sizes
3. Address the complexities of altering one's body through surgery, including potential countertransference, as well as the question of whether changing the outside changes the inside
4. Clinicians will be introduced to the self-attuned model of eating

April 6, 2022

Class 3

Physical Bodies and Virtual Bodies, the Body and Beyond, Somatic Countertransference: Bringing the Therapist's Body into the Zoom

Andrea Gitter, MA, LCAT, BC-DMT

Our new normal of providing teletherapy via 2-dimensional platforms has raised challenges and presented new opportunities for embodied psychotherapy.

With this in mind, this class explores therapists' embodiment and its effect on treatment. We will focus on idiosyncratic posture, gesture, cadence, prosody, and other non-verbal/somatic "utterances" to unearth what they reveal and how they influence our patients' treatment. Attention will be paid to how body/psyche develops, including how family history, gender and culture are written on and expressed through the body/self. Attention will also be paid to non-verbal/somatic signifiers and how this helps access viscerally experienced countertransference and facilitates kinesthetic empathy. What do we do when this information isn't fully available because we're not in the room together?

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## Learning Objectives

1. Learn to differentiate between the visual body and the visceral body and how they can reveal countertransference reactions
2. Learn, through clinical examples, how to make use of these somatic manifestations of psychic structure, both their own and their patients' and to implement interventions in this relational "dance" within an intersubjective framework

## Module II: Society

April 13, 2022

Class 1

Encounters With Otherness: Considering Gender in Psychoanalysis and Culture from Early Feminist Contributions to Queer Theory and Gender Creativity

Joanne Messina, LCSW

This class explores feminist and queer contributions to psychoanalysis—from Second Wave shaping to a Transfeminist perspective—and how these contributions impact our understanding of gender and gendered embodiment. We consider how the centering of previously marginalized subjectivities shifts the contemporary psychoanalytic model, including a dismantling of binaries of all kinds. Halberstam urges us toward a "politics of transitivity" and asks us to "look at forms of gender, idioms of gender, gender practices and ask all the while how gender changes and shifts through all bodies and how it might be imagined in the future."

We will engage with Halberstam's challenge utilizing clinical material, stories of gender, and an understanding of ourselves as gendered clinician. We will explore the way gender enters the consulting room and the transformative (and sometimes unnerving) possibilities of destabilizing the gender binary.

## Learning Objectives

1. Identify foundational feminist contributions to a relational psychoanalytic perspective
2. Describe changing conceptualizations of gender within psychoanalytic feminism
3. Grapple with the paradoxes of gender and gendered embodiment

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4. Identify ways gender enters our clinical work and how an understanding of our own and our patients' intersectional gendered identities is crucial to clinical practice

April 20, 2022

Class 2

## Climate Change: Clinical Presentation, Shared Trauma, and Feminist Perspective

Aleksandra Rayska, PhD and Marisa Mabli, LCSW

It is evident in these times that climate change is a serious crisis with serious consequences. The potential mental health impact on our clients is going to become more and more evident in the clinical space, interacting with the other presenting concerns that brought them into the consulting room. It is the therapist's responsibility to start thinking more deeply about these issues and identify ways to address anxiety, depression, and other psychological responses to climate change. As people living in this world, therapists may also have their own experiences with climate anxiety.

This class showcases contemporary theory related to climate crisis anxiety at the cutting edge of current clinical thinking. Presenters will focus on the feminist perspective of the issue of climate change, which brings to the forefront the intertwined issues of gender, oppression, and social justice. The class provides an opportunity to look at ways in which both clients and therapists are impacted by the trauma of climate change anxiety. During the class, clinical examples of climate change anxiety will be shared and discussed. Presenters and attendees will have a chance to come up with action items for clinical practice and share recommendations on how to address those issues in the clinical situation

### Learning Objectives

1. Deepen understanding of climate change anxiety in clinical encounters
2. Enable clinicians to gain understanding of how climate change anxiety is affecting them
3. Increase skills in handling climate change anxiety in clinical situations
4. Be able to critically analyze contemporary theory of climate change anxiety

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April 27, 2022

Class 3

## Interdependence and Belonging: Bringing the Social, Political, and Economic into Treatment

Susan Gutwill, LCSW and Wiola Rebecka, PhD, LCSW

How do we develop autonomy, independence, and belonging; and on a broader level, how are these themes exacerbated during this pandemic time? How can we address the need for belonging in this most divisive time? How does this enter the clinical room? And how does this tense climate threaten the therapeutic environment?

Issues of inequities, race, and class are heightened in our consciousness here in the US and internationally. This class will address these and other issues as they relate to autonomy, independence, and belonging.

### Learning Objectives

1. Learn how a broad concept of interdependence includes not only how we are interdependent on each other in the family but also in our own cultural and political economic national systems as well as the world at large
2. Learn how and with what consequences we belong to our families, our nations and to the world's people and how to respond to this in treatment and professional settings
3. Learn how world-wide capitalist, imperialist, racist and heteronormative systems assault us and how these assaults often emerge in treatment

## Module III: Identity

May 4, 2022

Class 1

### Identity: Considering Social and Cultural Location

Debra Kram-Fernandez, PhD and Tulasi Jordan, LCSW

In our current social and political climate, an awareness of how therapists' intersectionality might interact with clients' intersectionality is more relevant and important than ever. As different groups have been differently impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its sequela, a recognition of the 'elephant in the room,' be it our power attributes or our

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clients' power attributes, is important if we are to maintain a space for open expression of feelings and collaborative problem solving. In addition, while much of our work has moved to virtual online or telephone sessions, real and perceived ideas about therapist sameness and difference are sometimes exacerbated by the excess or dearth of visual data. Seeing the therapist's home office or hearing a crying child, or conversely, having no visual data on which to draw conclusions or explore fantasies adds another dimension to the work and the notion of therapist self-disclosure.

This class explores unspoken or invisible identities of therapists and clients, (ex. wealth, class, upbringing, political orientation, age, ability, education, medical status), and consider criteria to determine when therapist self-disclosure is an appropriate tool or action. We consider how we can "sit with" ideas/attitudes/behaviors that we don't understand and honor the different ways people go about being in the world, even when these behaviors exist in a new and unknown context that is often as anxiety-provoking for therapists as for clients.

## **Learning Objectives**

1. Identify invisible and unspoken identities of the therapist and client
2. Evaluate the impact of differences in social location/power attributes in the therapeutic relationship
3. Assess potential benefits and consequences of therapist self-disclosure regarding invisible identities
4. Explore ways to keep dialogue open around issues of differences of social location and power attributes

May 11, 2022

Class 2

## **Group Psychotherapy: Where Social Structures Enter the Clinical Setting**

Aleksandra Rayska, PhD

Group psychotherapy is a microcosm of social and power dynamics. In this class, we explore how social dynamics get enacted in group psychotherapy. How do we talk with our patients about differences they notice among group members? How do we stay present in moments of conflict? How do we remain together in the group when we disagree or feel hurt by another? Through sharing of clinical examples, we will embark on exploration of

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contemporary, intersectional, feminist theory and how it can help us in understanding the meaning of group roles and processes. In an interactive, hands-on way we will struggle together with how to bridge theory and practice of group work to benefit those with whom we work.

## Learning Objectives

1. Understand unconscious dynamics in group work
2. Analyze examples of group psychotherapy and challenges that emerge
3. Gain tools to manage challenging situations in the practice of group psychotherapy

May 18, 2022

Class 3

## Decolonizing Mental Health: A Critique of Mainstream Ideas about Psychic Suffering

Ruchi Amin, LCSW and Debra Kram-Fernandez, PhD, LCSW, MS DMT, 200-RYT

What is mental health and what is mental non-health? Based on your understanding of mental health, what are key elements of effective treatment? How does individualistic treatment differ from collective healing? In the United States, the dominant discourse in the field of therapy is organized around goal setting and an individual's motivation for change. There are other, equally powerful discourses involving the role of the community in therapeutic outcomes. Are we prepared to make space in our treatment rooms for other understandings of health and wellness, growth and change, and interventions? What would this look like given our own frames of reference and training?

## Learning Objectives

1. Explain the notion of "decolonizing mental health" and apply this concept to their own lens or framework for viewing health and mental health
2. Articulate several diverse understandings of definitions of mental health, what they have in common and how they differ
3. Define "schema" and apply this definition to analysis of how we as therapists identify health and mental health, and how we grapple with deep chasms in how mental health is understood across diverse cultures
4. Leave with two or three new ideas about navigating the divide between mainstream ideas about mental health and treatment and different cultural views and beliefs

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## About the instructors...

### **Ruchi Amin, LCSW**

Ruchi Amin is a clinical social worker who works at the New School University as a supervising clinician and maintains a private practice in the West Village. Additionally, she does clinical social work consulting for corporations. She received her master's degree at New York University. Ruchi has completed postgraduate training with WTCl and The Washington Square Institute. She became interested in the rapidly shifting social, political, and media landscape that often creates barriers to wellness in individuals and in maintaining healthy communities. Her practice is informed by incorporating socio-political, racial, cultural, and normative gender roles in considering wellness of individuals and communities. She sits on the Board as well as on the Diversity Committee and the Educational Committee for WTCl.

### **Rebecca Brown, LCSW**

Rebecca Brown is a New York State licensed psychotherapist in private practice and part time mental health counselor at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York. Rebecca specializes in treating adults dealing with eating disorders, disordered eating, body related concerns, as well as life transitions. She is also a dancer and with her training in the WTCl's two-year postgraduate training program, she developed a recreational Belly Dance workshop focused on embracing all parts of the body, fostering a sense of empowerment and resistance to oppressive culture. Rebecca has also received training from The Body Positive Institute based in California. She received her MSW from New York University and a BS in Psychology from Northeastern University. In the past, she has also worked in schools, group practices and outpatient mental health clinics and is dedicated to issues of embodiment and the pursuit of body liberation.

### **Andrea Gitter, MA, LCAT, BC-DMT**

Andrea Gitter is on the board and faculty of WTCl. She has a master's degree in dance/movement therapy from New York University. Her graduate training, along with her postgraduate training and practice in feminist relational therapy, influence her work integrating psyche and soma with an awareness of how cultural prescriptions become written on and expressed through our body/psyches. She has a particular interest in somatic countertransference. She has a specialty in working with eating and body issues and is the co-author of *Eating Problems: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Treatment Model* and several articles on the subject of eating and body.

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## **Susan Gutwill, MA, LCSW**

Susan Gutwill, trained as a sociologist, received her master's degree and learned to think critically about class, neo-colonialism, race, and patriarchal heteronormativity. She received her MSW at Rutgers University while working as a clinical social worker for a progressive labor union. She is on the faculty at WTCl and at The Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in NJ. Since the early 1980s, she has written, lectured and taught about trauma, eating problems, abortion and psychoanalytic activism. She is a member of Section 9 of Division 39 of the APA, Psychoanalysis for Social Responsibility. Susan is an author/contributor for several books including: "Toward Social Justice: the continuum of eating and body image problems: how social and psychological realities converge into an embodied epidemic," in *Psychoanalytic Treatment of Eating Disorders*. She is co-author of *Eating Problems: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Treatment Model*. She is also co-editor and contributor to *Psychoanalysis, Class and Politics*. She presented "My Recent Trip to Palestine," a talk and slideshow on behalf of the US Palestine Mental Health Network and for Jewish Voice for Peace.

## **Tulasi Jordan, LCSW, BCD, SEP**

Tulasi Jordan received her master's degree, with honors, from New York University, holds a post-master's certificate from WTCl, is a Somatic Experiencing Practitioner, a certified IFS (Internal Family Systems) therapist and consultant, and is a certified EMDR therapist. She has additional training in Integrated Somatic Psychotherapy, mindfulness, and clinical hypnosis. She has developed and taught continuing education workshops for therapists at WTCl and the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy (through CSAB) in NYC. Currently a program assistant for the IFS Institute, she has also been a teaching assistant for the Somatic Experiencing three-year trauma training. A yoga and meditation teacher since 1993, she integrates body-based interventions into treatment. She has been providing psychotherapy for over 20 years in private practice in Sparta, NJ.

## **Debra Kram-Fernandez, PhD, LCSW, MS-DMT, 200-RYT**

Debra Kram-Fernandez obtained her PhD in Social Welfare from the City University of New York Graduate Center/Hunter College School of Social Work after obtaining her LCSW-R. She also holds a MSW and MS in Dance-Movement Therapy from Hunter College. Dr. Kram-Fernandez is a graduate of WTCl's postgraduate training program. Her areas of expertise include understanding serious mental illness, group work facilitation, and diversity in human services. She is currently an Associate Professor at the State University of New York-Empire State College and has a small private practice.

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## **Marisa Mabli, LCSW**

Marisa Mabli is an alumna of WTCI's postgraduate training program. She completed her Master's in Social Work at Simmons University and had additional training in Spirituality and Social Work from New York University. She has worked in college mental health, currently part time at the New School and previously at Barnard College. In her private practice, she specializes in women's issues, particularly in emerging adulthood and life transitions, gender, and sexual identities, and eating and body issues. She is a member of the Climate Psychology Alliance of North America and offers clinical support around climate change anxiety. In previous roles, she has worked with adolescents, people who struggle with substance use issues, and women experiencing homelessness. She also facilitates clinical supervision with social work and psychology trainees.

## **Joanne Messina, LCSW**

Joanne Messina is a psychoanalyst, and faculty member and educational consultant at WTCI. She has a special interest in feminist psychoanalysis and the intersection of gender, sexuality, embodiment, and body justice. She has taught on the subjects of psychoanalysis, feminism, and contemporary gender theories for WTCI, the National Institute for the Psychotherapies, and at Hunter College School of Social Work. She received her MSW from New York University and later completed training at WTCI, The Stephen Mitchell Center for Relational Studies, and the Four-Year Program in Psychoanalysis at The Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity. She maintains a private practice in NYC in Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and provides group psychotherapy dedicated to issues of embodiment and the pursuit of body liberation.

## **Aleksandra Rayska, PhD**

Aleksandra Rayska graduated with a degree in clinical psychology from The Graduate Center, City University of New York. She completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the World Trade Center Health Program at Mount Sinai. Dr. Rayska completed additional postgraduate training at WTCI. Prior to finding her home at Mount Sinai, she completed her predoctoral internship at Manhattan Psychiatric Center. Drawing on her previous professional life as a dance movement therapist, she writes about the relationship between the mind and the body and works with patients to strengthen their awareness and experience of this connection. She has expertise working with patients impacted by trauma and emotion regulation, as well as body image and eating issues. She also works with patients to explore and address the psychological underpinnings of psychosomatic disorders and issues related to chronic pain.

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## **Viola Rebecka, PhD**

Viola Rebecka completed psychoanalytic training at the International Psychoanalytic Association London, and later the clinical training program at WTCl. She created and implemented the project "Rape: A History of Shame" and authored the book, Rape A History of Shame--Diary of the Survivors. Her areas of interest and expertise include complex trauma, war-rape survivors' syndrome, and transgenerational trauma.