



301 – Transforming Destructiveness: Working with “Difficult Patients”

Instructor: Christine Erskine, MSW, LCSW

Meeting Dates: Tuesdays – January 14, 2025 through May 6, 2025

(No class on March 11)

Time: 7:10 PM—8:40 PM Eastern

Location: Zoom/Virtual

of Credit hours: CME Credits: 24 hours / APA Category A CE: 24 clock hours / NBCC: 24 clock hours / All others: Letter of Attendance

Target Audience: This class is for participants at the intermediate level.

Prerequisites: This class is open to PCC matriculated students in all training tracks. Students will need a prior exposure to and understanding of psychoanalytic theory and its application to the treatment of patients. Applicants can meet this requirement through previous coursework, training, or supervision; preferably, students will have completed most of the PCC Core courses: The Basics; Psychological Development across the Life Cycle; Psychodynamic Assessment and Formulation; and Analytic Approach to Treatment, Pt. 1; and the four "metapsychology" courses. Applicants who feel they have met the equivalent in other settings (graduate school/ residency or post-graduation) may seek permission from the instructor.

Contact: [Christine Erskine](#)

Format: This class will be structured as much as possible as a seminar, with brief periods of "lecture" or individual presentation by students or visitors. All the PCC courses include group discussions which require participants to read and synthesize the materials presented. Students will be expected to complete brief writing assignments.

Description: This 16-week course will explore the differences between working in a traditional psychoanalytic way and working with patients whose minds are not equipped to undergo traditional analytic treatment, those whose minds can be seen as dominated by an unconscious "pathological organization." Our lens will be primarily Kleinian and developmental, drawing on work of Peter Fonagy and Anne Alvarez, in addition to post-Bionian analysts, including the author of our primary text. In the process we will discover the importance of language, both in assessment and in the framing and phrasing of our interventions. A significant portion of our time will be devoted to the discovery of "pathological systems of organization" at the level of the social structures in which we and our patients are embedded, and that are embedded in us.

Primary Required Text

Students enrolled in this course are expected to purchase the following book:

De Masi, F. (2012). *Working with difficult patients: From neurosis to psychosis*. Routledge.

All other readings will be provided electronically.

Course Syllabus: [Transforming Destructiveness](#)

Training Program Credit: Students who successfully complete this course can earn credit in the psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis training programs.

Continuing Education Credit: At the end of the course, participants must complete the evaluation form to receive continuing education credit. The instructor(s) have no relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies to disclose.

About the Instructor:

Christine Erskine, LCSW, a clinical social worker in private practice in Raleigh, is currently serving as Faculty Chair for the PCC. She obtained her MSW at UNC-CH and is a graduate of the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute (now the Washington-Baltimore Psychoanalytic Center). She was a co-founder and original director of the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Study Center of North Carolina, which later joined with the Psychoanalytic Society to become merged with our current curriculum.

Registration and Tuition Deadline is December 30, 2024.

Tuition

PCC Matriculated Students: **\$510**

Graduate Students and Residents: **\$645**

All others: **\$710**

Registration Fee: \$25 per term (Matriculated Students are exempt from registration fee).

Payment plans can be arranged with the Business Manager, [Lisa Long](#).

[Course Cancellation Policy](#)

[Register Here](#)

Course Learning Objectives

Class participants will be able to:

1. Describe how psychoanalysis is understood to work with "non-difficult" patients.

2. Describe how Anne Alvarez learned from her patients how to phrase interpretation that worked for them.
3. Describe three characteristics of "difficult" patients and the nature of the trauma that can result in severe pathology.
4. Discuss Peter Fonagy's mapping of healthy mental development.
5. Differentiate between "neurotic" defenses and "pathological organizations" that structure psychic withdrawal from reality.
6. Explain the relevance of the Kleinian "positions" in treating difficult patients.
7. Explain what is meant by a "psychic retreat" and how the analyst experiences the existence of such a retreat in a difficult patient.
8. Describe differences in superego and the unconscious in neurotic, borderline, and psychotic patients.
9. Describe how a patient's experience of sexuality is distorted in severe illness.
10. Describe the function of sexual perversion in a severely ill patient.
11. Describe the complexity of helping transsexual patients in distress.
12. Describe particular difficulties in treating borderline and psychotic patients.
13. Describe a pathological social system from the "outside" and compare it to the internal pathological structures studied in this course.
14. Describe the experience of embeddedness in a destructive social system.
15. Describe the experience of finding a destructive social system not just "around" oneself but *within* oneself.
16. Describe a pathway through disillusionment, mourning, and the internalization of a "good object" to greater individual and societal health.

Confidentiality Statement: All case material will be carefully disguised. We ask that participants agree to hold all material presented with the utmost care, following ethical and professional guidelines.

Course Participants agree to review and abide to the following:

[Professional and Ethical Guidelines for the Classroom](#)

Accommodation Statement: To request an accommodation for this program, please get in touch with the Administrator at Kayla@CarolinaPsychoanalytic.org by two weeks before the start date.

CE & CME Disclosures:

The Psychoanalytic Center of the Carolinas has been approved by NBCC as an Approved Continuing Education Provider, ACEP No. 6518. Programs that do not qualify for NBCC credit are clearly identified. The Psychoanalytic Center of the Carolinas is solely responsible for all aspects of the program.

The Psychoanalytic Center of the Carolinas is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Psychoanalytic Center of the Carolinas maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

Social workers will receive a letter of attendance documenting their hours of continuing education. This certificate may not be acceptable verification in all states.

ACCME Accreditation Statement

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through the joint providership of American Psychoanalytic Association and the Psychoanalytic Center of the Carolinas. The American Psychoanalytic Association is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

AMA Credit Designation Statement

The American Psychoanalytic Association designates this live activity for a maximum of 24 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)*[™]. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Disclosure Statement

The APsA CE Committee has reviewed the materials for accredited continuing education and has determined that this activity is not related to the product line of ineligible companies and therefore, the activity meets the exception outlined in Standard 3: ACCME's identification, mitigation and disclosure of relevant financial relationship. This activity does not have any known commercial support.

Contact: Kayla@CarolinaPsychoanalytic.org

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