

Final Syllabus Fall 2016  
Zoe Grusky, Ph.D.

Psychoanalytic Writing and Psychoanalytic Process: What does fiction, memoir, poetry or journal-writing have in common with writing psychoanalytic papers?

Being a psychoanalyst is a very personal experience. We know this because we know that our own analyses are at the center of everything we do. However, we are also in conflict about this defining fact. How do we use the self-knowledge we gain from being in analysis and being analysts? Writing is a way to become more aware of how we are always having inner dialogues about how to recognize and how to use our internal worlds; with ourselves, with our patients, consciously and unconsciously. While reading for this class we will think about how other forms of writing and our own writing can help us become more aware of unconscious process, and how to think and feel creatively as analysts and writers of psychoanalytic papers.

We will also try to focus in this class on how to love/struggle with writing for its own sake. If we can do that, it will be more fun and more interesting to write graduation papers or any kind of psychoanalytic paper.

Structure of Class: The focus of this class will be primarily to talk about our writing and how we think and feel about it. The assigned reading for each class is for inspiration and to serve as a reference point to help us to discuss our own writing. Although some people may want to talk more directly about their graduation papers and others may not, we will do our best to help everyone to start where they are at.

I will ask everyone to write something for each week, one or two pages, sometimes in class, and a longer, approximately 5 page (or more) piece of writing. You can use your weekly writing as the starting place for the longer piece of writing. Everyone will have a chance to share something they have written with the class and I will ask you to sign up for a date to do that on the day of our first meeting.

Week 1:

“There is a quality of trust and revelation in such work (journals) that is immediately recognizable, impossible to fake, a generosity of spirit and fearlessness that I wish to emulate. Working with journals helps me to remember how vulnerable I make myself within the creative act and how vigilant I must be to stay honest...how hard it is to work against silence, shame, how hard to be brave.

“The Tenor of Memories” Diana Abu-Jaber

Reading:

Birkerts, S. (2008). *The Art of Time in Memoir*. Graywolf Press:Minneapolis. Pp3-24

Recommended:

Bender, S.(1997). *The Writers Journal*. Bantam Doubleday Dell: New York:New York  
Ueland, B. (2008). “If You Want to Write.” BN Publishing.pp 9-19.

Week 2:

“I had read many descriptions of the contents and habits of the unconscious mind, which by definition was something I could never, by unaided effort know by myself. But I learned through writing that the no man’s land which lay between the dark kingdom of the psychoanalyst and the cultivated domain of my conscious thought, was one which I could profitably explore through my writing.” Marion Milner (1936).

Field, J. (Marion Milner) (1936). *A Life of One’s Own*. London: Chatto and Windus. pp 11-33.

Week 3:

Grusky, Z. (2002). *Conviction and Interpretation: Hiding and Seeking With Words* P.Q., V71 pp81-113.

Why are we reading the following book in Week 4?

While planning this syllabus I began thinking about how a part of this writing class might be about recognizing that writers and analysts/analysands are sometimes the second generation, the children of the survivors who must metabolize the experiences of trauma/conflict that were primary for the parents or survivors or first generation. As psychoanalytic writers it is interesting to think about the words and descriptions that writers who are not analysts use when they write about the process that we call “metabolize.” The word “metabolized” is an example of how our psychoanalytic jargon is a shortcut for a process that we know is very complicated and can perhaps be written about more compellingly by some of the writers we will be reading.

Week 4:

Kingston, M.H. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*. Random House: NY: NY. Pp 3-16.

Week 5:

No reading assignment. Work on your own writing

Week 6:

“You’ll never be a poet unless you realize that everything I say is wrong. It may be right for me, but it is wrong for you. Every moment I am, without wanting to or trying to, telling you to write like me. But I hope you learn to write like you... at all times keep your crap detector on. If I say something that helps, good. If what I say is of no help, let it go. As Yeats noted, your important arguments are with yourself.”

Richard Hugo, “Writing Off the Subject.” (Bender, 1997).

Sweetnam, A. (2010). *People Are Not Cabbages: Reflections on Patient and Analyst Change*. PQ 79:4 1025-1048.

Week 7:

“Where do you get your ideas from, a poet gets asked... and seldom answers, “from other people.” Of course we use books, other people... a journal is to stumble on scraps.

Things needn't be finished, just stored... and “idea” is too big a word. It's not scrappy enough. A scrap of another persons' idea might lead to another, to the exposition of an argument, and from there to the discovery of your own article, or poem.”

“Consigned to the Unconscious” William Matthews (Bender, 1997).

Pass, S. (2014). The Mummy at the Door: Play Therapy and Surviving Loss. *Journal of Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy*. 13: 152-163. Copyright at Taylor and Francis Group, LLC, ISSN 1528- 9168 print

Week 8:

No reading assignment. Work on your own writing, journal writing, integrating the reading we have done, “dreaming” into your own feelings or “dream- thoughts” about writing that you might want to bring to our last class.