

**University of Pennsylvania  
Clinical Doctorate in Social Work Program  
Course Module on Psychoanalytic Diagnosis**

**Nancy McWilliams, Instructor**

Saturday, February 11, 2012 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

**Overview**

Many of us chose a vocation in psychotherapy because we were fascinated with individual differences. Research on psychotherapy supports this focus, in that personality and relationship variables are consistently found to have more influence on treatment outcome than type of treatment. This course module will conceptualize personality differences as they have emerged from clinical experience and empirical research rather than according to the somewhat arbitrary personality disorder categories in DSM-IV and other psychiatric classifications that have influenced contemporary paradigms for psychological treatment. It will emphasize subjective as well as objective means of appreciating patients' individuality, including a disciplined attention to countertransference reactions and mutual enactments.

Dr. McWilliams will review recent research and longstanding clinical writing relevant to personality differences that have important implications for social work practice. Throughout the workshop, the focus will be on the practical value of understanding clients' personalities in depth (whether or not the personality itself is "disordered"), so that professionals can adapt to each person's individual style of learning and changing as they address the problems that constitute the central focus of therapy.

She will present material from her own practice and encourage the sharing of clinical vignettes from participants in the course. The focus will be kept on the practical issues of how to relate therapeutically to different kinds of patients and problems, in whatever roles or under whatever circumstances the social worker encounters them.

**Readings**

Required: McWilliams, N. (2011). *Psychoanalytic diagnosis: Understanding personality in the clinical process, rev. ed.* New York: Guilford Press.

Recommended: PDM Task Force. (2006). *Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual*. Silver Spring, MD: Alliance of Psychoanalytic Organizations. Especially pp. 13-69.

**Schedule of topics**

**Saturday morning: Individual differences in degree of suffering/disturbance**

9:00 – 10:30

What do we mean clinically by “personality”?

When is a personality a “personality disorder”?

What are the components of mental and emotional (not just behavioral) health?

10:45 – 12:30

What are the therapeutic implications of a patient’s position on an overall health-to-illness continuum (Kernberg’s “severity dimension”)?

Exploratory therapies

Therapy with patients in the borderline spectrum

Supportive therapies

Paranoid phenomena, personalities, and personality disorders

Schizoid phenomena, personalities, and personality disorders

**Saturday afternoon: Individual differences in personality type and pathology**

1:30 – 3:30

Working with people with the “traditional” neurotic personality organizations

Hysterical (histrionic) syndromes, personalities, and personality disorders

Obsessive and compulsive syndromes, personalities, and personality disorders

Depressive and masochistic personalities and personality disorders

Phobic personalities and personality disorders

3:45 – 5:00

Working with people with more difficult, “pre-oedipal” personality organizations

Narcissistic phenomena, personalities, and personality disorders

Psychopathic phenomena, personalities, and personality disorders

Hypomanic phenomena, personalities, and personality disorders

Dissociative phenomena, personalities, and personality disorders

Somatizing phenomena, personalities, and personality disorders

Dependent and passive-aggressive personalities and personality disorders