

Melanie Klein and Contemporary Kleinian Theory

2025-2026 Fall Trimester, 8:15am - 9:45am

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Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the work of Melanie Klein, both her theory and technique and some of its contemporary advancements. Melanie Klein is arguably the most important psychoanalytic figure after Freud. Her work has had one of the most lasting and important impacts on contemporary psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and psychological research. Klein is the grandmother of attachment theory, having trained and analyzed John Bowlby. Although Bowlby rarely credits her in his work, we will see the roots of his thinking in her work. Her ideas of transference and projective identification were taken and elaborated on by Bion; again with little credit to Klein. Her ideas on transitional objects and object relationships and relatedness are the roots of Winnicott's theorizing about mother-infant dynamics and the object usage.

While Kleinian thinking and interpersonal thinking have many differences, what they share (rooted in Klein's writing and the writing of the early interpersonalists) is a deep appreciation for the inherent interpersonal nature of human development and the important role played by anxiety in that development.

Through the course we will be connecting theory with practice. Clinical examples are the best way of understanding Kleinian theory as her theory is rooted in what she was observing in her work and in her observations of young children and infants. As you read, see if you can allow your mind to make links to your own patients, your own experience, and what it's like to be in the consulting room with another person. Bring these clinical moments to class as they will greatly enrich our discussions.

We will be reading multiple chapters from the book *Kleinian Theory: A Contemporary Perspective*, Ed. Catalina Bronstein. I would recommend everyone purchase this as it is an excellent overview of Kleinian theory.

Readings:

September 8, 2025	<p>Week 1: Introduction - An Overview of Kleinian Thinking</p> <p>Klein, M.. (2017). Lecture I: Guiding Principles. In J. Steiner (Ed.): <i>Lectures on Technique by Melanie Klein</i>. (Pp. 29-31). New York: Routledge.*</p> <p>Klein, M. (1955). The psycho-analytic play technique: Its history and significance. In <i>Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963</i> (pp. 122-140). NY: Delacourte.</p> <p>*Lectures originally delivered in 1936. I have given you more pages than the ones assigned. Feel free to read on. We will be discussing only pages 29-3.</p>
September 15, 2025	<p>Week 2: What are Internal Objects</p> <p>Bronstein, C. (2001). What are internal objects? In C. Bronstein (ed.): <i>Kleinian Theory: A Contemporary Perspective</i> (ch. 8, pp. 108 – 124). London & Philadelphia: Whurr Publishers.</p> <p>Alvarez, A. (2018). The concept of the internal object: Some defining features. <i>Psychoanalytic Dialogues</i>, 28: 25-34.</p>
September 22, 2025	<p>Week 3: Symbol Formation</p> <p>Klein, M. (1930). The Importance of Symbol-Formation in the Development of the Ego. <i>International Journal of Psycho-Analysis</i>, 11:24-39.</p> <p>Segal, H. (1988). Notes on symbol formation. In <i>Melanie Klein Today</i>, E. Bott Spillius (ed)., London: Routledge.</p>
September 29, 2025	<p>Week 4: The Transference</p> <p>Klein, M. (1952). The origins of transference. In <i>Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963</i> (pp. 48-56). London: Hogarth Press.</p> <p>Klein, M.. (2017). Lecture I: Guiding Principles. In J. Steiner (Ed.): <i>Lectures on Technique by Melanie Klein</i>. (Pp. 29-31). New York: Routledge.</p> <p>Joseph, B. (1985). Transference: The Total Situation. <i>International Journal of Psycho-Analysis</i>. 66: 447-454.</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <p>Caper, R. (1999). Psychic reality and the analysis of transference. In <i>A Mind of One's Own</i>. (Ch. 6, pp. 59-69)</p>

October 6, 2025	<p>Week 5: The Positions: The Depressive Position</p> <p>Klein, M. (1944). 'The emotional life and ego-development of the infant with special reference to the depressive position', in P. King and R. Steiner (eds.) <i>The Freud-Klein Controversies 1941-1945</i> (Sect. 4, Chapter 4, pp. 752-797). London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991.</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <p>Klein, M. (1940). Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states. <i>The International Journal of Psychoanalysis</i>, 21, 125–153.</p> <p>Temperley, J. (2001). The Depressive Position. In C. Bronstein (ed.): <i>Kleinian Theory: A Contemporary Perspective</i> (ch. 4, pp. 47 – 62). London & Philadelphia: Whurr Publishers</p>
October 27, 2025	<p>Week 6: The Positions: The Paranoid-Schizoid Position</p> <p>Roth, P. (2001). The paranoid-schizoid position. In C. Bronstein (ed.): <i>Kleinian Theory: A Contemporary Perspective</i> (ch. 3, pp. 32 – 46). London & Philadelphia: Whurr Publishers.</p> <p>Klein, M. (1946). Notes on some schizoid mechanisms. <i>The International Journal of Psychoanalysis</i>, 27, 99–110.</p>
November 3, 2025	<p>Week 7: Beyond the Depressive Position</p> <p>Britton, R. (1998). Before and after the depressive position: Ps(n) -> D(n) -> Ps (n+1). In <i>Belief and Imagination</i> (Ch. 6, pp. 69-81)/.</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <p>Steiner, J. (1997). The interplay between pathological organizations and the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. In <i>The Contemporary Kleinians of London</i>, R. Schafer (Ed). International Universities Press: Madison.</p>
November 10, 2025	<p>Week 8: The Oedipal Situation</p> <p>Burhouse, A. (2014). Now we are two, going on three: Triadic thinking and its link with development in the context of young child observations. In S.M.G. Adamo and M. Rustin (eds.) <i>Young Child Observation: A Development in the Theory and Method of Infant Observation</i> (pp. 259-273). London: Karnac.</p> <p>Adamo, S. M., & Magana, J. (2014). Oedipal anxieties, the birth of a second baby, and the role of the observer. In S.M.G. Adamo and M. Rustin (eds.) <i>Young Child Observation: A Development in the Theory and Method of Infant Observation</i> (pp. 58-73). London: Karnac.</p>

November 17, 2025	<p>Week 9: Klein's concept of projective identification</p> <p>Bell, D. (2001). Projective Identification. In C. Bronstein (ed.): <i>Kleinian Theory: A Contemporary Perspective</i> (ch. 9, pp. 125 – 147). London & Philadelphia: Whurr Publishers.</p> <p>Alvarez, A. (1997). Projective identification as a communication: Its grammar in borderline psychotic children. <i>Psychoanalytic Dialogues</i>, 7(6): 753-768.</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <p>Joseph B. (1983). On understanding and not understanding: some technical issues. <i>Int J Psychoanal.</i> 64 (Pt 3):291-8.</p>
November 24, 2025	<p>Week 10: Thinking and Learning</p> <p>Waddell, M. (1998) . Models of Learning. In <i>Inside Lives: Psychoanalysis and the Growth of Personality</i> (Ch. 7, pp. 95-110). Routledge: NY.</p> <p>Caper, R. (1999). A mind of one's own. In <i>A Mind of One's Own</i>. (Ch. 10, pp. 111-126)</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <p>Bick, E. (1968). The experience of the skin in early object relations. In M. Harris and E. Bick (eds). <i>The Tavistock Model: Papers on Child Development and Psychoanalytic Training</i> (pp. 133-138). London: Karnac, 2011.</p> <p>Tokgoz, T. (2023). Treating Vulnerable Mothers, Infants and Young Children Living in Poverty: Co0- Creating a Psychoanalytic Playground in Various Alternative Settings, <i>Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy</i>, 22:3, 215-225</p> <p>Cassorla, R. (2013). When The Analyst Becomes Stupid: An attempt to understand enactment using Bion's theory of thinking. <i>The Psychoanalytic Quarterly</i>, Vol. LXXXI:2 (pp. 323-360).</p>