From The Director
Erika Schmidt, M.S.W.

Virginia Barry, MD, of the Institute faculty will present a lecture titled “Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience” March 9 as the final installment in the Institute’s series “Psychoanalysis Today.”

What does psychoanalysis look like in our contemporary world? Five eminent Institute faculty members are addressing the question this year in a series of monthly lectures, covering topics that demonstrate the vibrancy, excitement, and relevance of a psychoanalytic viewpoint. These talks can be used to examine individual lives in therapy, and also to understand the social world and problems faced within our communities.

The series opened with Prudence Gourguechon, MD, discussing what she calls “psychoanalytic activism” in her talk, “The Citizen Psychoanalyst in Today’s Troubled World.” In this call to action, she outlined how psychoanalytic theory can help us better understand fundamental problems such as climate change and the impact of war trauma on soldiers and families.

Charles Jaffe, MD, spoke about “The Unconscious Today.” Bringing together knowledge from fields of cognitive science, human development, social psychology, and neuroscience, Dr. Jaffe described how our unconscious minds take in information and process and remember it—or repress it.

Jonathan Lear, PhD, who is both philosopher and psychoanalyst, considered the question of what constitutes a genuinely happy human life in “Psychoanalysis and Ethical Life.” The ancient Greeks defined an ethical life as one lived thoughtfully and responsibly among friends, family, and fellow citizens. Psychoanalysis provides a way to achieve this kind of thought-filled life, in which one’s best self can live well and authentically in ethical relations with others.

Frank Summers, PhD, spoke about “Subjectivity in an Objectified World.” Dr. Summers is a powerful voice for the primacy and value of human subjectivity, contrasting them to the objectivism, materialism, and quantification of the outside world. There is an inherent conflict between psychoanalytic values and those of the everyday world, but Dr. Summers emphasized the contributions of the psychoanalytic worldview to the life of the contemporary American.

Dr. Barry concludes the series on March 9 with her lecture on “Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience.” To introduce her themes, Dr. Barry writes, “The bottom line of Freud’s radical theorizing is that we do not know ourselves. The mind generates powerful wishes that are repressed, or shut down, before we become aware of them. Yet much of what we do and think is shaped by these unconscious impulses.”

This is an exciting moment in psychoanalysis, bringing together Freud’s fundamental and founding insights with contemporary knowledge.
Prison Reform Settlement

CIP Board member Harold C. Hirshman, a Dentons US LLP law partner, led the pro bono effort in a class-action law suit against the Illinois Department of Corrections on behalf of the 11,000 mentally ill inmates in the Illinois prison system. Hirshman told the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin (01-05-16) that the settlement reached in December 2015 after eight years in litigation will release from solitary confinement prisoners with serious mental illnesses who are there for non-violent offenses. DOC will also consider mental health before segregation sentencing.

The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin reported that “the settlement provides 350 full-time mental health experts and 420 more guards at an annual expense of $40 million.” In addition, a new $40 million hospital will be built near Joliet close to the Stateville Correctional Center.

We asked Hirshman to share some thoughts about the settlement. He replied with a concern and a hope.

“I don’t think my years of analysis consciously motivated me to take on this project,” he said. “It grew out of my involvement in a series of cases in 2005-06 that taught me about how the prison system deals with inmates with health needs. As I told the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, there is growing awareness locally and nationally that society’s mentally ill have been imprisoned rather than treated. We all know that Cook County Jail is the largest mental health care facility in the nation. Its warden is now a psychiatrist. So I came to this case from a social justice perspective, not because of a personal issue.

“However, I am deeply concerned that the settlement doesn’t go far enough, and I learned this from my own analysis. Treatment is effective only when there is an ongoing professional relationship between the patient and the practitioner. The patient has to believe that there is someone who takes their illness to heart.

“It will take a great deal of effort by the monitor to create a structure which provides for the development of professional relationships to be the norm for treating seriously mentally ill inmates.”

Looking at the treatment side of the matter, Hirshman hopes that implementation of the settlement will open opportunities for the Institute and other organizations to play a role in helping assure quality of care for inmates that is absent now. He noted that the Institute’s school and clinical experience, as well as its teaching and research programs, ought to be rich resources for those charged with implementing the IDOC settlement.

For more information:

Faculty Publications

The Institute faculty has wide-ranging scholarly, clinical and research interests. Here are some recent noteworthy publications, awards and presentations:

Kate Schechter’s 2014 book Illusions of a Future won this year’s Courage to Dream award from the American Psychoanalytic Association. Not only is this a very prestigious award, but Kate’s book tells the story of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis as it has moved from its illustrious past toward the future.

Jesse Viner, CEO of Yellowbrick, a mental health facility that is national leader in services for young adults, received the Illinois Psychiatric Society’s 2015 Excellence in Patient Services Award.

David Garfield, along with Ira Steinman, published Self Psychology and Psychoanalysis: The Development of the Self during Intensive Psychotherapy of Schizophrenia and Other Psychoses.

Denia Barrett contributed a chapter, “Creating a supervisory framework: Models, methods, and mastery,” in Teaching Effective Supervision of Child and Adolescent Analysis. She also co-edited the Psychoanalytic Inquiry volume on “Psychoanalytic work with the dreams of children: The forgotten royal road,” which includes her article “Dream weaver/dream catcher: The older child and analyst at work.”


Frank Summers presented “The Expressivist Turn in Contemporary Psychoanalysis” to the Tehran Psychiatric Society via Skype, and his books are being translated into Farsi. Recent publications include “What is psychoanalysis doing in the world of social justice?” in the 2015 Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, a chapter titled “To live in a dream” in the 2015 Annual of Psychoanalysis, a publication of the Chicago Instituteedited by James Anderson and Jeffrey Stern, and “Guilt and the Experience of the Other,” in Psychoanalysis: Perspectives, Techniques and Socio-Psychological Implications, edited by Z. Knight.