Course: Difficult Patients/Difficult Dyads
Instructor: Jennifer L. Stevens, Ph.D., ABPP

This condensed course will address the challenges that work with patients recognized as “difficult” pose for therapists. Course material will address not only patient pathology, but also the ways in which patient and therapist can become entangled in unproductive forms of engagement together. A review of the dynamics and phenomenology of narcissistic character structure, borderline organization, and forms of developmental deficit or obstruction will both frame and be woven through the various topics covered in the seminar, as they seem necessary to any discussion of difficult treatment situations.

Over the course of the five weeks, particular clinical difficulties and patient populations will be addressed, e.g. patients who are regressed or hateful, suicidal, substance abusing or difficult to reach, all of whom present strong countertransference reactions and vulnerabilities for enactment (often with a sado-masochistic substrate). Additionally, the course material will address unproductive therapeutic processes, such as impasse and those therapeutic developments also known as negative therapeutic reactions. Though these clinical phenomena are sometimes dramatic, readings and discussion will also concentrate on the ways in which therapeutic dyads can become entangled in unproductive, yet deeply entrenched and mutually contributed-to knots bringing lively work, development and change to a slow and grinding halt.

In an effort to bring the reading material alive, discussion of examples from candidates’ and the instructor’s clinical work will be centrally important and is strongly encouraged.

Week 1 (Saturday 1:00 – 3:30)
March 9, 2019 Introduction and Background


Additional Reading (elective)

Week 2  (Saturday 1:00 – 3:30)
March 23, 2019   Technical Concerns/Level of Development and Pathology and Difficult to Reach Patients


Additional Reading (elective)


Week 3 (Saturday 1:00 – 3:30)
March 30, 2019   Dependency and Destructiveness/Hatred


**Additional Reading** (elective)


Epstein, L. (77). The Therapeutic Function of Hate in the Countertransference. Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 13, 442 – 460

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**Week 4  (Tuesday 5:00 – 7:15)**

April 30, 2019  Going Nowhere: Compliance/Pseudo-analysis & Impasse/Negative Therapeutic Reaction


**Additional Reading** (elective)


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**Additional Reading** (elective)


**Week 5 (Tuesday 5:00 – 7:15)**  
**May 14, 2019 Suicidal and Substance Abusing Patients**


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**Additional Reading (elective)**