

**Intersubjectivity: Developing A Dyadic Theory of Mind (DAD-ToM)  
PSYD22: Social Processes**

Instructor: David Haley

Office Hours: Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, 2PM to 3PM, by appointment

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**Course Meetings**

Thursdays, 12:00 PM–2:00 PM; Course Location: Room IC 326

**Course Description**

What is a self? How much does one’s self—one’s “subjectivity”—depend on and emerge from interactions with others? What is intersubjectivity? Is it more than the interaction of two separate minds, each with their own separate theory of mind? What types of experiences contribute to the formation of an intersubjective axis linking two separate minds? What psychological factors influence individual differences in the regulation of intersubjectivity and the co-construction of a dyadic theory of mind (DAD-ToM)?

Viewing intersubjectivity as both a psychological and biological phenomenon, we ask how relationships influence development and regulation from infancy onward. Focusing particularly on infant relationships and mental health, but also considering development across the lifespan, this course will review work on intersubjectivity, drawing on texts and perspectives from developmental science, neuroscience, biology, psychoanalysis, political science, ancient literature, philosophy, feminism, and social criticism.

Throughout the semester, students will have the opportunity to reflect on the implications of the course material for parenting, education, therapy, and society.

**Course Evaluation**

<b><u>Component</u></b>	<b><u>Date(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Weight</u></b>
Class participation	Weekly	10%
Tutorials: Group	TBA	10%
Tutorials: Individual	TBA	10%
Discussion questions	Weekly	20%
Midterm exam	TBA	20%
Final take-home	TBA	30%

## Course Outline

In week 1, we will discuss the course goals and content and review the schedule and readings.

In week 2, we will discuss attachment theory and the reflective function. John Bowlby introduced the notion of attachment bonds between infant and caregiver. One of the more specific mechanisms proposed by attachment and psychoanalytic theorists is the reflective function, which essentially provides a mechanism for how two minds develop a mutually defined theory of mind.

In week 3, we consider dyadic models of mutual regulation and social development and how this may be applied to therapy and to the development of intra- vs. intersubjectivity. The concepts of self-regulation and mutual regulation are elucidated in Ed Tronick's classic article "Emotions and Emotional Communication in Infants," which introduces the Mutual Regulation Model (MRM). This model sheds significant light on the interactive nature and function of the parent–infant relationship. According to the MRM, self-regulation (e.g., the infant regulates him- or herself) and other-regulation (e.g., the parent or caregiver serves as an external source of regulation for the infant) form the building blocks of mutual regulation. Further, the MRM has been used to explain gender difference in infant emotion and will thus serve as a springboard to part two of our seminar. However, to better understand the mutual theory of mind notion, we turn to the theory of dyadic states of consciousness.

In week 4, we will consider philosophical questions about intersubjectivity vs. subjectivity: What are some of the prevailing assumptions about consciousness that are relevant to how we understand the self? In *The Myth of the Isolated Mind*, Stolorow and Atwood (2002) argue that several key assumptions about the nature of the autonomous self have restricted how we think about relationships in Western culture. Do these myths constitute philosophical blind spots that impede our knowledge of intersubjectivity? Much of what we will be reading in this seminar can be treated as either evidence or as a theoretical perspective to help confirm or refute what Stolorow and Atwood call myths of the isolated mind.

In weeks 5, we will dive back into biological models of mutual regulation as conveyed by the notions of *Hidden Regulators and Synchrony*. A further advance to our understanding of attachment theory stems from Myron Hofer's notion of the hidden regulator. In a brief theoretical review paper, "The Psychobiological Roots of Early Attachment," Hofer presents an animal model of attachment, which emphasizes the co-regulation of specific physiological systems in the parent-infant dyad that he claims constitutes attachment. The developmental and biological processes that contribute to attachment behavior in humans are presented by Ruth Feldman in her paper "Parent-infant Synchrony: Biological Foundations and Developmental Outcomes," which emphasizes reciprocal interactions between parents and offspring. Feldman highlights the developmental progression and

fine-tuning of the infant's physiological oscillators (e.g., the timekeepers of physiological rhythms) in the prenatal period and the co-emergence of more complex physiological regulation and behavioral synchrony with the parent during the first year of life that predict social outcomes).

In week 6, we will continue to consider neuroscientific models of intersubjectivity. A neurobiologist, Walter Freeman, discusses the neurochemical mechanisms that help address how two distinct beings can learn to interact and form intersubjectivity. He also discusses how these models are regulated by society.

In week 7, we will consider the social and biological perspectives of gender formation and how these perspectives affect our notions of intersubjectivity. After presenting the biological mechanisms contributing to gender differences in emotion, Leslie Brody addresses the family context in her chapter "Transactional Relationships within Families," which extensively reviews developmental studies of the role of parenting in the socialization of infants and children's gender identity. In the subsequent chapter, "Gender Identification and De-identification in the Family," Brody introduces Nancy Chodorow's theory of gender development and offers a review of the evidence that supports and/or fails to support the predictions of this theory.

In weeks 8 & 9, we will dive into the psychoanalytic tradition to understand the psychological significance of recognizing others not only as objects, but also as subjects (Benjamin, 1988a)—an intersubjective experience that is often credited with creating the psychological roots for the child's achievement of similar acts of recognition in relationships across the lifespan—as discussed in our initial readings on the reflective function. We will also consider obstacles to intersubjectivity such as the mental "negation" of others, the use of power relations to dominate others, and the worldwide phenomenon of the oppression of women, considering all of these in terms of the development of the capacity to regulate desires and fantasies about the self and others (Benjamin, 1988b).

In week 10, we will use ancient and modern versions of the Greek myth of Electra as a lens through which to consider intrapsychic (unconscious fantasy-focused) and intersubjective (relational-focused) views of the role of trauma, oppression, and conflict in the subjectivity of motherhood and mental health. In addition, we will consider the implications for these different views on the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Week 11, TBA

Week 12, TBA

## **Course Readings/Schedule**

### **Week 1 (January 11) Introductions**

### **Week 2 (January 18) Attachment and the Reflective Function**

1. Patrick Luyten, Liesbet Nijssens, Peter Fonagy & Linda C. Mayes (2017) Parental Reflective Functioning: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 70:1, 174-199.
2. Murphy, K. (2017). Yes, it's your parents' fault. January 7, 2017. *New York Times*.

### **Week 3 (January 25)**

1. Tronick, E. Z. (1989). Emotions and Emotional Communication in Infants. *American Psychologist* 44: 112–119.
2. Tronick, E. Z. (1998). Dyadically expanded states of consciousness and the process of therapeutic change. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 19(3), 290–299.

### **Week 4 (Feb 1)**

1. “The Myth of the Isolated Mind.” In *Contexts of Being: The Intersubjective Foundations of Psychological Life*, by Robert D. Stolorow and George E. Atwood. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1992. Chapter 1, pages 7–28.
2. “A New Take on Intersubjectivity,” by Vittorio Gallese. In *The Birth of Intersubjectivity: Psychodynamics, Neurobiology, and the Self*, by Massimo Ammaniti and Vittorio Gallese. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014. Chapter 1, pages 1–25.

### **Week 5 (Feb 8)**

1. Hofer, M. A. (2006). The Psychobiological Roots of Early Attachment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15, 84-88.
2. Feldman, R. (2007). Parent-infant Synchrony: Biological Foundations and Developmental Outcomes. *Current Directions In Psychological Science*, 16, 340-345.

### **Week 6 (Feb 15)**

1. Brody, L. (1998). “The State of the Art: Biological Differences?” In *Gender, Emotion, and the Family*. Pp. 101-127. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
2. Brody, L. (1998). “Transactional Relationships within Families” and “Gender Identification and De-identification in the Family.” In *Gender, Emotion, and the Family*. Pp. 147–175. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

### **Reading Week (Feb 22)**

### **Week 7 (March 1)**

- 1) Freeman, W. J. (1995). *Societies of Brains: A Study in the Neuroscience of Love and Hate*. Psychology Press (Taylor & Francis Group): New York and London. [Chapter 6, pages 111-134]
- 2) Freeman, W. J. (1995). *Societies of Brains: A Study in the Neuroscience of Love and Hate*. Psychology Press (Taylor & Francis Group): New York and London. [Chapter 7, pages 135-162]

### **Week 8 (March 8)**

1. "The First Bond." In *The Bonds of Love*, by Jessica Benjamin. New York: Pantheon, 1988. Chapter 1, pages 11–50.

### **Week 9 (March 15)**

1. "Gender and Domination." In *The Bonds of Love*, by Jessica Benjamin. New York: Pantheon, 1988. Chapter 5, pages 183–219.

### **Week 10 (March 22)**

1. *The Electra of Euripides*, translated by Gilbert Murray. The Electronic Classic Series, 2010, pages 1–73.
2. *After Electra*, by April De Angelis. London: Faber and Faber, 2014, pages 1–34.

### **Week 11 (March 29) TBA**

### **Week 12 (April 5) TBA**

### **Supplemental (Optional) Readings and Videos**

\*Optional readings/videos will be posted on Blackboard during the semester

**Tutorials:** Each week a group of students will present the weekly material to provide insights on the material and to facilitate class discussion. The students giving the tutorial will meet in advance with the instructor to strategize how best to achieve these goals. The tutorial should include a 30- to 40-minute presentation at the start of the seminar followed by 60 to 80 minutes of discussion.

**Class participation:** Class participation is critical. This is an advanced undergraduate seminar in which enthusiastic class participation is important and is graded. Participation includes attendance, punctuality, facilitating discussion, paying careful attention to classmates' presentations, showing respect for others' contributions, and offering constructive feedback, critical questions, and comments after each group presentation. To help create a stimulating, safe, equitable discussion environment, each of you should try

**Discussion questions:** In order to stimulate critical thinking about the reading material and to help you prepare for the seminar discussion, please bring to class a brief critical summary of each reading. To structure your summary, please answer these basic questions: What did the text say? How well did it say it? What are the implications of the data, findings, theories, and/or arguments it presents to society? No summary should

exceed 150 words. As you prepare your summaries, please be sure to raise several questions about the readings, and be sure to raise these questions in the seminar discussion.

**Take-Home Class Exam:** During the semester we will have a written take-home exam. You will have 48 hours to complete this exam. For this exam, you will be asked to choose two questions to answer out of several choices. The exam will be based on the readings and group presentations that precede it.