Course Description:

This is a course of opposites. On the one hand, I assume you know precious little of how to be a child therapist. To that end, we will speak at length on “how to”: meet a patient in the waiting room; begin a session; end a session; deal with sibs; work with parents; work with fellow therapists; work with schools, work with supervisors etc. etc. By the end of the semester, the goal is that you will have a beginning but solid capacity to perform all the above tasks. On the other hand, I will expect that you know a lot about being a person with another person. And on the third hand, I will expect that you know a lot more about diagnosis and prognosis than you are willing to admit. I will push you constantly to link what you do with a patient to how you understand where they are diagnostically. After 2-3 weeks of speaking conceptually about the nature of play therapy, the remainder of the course will consist of listening to transcripted recordings of your sessions with your child patients. Each student will present at least twice this semester and will provide a typed transcript for all of us while we listen along to a taped therapy session. The session can and will be stopped systematically to discuss both the theory and technique of child psychotherapy.

Objectives:

By the end of the semester, you will be expected to:
1) have improved in your ability to link diagnostic considerations to the process and content of your work with children.
2) better understand the meaning and nature of a child’s play, both in terms of its diagnostic meaning and in its link to developmental/cognitive considerations
3) be better able to link work in the therapy room to work with parents and school personnel.

The logistics of this class are simple. Those of you who have begun with patients already will be set up in a rotation to present your case to the class. I will expect that you will get permission from the parents and assent from the child to have your sessions audiotaped. You will be expected to present an audiotape with a transcript each time you present. If you would like me to hear the tape and read the transcript before your presentation, I will do so gladly. If not, that’s OK too. Those of you who do not yet have a case to present, please let me know as soon as possible what is in the way of getting one. As an important part of the class is the mutual “supervision” you will help provide one another, pay particular attention to the readings below on the supervisory process.
Grading

It is an extremely complex question as to how to grade a course like this and a strong argument can be made for having the class be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. The degree of trust and faith that a presenter must have for an optimal learning experience to occur is profound and being graded on the presentation of your first, audiotaped efforts at being a child therapist can be quite trying without a “grade” hanging in the balance. Competent work, resulting in a grade of B+, B or B-, will therefore be awarded for a tactful, respectful approach to your patient and to the work of your fellow students that both does no harm to the patient and shows the potential for greater attunement to the experience of the child. Quality work, resulting in a grade of A or A-, shows an enhanced capacity to understand the process and content of the child’s play and narrative and to provide interventions that foster a continued investment by the child in the session. Outstanding work, resulting in a grade of A+, will be awarded for work beyond that of an “A” that reveals interventions that enhance the child’s experience and understanding of him or herself in the session and/or enhances the performance of fellow student’s in the class. Not yet competent work, resulting in a grade of C through F, will be given for either ethical or behavioral lapses in the session that are harmful to the patient and do not improve substantially over the semester and/or an inability or unwillingness or insensitivity to contribute to the work of your fellow students in class discussion. Please note that participation is evaluated on quality (not quantity) of contribution to the class discourse. This does not mean talking a lot; quality of participation includes facilitation of group discussion, questioning, and integrating others’ ideas and comments.

Attendance:
Please note that participation is assessed separately from attendance. Participation refers to active involvement in classroom discussions. In addition, attendance in class is required. Because this course meets once weekly for 2 hours, missing one class is the equivalent of missing a full week of course work. Attending all classes is essential for being successful in this course, and therefore absences will not be excused for just any illness or scheduling conflict – there needs to be a major crisis for an absence to be excusable. Discuss with the professor any anticipated events or religious holidays that conflict with the course schedule, and alternative arrangements must be worked out in advance. Please note that more than two unexcused absences will be grounds for a failing grade.

Plagiarism and Cheating:
Plagiarism is the use or presentation of ideas, words, or work that is not one’s own and that is not common knowledge, without granting credit to the originator. Plagiarism is a practice that is not only unacceptable, but which is to be condemned in the strongest terms possible on the basis of moral, educational and legal grounds. Under University policy, plagiarism may be punishable by a range of penalties from a failing grade in the assignment or course to dismissal from the college. All students are required to read the Program Handbook on avoiding plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to the following: falsification of statements or data; listing sources that have not been used; having another individual write your
paper or do your assignments; writing a paper or creating work for another student to use without proper attribution; purchase of paper or research work for one’s examination (except when expressly permitted by the instructor, depending on the nature of the examination) or knowingly providing such assistance to aid other students.

Students with Disabilities:
CUNY seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. The University will adhere to all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to register with Student Support Services (SSS) as early as possible and to provide faculty members with the formal communication from SSS for suitable accommodations. All accommodations must be approved through SSS.

Readings:
Readings are not corresponding to particular class sessions but should be read over the course of the semester, except where noted:
Books:
(3) Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy by Peter Blake, IP Communications, 2008.
(6) A Handbook of Integrative Psychotherapies for Children and Adolescents by Sebastiano Santostefano, Jason Aronson, 1998
(8) Early encounters with Children and Adolescents. Steve Tuber (Ed.) Routledge, 2015
Articles:
(11) Tuber, S. Introduction to the training and development issue of JICAP, issue 12, number 4

(14) Punales, D. On Being Essential: Parenting, Immigration and Acculturation

(15) Schwartz, D. Psychoanalytic developmental perspectives on parenthood

(16) Fisch, J. Parenthood and the therapeutic alliance.

Weeks 1-3: A theoretical and practical overview to psychotherapy with children and adolescents: developmental considerations.
Readings: Sandberg & Spritz, Chs. 1-4; Santostefano, Ch. 1; Altman, et al, Chs. 9 & 11; Chethik, Ch. 3, Haworth, Chs. 1, 5 & 6, Tuber & Caflisch, Ch. 1, Blake, Chs. 1-3. Articles by Perry, Smith, Halfon & Tuber and Volume 12, 4 of JICAP.

Clinical work: Review of transcript of Tuber play therapy Session; Tuber and Caflisch, Chapters 2 and 6.

Weeks 4 – 15: Audio-taped sessions of students with their child patients. Readings from the above books will be assigned based on the particular issues raised by the demographic, clinical, cultural and/or developmental vicissitudes of each individual case on a week to week basis.