

Stewardship and Clinical Practice: The Private Growth of the Public Good

Sponsored by The Project on Civic Reflection at
Valparaiso University
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This seminar will use short fiction and poetry to help mental health clinicians, whose work is uncommonly private, consider our place in the broader community. Each of us receives some public funding. *What expectations accompany this investment? To whom are we responsible? How does our role as steward impact us and our work?* We will use the readings as common plots upon which we can build ongoing conversations. We may find answers to some of these questions. We may simply find that the questions are worth asking.

Civic reflection is neither group therapy nor clinical supervision. It does not mimic support groups nor is it something to be accomplished. Rather, it is a practice – a practice to which a group of individuals commit themselves for a period of time. We will slow down, read well-crafted, thoughtful writings, and talk with one another. We will share dinner and perhaps more. And we may find, in the midst of agreeing and disagreeing, that we learn something about ourselves and our daily work.

Session I What is Stewardship?

As clinicians whose training has been partially funded by public dollars, what has been invested in us and by whom? What opportunities and perhaps responsibilities accompany these investments? Are we stewards, and if so, of what?

Jane Addams “A Modern Lear”
Philip Larkin “This be the Verse”

Session II The University Town

In what ways do the university and the city impact each other? How do they thrive or wither in each other’s presence? How are we, as (un)official representatives of the university and members of the community, affected by these mutual influences?

DuBois, “Of the Sons of Masters and Man”
LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

Session III Now Look from Over Here

What is it like to have our sense of our neighborhoods constantly shifting? Over the course of a treatment, every individual inevitably describes our community in a way new to us. In what ways are these evolving perspectives enlivening? Threatening? How do we tolerate the shifts? Do we need to integrate them in some way?

Toni Morrison “Recitatif”

Session IV Interior Lives on Parade

How do we retain a sense of privacy given the intimate realms we enter with so many people? Who protects our personal space? Do we feel exposed, and if so, how do we tolerate such feelings?

**Mary Wilkins Freeman “Luella Miller”
Jan Beatty, “Saving the Crippled Boy”**

Session V When Clinical Practice Becomes a Practice in Loneliness

Given the solitary and yet emotionally intense nature of psychotherapy, how do we remain connected with others? How do we cope with loneliness?

**Wendell Berry “To Know the Dark”
Emily Dickinson “There is Another Loneliness”**

Session VI Going Public

What do we do with the knowledge we accrue over years of practice? Are there ways to use this understanding more generatively? How would going public affect us?

**Morrison, Nobel Laureate Speech
Lynn and Wisely, “Toward a Fourth Philanthropic Response”**

Session VII Maybe They Know How

Can another group of professionals help us think about our work in novel ways? What do conceptual artists contribute to their communities? How does their work isolate them from their neighbors? In what ways do you identify with or distinguish yourself from these artists?

**Martin , “The Untroubled Mind”
Holzer, “Language Games”**