

# Woke Psychoanalysis – When Training Institutes Become Driven by Social Justice Activism

By Jon Mills

Since the release of the [Holmes Commission Final Report](#) for Racial Equality in American Psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic accrediting bodies such as the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA), and membership organizations like the International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (IFPE) and the psychoanalytic division of the American Psychological Association (APA), have increasingly turned into a woke collective. For the past few years, annual conferences from leading psychoanalytic federations have been dominated by critical social justice themes.



We are also seeing DEI programming take center stage in some psychoanalytic training institutes throughout the United States that have created task forces, formed diversity committees, offer study groups, and have implemented changes in their course curriculums promoting identity politics,

antiracism pedagogy, and social activism directives as core values governing the mission of training institutes themselves.

In the [By-Laws and Mission Statement](#) of The William Alanson White Psychoanalytic Society, it specifically makes antiracist programming a key element of its goals: “The members of the Society are committed to partnering with the governing bodies of the Institute to dismantle institutional racism as it may manifest in policies, procedures, curriculum, faculty, and training analyst and supervisor appointments.” From this statement, the reader may assume that the training institute is saturated with racism that has seeped into the very fabric of the organization. But it is more likely that the Institute and Society are waxing DEI optics under their progressive politics. As they [claim](#), “Today, we still represent the most progressive wing of the psychoanalytic profession in the country.” But we may naively ask, if the Society and Institute are systemically racist, why would anyone want to train there?

As another institutional case in point, let us briefly examine the Westchester Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (WCSPP). On the [About Us](#) page of their website, the Center emphasizes its “core values in the creation of a more diverse and inclusive community that challenges prejudice and discrimination in all its forms.” The Mission of the [Diversity Committee](#) “includes addressing issues related to race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and economic disparities. The committee works to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the recruitment, education, and training of candidates at WCSPP.” To their credit, they do offer a sliding fee scale of as low as \$30 for clients in their mental health training clinic seen by therapists who are candidates in their training programs.

At first glance we may assume that the Center simply wants to nobly recruit and train people from minoritized groups that

typically do not seek out psychoanalytic training and education. This has generally been a goal of psychoanalysis globally—to attract as many qualified members as possible, which has successfully organized international psychoanalytic collectives on every inhabitable continent comprised of people from most cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and religions. But the devil is in the details. When one closely examines some of the language employed in their process groups, book clubs, retreats, course offerings, and training materials, it becomes very clear that the Center is teaching antiracist propaganda. When Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* and Ta Nehisi Coates' *Between The World and Me* are part of the reading list, we must suspect that social justice ideologies are at play.

Weekend retreats offered by the Center have focused on activist themes using antiracist rhetoric such as "Facing the Other: Implicit Bias, Hate and Transformation" and "Living with Otherness: The Not-Me in Me and You." Here we may imagine the type of moral re-education offered in workplace DEI struggle sessions that subject attendees to the fallacious notions of institutionalized white supremacy, systemic racism, and decolonial blame. They even offer "Faculty Diversity Training" on the topic of "Micro-aggressions," a totally bogus construct that could mean anything to anyone looking to be offended, not to mention being thoroughly [discredited](#) by leading social scientists.

But when you get into the weeds of examining the course content, a more detailed description of the course curriculum gives pause for concern. One course is titled: "Toward Appreciating the Other in Clinical Work: Racial Dynamics in The Consulting Room." What may appear as innocuous is anything but. Here is the course description:

The course will explore the unconscious biases that are often present in the consulting room whether the other is physically present or not. Each participant will identify their biases

and have an opportunity to explore how to manage them as they emerge with patients. The course will rely on readings from prominent thinkers in the field on this subject but will also have experiential components and opportunities to express thoughts and feelings related to the content. The course objectives will be to improve the level of comfort for new analysts in thinking about and discussing these ideas.

#### Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the Nature and Purpose of Unconscious Bias
2. Understand The History of Bias in Psychoanalytic Theory
3. Explore Psychoanalytic Theories of Race and Racism
4. Identify Feelings Related to Race and Racism
5. Identify Biases in the Self Related to Race and Racism
6. Approach a Level of Comfort in Discussions About Race
7. Begin to Develop Clinical Skill of Recognizing and Processing Bias in the Consulting Room

I have already offered a substantial [critique of antiracism ideology](#) elsewhere, so I will not duplicate those arguments here. But what is noteworthy to point out in this course description is the palpable antiracist tenets operating as [academic propaganda](#) when evoking the term “unconscious bias.” It should be noted that theories of implicit bias derived from research based on the Implicit Association Test (IAT) purported to measure unconscious thoughts and attitudes of racial prejudice and discriminatory behavior have been [thoroughly debunked](#). If antiracism pedagogy is becoming the new unquestioned orthodoxy in psychoanalytic education, then I fear what will become of the future of the profession when political bias saturates training standards.

What we do know, supported by sundry [evidence](#), is that the

more you focus on racial identity the more racially biased you become. This is not hard to imagine, as anyone who has witnessed a DEI training session will attest to its inherent [psychopathology](#) that pits majority white Anglo-European collectives and Jews against minority identities. This tactic only spurs division, inflicts unnecessary psychic wounds, and promotes rancor and antipathy among professionals who share a common purpose of wanting to heal people of their suffering through psychoanalytic interventions.

But an equally troubling dimension to this class is its compulsory experiential nature. Candidates are told they must “identify their biases” and “feelings” in themselves through “experiential components” of processing their internal racism. It takes no act of imagination to surmise how this would turn out. Here there seems to be some kind of fantasy that only certain types of people (i.e., white) harbour biases, when such a provocation is itself racist. In fact, our defenses, resistances, transferences, and hostilities would be exacerbated by the insistence that some people are racists while others are not, especially if one racialized group is pointing the finger at another. A psychoanalytic theory of [unconscious prejudice](#) is something that applies to everyone: it’s just a matter of degree. Antiracist and anti-oppression training presumes a moral ideality that if we were to become aware of all our biases, then we could eliminate them with proper education. Prejudice is no more likely to disappear than the reality of the external world, only ameliorated, as it is part of human nature.

The antiracism class offered by WCSPP confuses scholarly content with a form of group therapy that is intrusive and potentially coercive. And this is a 3rd year required [course](#) in their Advanced Psychoanalytic Training Program. In all the psychoanalytic training environments I have taught in over my career, most candidates would be completely turned off by these identity politics, as I have

been told by many. Administrative bodies who push these courses appear to be clueless to the tensions they structurally create within cohorts who simply want to be trained as competent analysts based on universal humanitarian principles regardless of personal background or skin color. Pressure from the progressive left and woke instructors would only support this nonsense as a mandatory requirement, and at their own peril.

Can you imagine a new candidate choosing to train there? Let's sign up only to be singled out and exposed for all my prejudices and forced to confess them to the morality police running the course! Could you imagine the anxiety, uncomfortable staid silence, the transference projections, and defensive enactments in such a class that violates the social contract?

The instructor is also in a position of authority and is grading the candidates. If you were to speak your mind freely, or challenge the course content or instructor's opinion, you would likely be reproached, perhaps even punished, covertly if not overtly, and hence tarnish your reputation among the faculty and executive, if not jeopardize your suitability to graduate. Instead of engendering critical thinking and authenticity among candidates, this scenario encourages the development of a fine false self who is not permitted to think independently as a free agent without threat of penalty.

On a pragmatic level, the program does not seem to be aware that it is setting itself up for a potential lawsuit if someone feels violated, emotionally abused, or does not pass the class because of the instructor's commitment to an ideology based in political bias. Guilt inducement, acting out, and rage are predictable outcomes. Teaching such course content would do nothing but alienate everyone in the program. Such forced duress could even lead to complaints, people dropping out of the course or program, or even bring about legal consequences if someone was branded a racist. As

a mandatory course that requires personal self-disclosure exposing one's utmost private thoughts and feelings, you would think it would have a chilling effect on those considering training at this institute.

But what is most condescending is to think that clinicians seeking out advanced training would be so morally depraved that they require instruction on how to be antiracist. We must begin with the premise that most people in our field are decent human beings who simply want to help others, not bigots who cause their patients extra suffering. Why else would they be in the profession?

*First published in [Critical Therapy Antidote](#)*

Jon Mills is a Canadian philosopher, psychoanalyst, and clinical psychologist who has written extensively on the institutional take-over of critical social justice in academe and professional associations. His forthcoming book is titled *Woke: A Critique of Social Justice Ideology*, which is being published by New English Review Press in March 2026.