

## Psychoanalytic Takes on the Cinema

4.5 CME/CE (1.5 CME/CE per session)

Please join us for the following sessions



### Discussion of the Film: The Thing

Discussant: Alex Smith, PsyD

Friday, November 14, 2025, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Via Zoom

1.5 CME/CE

\*Film must be viewed prior to the event

1982 (109 min)

**Director:** John Carpenter

*A research team in Antarctica is hunted by a shape-shifting alien that assumes the appearance of its victims.*

**Presentation:** At surface level fantastical, appalling, and occasionally comical, horror renders that which is unthinkable or unspeakable into inhuman, slimy, or spectral forms, presenting the taboo or the overwhelming at a safe, controllable distance from the self. In horror, unthinkable and unspeakable aspects of the “self” can be experienced as the monstrous “other” and exorcised with flamethrowers. The horror movie generates credibility through performance, photography, and effects that ground the viewer in a “reality” that can then become credibly unreal. This magical reality evokes archaic experiences of the self as unbounded and vulnerable, taking on challenging, unsettling thoughts and feelings while allowing for the suspension of the neatly boundaried “I” of the viewer.

John Carpenter’s *The Thing* belongs to a rich tradition of paranoia and body horror in the uncanny narrative and horror cinema. The self, here under the condition of isolation and environmental confusion, becomes vulnerable to external corruption. The un-integrable impulse is cast off, producing a disintegrated state. Then, in the presence of an alien “other”, the once familiar body is usurped. The mind is subsumed. The “me” becomes a “me” copy that is at once terrifying and terrified, its sole purpose being to consume additional “others.” *The Thing* is an allegory for the mental mechanisms of unbounded consciousness: not only the body, but also the psychological boundaries constituting the self, are at risk.

In working on this allegory, we will briefly touch on horror cinema’s enduring interest in paranoia and the unbounded consciousness. We will consider Clara Keane’s clairvoyant work on existential permeability and Andre Green’s psychic envelopes as regards their explanatory power for experiences of unbounded consciousness, paranoia, and uncanny encounters. We will see how *The Thing*, as an apex of creepstastic cinema, resonates with our own experiences—both archaic and present-day—of the fragility of our distinct, boundaried sense of a “me”, and why it matters.

**Discussant: Alex Smith, PsyD**, completed his postdoctoral fellowship and additional trainings in psychoanalytic theory, psychotherapy, and supervision at the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute and the Washington School of Psychiatry. He is an Associate Professor at George Washington University. He has led classes in psychological assessment, psychotherapy, ethics, and the writing of the horror story. Alex has a private practice in Washington, DC.

## Learning Objectives:

1. Review and elaborate on the effectiveness of horror motifs in rendering the individual and group processes with fantastical tropes.
2. Describe the concepts of “existential permeability”, “unbounded consciousness”, and the “psychic envelope” in individual and group processes.
3. Describe aspects of the process of paranoia as it is reflected in the horror narrative.

## References:

Craig, S. G. (2004). Invasion of the individual: John Carpenter’s modernization of the myth of identity-theft in *The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness*, and *They Live*. *Popular Culture Review*, 15(1), 123–130.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2831-865X.2004.tb00621.x>

Canelas Neto, J.-M. (2018). Reflection on the void in psychoanalysis: From horror of the void to the void as a creator of metaphors. *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 82(4), 1126–1137.  
<https://doi.org/10.3917/rfp.824.1126>

Perelberg, R. J. (2016). Negative hallucinations, dreams and hallucinations: The framing structure and its representation in the analytic setting. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 97(6), 1575–1590.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-8315.12572>



## Discussion of the Film: Me Before You

**Discussant:** Katherine Marshall Woods, PsyD  
**Friday, January 30, 2026, 4:00pm-5:30pm**

**Via Zoom**

**1.5 CME/CE**

**\*Film must be viewed prior to the event**

2016 (120 min)

**Director:** Thea Sharrock

*A girl in a small town forms an unlikely bond with a recently paralyzed man she's taking care of.*

**Presentation:** It has been a long-standing question regarding whether an individual has the right to take their own life. This question has invited both legal and moral considerations into the conversation. Physician

Assisted Suicides have become legal in America in thirteen states and the District of Columbia for certain individuals/patients. *Me Before You* explores the affective response and behavioral manifestations that occur with the loved ones of those who have accepted a PAS. Examining the range of grief experienced, coupled with the diligent use of defense mechanisms to emotionally cope with the person’s chosen manner to end their life is illustrated in this film event.

In this talk, we will discuss the dynamics present within the film *Me Before You* in the context of age and SES. We will also have the opportunity to screen Pat Basstini’s short, *Dignity* (2020), and explore

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similar and differing dynamics given the season in life the characters find themselves. Participants will have an opportunity to speak with the filmmaker at the event.

**Discussant: Katherine Marshall Woods, PsyD** is a media psychologist and licensed clinical psychologist in Washington, DC. Dr. Marshall Woods spearheads PsychMinded Media, which allows her to assist individuals in the film and media industry to conceptualize projects with a psychological perspective. She has worked with actors, screenwriters, producers, and directors, and collaborates with film festivals in the US and abroad. Dr. Marshall Woods co-leads the Psychoanalytic Takes on Cinema with the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis and is the developer of Cinematic Imprints with American Psychological Association's Division 39, Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology. She is also the Director of Graduate Studies with The George Washington University Professional Psychology Program.

Dr. Marshall Woods has contributed blogs for The Huffington Post, the former American Psychological Association's PsycCRITIQUES, has a column with Psychology Today and blogs with Thrive Global and Medium regarding psychology, film and media works. She has authored the book, *Best Psychology in Film*, which has become a 2024 Telly Award-winning television show and podcast that she produces and hosts with UDCtv. Her recent publication, *Black Film Through a Psychodynamic Lens*, has been featured on numerous podcasts and speaking engagements around the US. Additionally, Dr. Marshall Woods has lent her expertise to media outlets, such as News Channel 8, NPR, The Huffington Post, The Daily Drum and remains the host and producer of *A Healthy Mind* television show in Washington, DC.

#### Learning Objectives:

- 1) Define physician assisted suicide (PAS).
- 2) Describe the process affective shifts that occur within decisions of PAS for patients and loved ones.
- 3) Identify the process of and varying forms of termination within relationships.

#### References:

Andriessen, K., Krynska, K., Castelli, D., Dolores, A., Dargis, L., & Mishara, B. L. (2020). Grief after euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide: A systematic review. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 41(4), 255–272.

Kelly, B., Handley, T., Kissane, D., Vamos, M., & Attia, J. (2020). "An indelible mark": The response to participation in euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide among doctors—A review of research findings. *Palliative & Supportive Care*, 18(1), 82–88. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951519000518>

Simmons, K. M. (2018). Suicide and death with dignity. *Journal of Law and the BioSciences*, 5(2), 436–439. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jlb/lxy008>



## Discussion of the Film: Please Stand By

Discussant: Karen Weise, PhD

Friday, February 27, 2026, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Via Zoom

1.5 CME/CE

\*Film must be viewed prior to the event

2023 (93 min)

**Director:** Ben Lewin

*A young autistic woman runs away from her caregiver in an attempt to submit her 500-page manuscript to a "Star Trek" writing competition at Paramount Pictures.*

**Presentation:** This presentation will consider how racially crafted stereotypes located in literary and film works have permeated artistic mediums over the last century. Jefferson's *American Fiction* depicts an esteemed scholar and novelist frustrated by the narratives published in the literary world that perpetuates racial stereotypes influencing the ways in which people of color are imagined and understood in the world. Within this presentation, racial stereotypes frequently depicted are examined understanding that their insidious residue exist within quotidian dynamics, including therapy rooms. This film carefully examines the roles artists and audiences have to uphold racial stereotypes within present day artistic expressions, while challenging one to consider how minority artists have contended with these stereotypes and navigated systems that depict their identity as the other. *American Fiction* directly confronts these systemically racially charged dynamics while being curious regarding whose voices and narratives are silenced and whose are celebrated.

**Discussant: Karen Weise, PhD** is a clinical psychologist and child/adolescent psychoanalyst based in Washington DC. She obtained her PhD in clinical psychology from City College in New York (CUNY) and completed her psychoanalytic training at the Hampstead Clinic (Anna Freud Centre) in London. She presently has a psychotherapy and assessment practice in NW DC, where she works with children through young adults and their parents. Over the past twenty-five years she has been a staff psychologist at Children's National Medical Center in the Developmental Clinic, as well as at the Reginald S. Lourie Center for Infants & Young Children. She has long been involved in psychoanalytic education and is on the child faculty of the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis and is the chair of the Child & Adolescent track in the PsyD program at George Washington University (DC), where she has been core faculty for more than ten years. She is the current President of Division 39, Section II (Child/ Adolescent) of the APA and holds the office of Councilor in the Association of Child Psychoanalysis (ACP). Dr. Weise has presented her clinical work with gender-expansive youth to a variety of local audiences, and also has clinical interests in working with children and adolescents on the autism spectrum and/ or with adoption histories.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Explain how this film challenges stereotypical understandings of young adults on the autism spectrum as unemotional or unable to access imagination or creativity.
2. Describe how Wendy's "obsession" with Star Trek can be understood as meaningful, and representative of both her inner object world but also a fundamental aspect of her identity development.

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3. Speak to the challenges for the caregivers and loved ones of neurodivergent young adults in providing the structure that often helps youth thrive, but also allowing opportunities for autonomy.

### References:

Delafield-Butt, J., Dunbar, P., & Trevarthen, C. (2022). Disruption to the core self in autism, and its care. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 42(1), 53–75.

Emanuel, C. (2015). An accidental Pokémon expert: Contemporary psychoanalysis on the autism spectrum. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, 10(1), 53–68.

Hardy, A. (2024). “You don't need to be fixed”: Working with a neurodiverse family. *Couple and Family Psychoanalysis*, 14(1), 146–160.

### Registration Link:

[https://wbcp.memberclicks.net/reg\\_psy\\_cinema\\_25-26](https://wbcp.memberclicks.net/reg_psy_cinema_25-26)

### Registration Fees (per session):

I do not need CME/CE

No Fee

I want CME/CE

\$67.50

### ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

Continuing Education Units are not issued for partial attendance.

**Please note, a confidential evaluation will be sent out after this program.** We are required by our accrediting organization to provide a summary of evaluation results within 30 days of the completion of a program. In order to comply with this requirement, we will close the evaluation link three weeks after the program. Those who want CE credits AFTER the evaluation closure will be charged a \$30 processing fee for us to reopen the evaluation and generate a certificate.

**Katherine Marshall Woods, PsyD, Program Co-Chair**  
**Sarah Hedlund, PhD, Program Co-Chair**

*There is no known commercial support for this program.*  
*CVs available upon request.*

### Continuing Education Information

**Continuing Medical Education** – This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education

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The American Psychoanalytic Association designates this Live Activity for a maximum of 4.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s) TM. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

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