

**Washington Square Institute
Family Law and Family Forensics Training Program**

**Sequence I - 2013-2014
Curriculum and Presenters**

Fall Semester

I. Introduction : 10/15/13

Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D. and Ellen Holtzman, J.D.

This class, co-lectured by Linda Gunsberg and Ellen Holtzman, offers an overview of the first year sequence and how the first year sequence fits into the framework of the entire training program.

- Why this training program is essential
- Candidates' expectations of this training program , and what candidates should expect from this training program
- Functions of the family law attorney, attorney for the child, and mental health professional
- How the concept of family law originated, and what is the difference between family law and matrimonial law
- How Family Law defines "the family", and how Matrimonial Law defines "family" (how does Family Law address married families, never-married families, single-parent families and gay and lesbian parent families)
- Best Interests of the Child (best interests of the child legal standard, judicial and psychological perspectives)
- How family forensics developed
- How social sciences define "family" (married, never-married families, single-parent families, and gay and lesbian parent families)
- Points of agreement and disagreement between the perspectives of Family Law and Family Forensics
- Difference between being an advocate and being a neutral in a Family Law case
- The adversarial system and the concept of collaborative law

II. Overarching Developmental Concepts: 10/22/13

Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D.

- Steps towards transitional space, transitional objects, self-soothing, mental representation, internalization, and libidinal object constancy
- The interrelationship between culture and development

III. The Family System: 10/29/13

Part 1: Theory

Claire Steinberger, Ed.D., J.D. and Sharon Kozberg, Ph.D.

- The family (married, never-married families, single-parent families, and gay and lesbian parent families) as a system
- Factors and processes that maintain and strengthen the family system
- Factors that lead to disruption in the family system
- Theoretical contributions to the conceptualization and dynamics of the family system
- How separation and divorce impact on the family system
- Clinical work with separating and divorcing couples and families
- The multigenerational family

IV. The Family System (cont'd): 11/5/13

Part 2: Alternative Lifestyles: Psychological and Legal Considerations

Sharon Kozberg, Ph.D. and Sherri Donovan, J.D.

- Legal and psychological recognition of multiple kinds of motherhood and fatherhood, and recognition of multiple parents
- Homeless families*
- Domestic violence shelter families* ¹

V. Best Interests of the Child : Psychological, Legal, and Judicial Perspectives :11/12/13

Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D. and Ellen Holtzman, J.D.

¹ * This denotes topics that will be presented in Year Two

VI. Expectant Parenthood: 11/19/13

Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D.

- The progression of the family from a dyad (couple) to the family triad (parents and baby)
- The emerging roles of the mother and the father
- The unconscious beliefs of the couple regarding their marriage and relationship
- The script the couple writes regarding who they are as parents and who their baby is supposed to be

VII., VIII., & IX., Infancy and Toddlerhood: 11/26/13, 12/3/13, & 12/10/13

Anni Bergman, Ph.D., Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D., and Marla Isaacs, Ph.D.

Attachment theory and separation-individuation theory are offered as useful conceptual frameworks for understanding the psychological development of the infant and toddler, and for what the forensic evaluator observes between the infant, parents, and other caregivers

- The normative levels of cognitive development, emotional development, and social development for this age group
- The normative defense mechanisms/coping strategies of this age group
- How parental separation/divorce impacts a child at this particular developmental phase
- What the forensic evaluator observes between the pre-school child and each parent, the pre-school child and both parents, and the pre-school child and other significant family members including siblings
- Factors to consider regarding overnights with the second parent

X. The Family Genogram: 12/17/13

Michael Zentman, Ph.D.

GETTING READY FOR COURT (LECTURES XI-XV)

XI. How the Forensic Expert Prepares for Court Testimony: 1/14/14

Moisy Shopper, M.D. and Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D.

- General guidelines for a family forensic evaluation
- How to read and use social science literature
- Preparation for testimony with attorney: collaborative process

- The Court as context

XII.How to Read a Legal Case and Landmark Family Law Cases: 1/28/14

Part 1: How to read a legal case and landmark family law cases
Meryl Neuren, J.D.

Part 2: The task of the forensic evaluator in the family of a very young child
Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D.

XIII.The Role of the Attorney for the Child: 2/11/14

Cheryl Solomon, J.D.

- The role of the attorney for the child (for the infant/toddler, the pre-school child, the school-age child, and the adolescent)
- How to interview children of different ages
- New legal rules regarding the role of attorney for the child and when an attorney for the child can substitute judgment
- Examples of attorney for the child interviews with children through the developmental progression from infancy to adolescence
- Consideration of cultural and religious family factors in representing the child
- Confidentiality
- When NOT to appoint an attorney for the child: considerations

XIV.Matrimonial 101: 2/18/14

Meryl Neuren, J.D.

XV.Legal considerations in selecting an expert , and expert testimony in a case regarding overnight parental access with a very young child: 2/25/14

Linda Gunsberg,Ph.D. and Ellen Holtzman, J.D.

Pt. 1: How the Attorney Prepares for Court: Ellen Holtzman

- The Court as context - sizing up the judge, and the alliances between attorneys, the judge, and attorney(s) for the child
- When the attorney selects an expert for trial
- How the attorney selects the expert
- How the attorney prepares the forensic expert for Court
- Voir Dire of the expert
- How the attorney prepares for trial

Pt 2: An Analysis of the Trial Transcript: Direct Testimony and Cross-Examination of an Expert Witness (Child Development Expert): Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D. and Ellen Holtzman, J.D.

- Linda Gunsberg will discuss how she worked with the particular attorney on this case (preparation of questions for direct testimony; educating the attorney about the psychological position, research and theory related to her testimony)
- Ellen Holtzman will discuss how the attorney and expert work together in preparing each other for testimony of the expert
- Ellen Holtzman and Linda Gunsberg will talk about the report submitted and its relationship to the expert's testimony
- Ellen Holtzman will discuss the attorney's work product privilege

Spring Semester

I. The Pre-School Child- Ages 2.5-5: 3/4/14

Steven Demby, Ph.D.

- The normative levels of cognitive development, emotional development, and social development for this age group
- The normative defense mechanisms/coping strategies of this age group
- How parental separation/divorce impacts a child at this particular developmental phase
- What the forensic evaluator observes between the pre-school child and each parent, the pre-school child and both parents, and the pre-school child and other significant family members including siblings
- Parenting plan considerations for this age group, and how much weight is given to the expressed preferences and wishes by the pre-school child regarding custody and parental access

II. The School Age Child: Ages 5-11: 3/11/14

Julie Marcus, Ph.D.

- The normative levels of cognitive development, emotional development, and social development for this age group
- The normative defense mechanisms/coping strategies of this age group
- How parental separation/divorce impacts a child at this particular developmental phase

- What the forensic evaluator observes between the school-age child and each parent, the school-age child and both parents, and the school-age child and other significant family members including siblings
- Parenting plan considerations for this age group, and how much weight is given to the expressed preferences and wishes by the school-age child regarding custody and parental access

III. & IV. Early, Middle, and Late Adolescence: 3/18/14 and 3/25/14

William Salton, Ph.D. (Pt. 1, 3/18) and Sharon Kofman, Ph.D. (Pt. 2, 3/25)

- The normative levels of cognitive development, emotional development, and social development for this age group
- The normative defense mechanisms/coping strategies of this age group
- Further brain development
- Peer relations and membership in gangs
- How parental separation/divorce impacts a child at this particular developmental phase
- What the forensic evaluator observes between the adolescent and each parent, the adolescent and both parents, and the adolescent and other significant family members including siblings
- How much weight is given to the expressed preferences and wishes by the adolescent regarding custody and parental access, and other parenting plan considerations for this age group
- Depression and mood disorders
- Sexual experiences (homosexual and heterosexual)
- Gender confusion
- Cutting
- Drug and alcohol use
- Anorexia, bulimia, and bingeing
- Suicidal ideation and suicide

V. Special Needs Children: Psychological and Legal Perspectives on the Child with Special Needs as Well as Parenting Capacities: 4/1/14

Serena Weider, Ph.D. and Sherri Donovan, J.D.

Special needs to be discussed will include autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, the physically handicapped child, deafness, blindness, Down syndrome and mental retardation

VI & VII. Adult Development and Parenthood: 4/8, 4/22

Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D.

- Evolution of parenthood
- Primary maternal preoccupation
- The impact of separation and divorce on parenthood (changes in adult and parental identity; trauma; and depression)
- Parenting Capacities (strengths and weaknesses)
- Intermittent decathexis
- Parentification
- Psychodiagnostic issues*
- Lying, deception, and malingering in adults and parents*
- Interviewing of the parent in a family forensic evaluation*²

VIII. How to Assess Suicide and the Responsibility of Social Workers and Psychologists in this Assessment: 4/29/14

Steven Fayer, M.D.

In the first part of Dr. Fayer's presentation, he will discuss the risk of suicide by a parent during child custody proceedings. In the second part of his presentation, Dr. Fayer will address the use of psychiatric medications by parents, particularly at the time of separation and divorce.

IX. How Drug and Alcohol Use Impacts Parenting Capacities: Assessment in Child Custody Evaluations: 5/6/14

Claude Schleuderer, Ph.D.

Dr. Schleuderer will also address the assessment in a child custody evaluation of alcohol and drug use by children and adolescents.

X., XI. The Integration of Verbal and Non-Verbal Communications in Family Forensic Evaluations: 5/13/14 & 5/20/14

Dana Ernst, M.A., and Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D.

Pt I - 5/13: Overview of non-verbal communication theory and video presentation.
Dana Ernst, M.A.

Pt. II - 5/20: How non-verbal communication is integrated into the forensic expert's knowledge of the family in family forensic evaluations.
Linda Gunsberg, Ph.D.

² * This denotes topics that will be presented in Year Two

XII. Military Families: Issues Regarding Family Life, Parenting, Separation & Divorce: 6/3/14
Nadine Mass, LCSW

XIII. Panel: Modification of Custody for an Adolescent: Issues of Estrangement: 6/17/14

Family Forensic Expert: Sherill Sigalow, Ph.D.

Attorneys: Ellen Holtzman, J.D., Michael Joseph, J.D. and Cheryl Solomon, J.D.

Attorney for the Adolescent: Melissa Bonaldes, J.D.

XIV. Voir Dire of Candidates: 6/24/14

Ellen Holtzman, J.D.