

Teaching Dreams – a 24 Hour Course Syllabus by Robert Hoss

Introduction:

The example syllabus provided here is a referenced source from a chapter titled “Teaching Dreams in Continuing Education Courses” by Robert J Hoss, MS, in a book soon to be published on the subject of teaching dreams. The book chapter describes an 8 hour syllabus whereas this document provides an example of what a 24 hour tutorial course on dreams might include. It is based on the course material that I typically cover in various continuing education courses at various institutions where I have taught.

The syllabus contains a sizeable list of suggested reference materials to aid in the structuring of such a course. The material referenced is a sampling of what is available and by no means the totality of what is available for that section, but is provided as representative of the material which one might compile for the instruction. The syllabus contains a number of references to source material from the book *Dream Language*, which I wrote to support my own teaching of dream studies courses, and may be useful in particular for the dream examples contained therein to support the concepts and theories being presented. If you are planning to create a course on dreamwork feel free to contact me at bob@dreamscience.org if you have questions or would like assistance.

This material is organized for a 24 hour course but can be condensed or increased by retaining much of the same subject matter and content, but reducing or increasing the amount of detail provided. Sessions of a minimum of two hours in length are suggested. Two hours provides the ability to provides time to prepare the topic with a lecture then reinforce the learning through experiential work or dream sharing. The two hours is also required for the dreamwork sessions that are almost totally experiential.

The organization of this syllabus begins with the basics and science of dreaming (session 1 and 2), continues with a discussion of the varied dream experiences (sessions 3 through 6) then presents a history of psychological theory and practice with a focus on a few key theorists (sessions 7 through 9), then moves to experiential sessions for practicing both group and personal dreamwork (session 10 and 11), and ends with a closing session for sharing and exams.

Session #1 Orientation

The session begins with introductions between the student and instructor similar to those of the short course, but perhaps with some additional time for students to share their experiences or interests in dreams. The schedule and syllabus would be described as well as the CE requirements, homework, exams and instructor or course evaluations. This first session provides some basic facts about the nature of dreaming, then information on

journaling and incubation in preparation for dream sharing and experiential work during later sessions.

- The Nature of Dreaming (Hoss, 2005, pp.3-14)
 - The REM cycle – a diagrammatic representation of the sleep cycle and reference to the differences in REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM sleep and dreaming. (Hartmann, 1974; Van de Castle, 1994, p 228-234)
 - Dream recall frequency. (Domhoff, 2003, p21-25; Schredl, 2007)
 - Definition – a consistent set of features that define the “normal” dream experience (Hobson, 2003, p7).
 - Sensory Content – a content listing of the percent of visual, auditory, motion and other sensory content typically found in dreams. (Dang-Vu, 2007, p.103)
 - Color Content - a presentation of findings from recent studies related to color in dreams, both color content and the significance of color as it relates to emotion. (Hoss 2005, pp. 151-184; Hoss, 2010c; Schredl, 2008)
- Dream Recall and Incubation – instructions on effective methods for enhancing dream recall and for incubating dreams in preparation for later class discussion, dream sharing and homework assignments. (Harthan, 2005, p. 61; Barrett, 2001a)
- Dream Journaling – an introduction to some of the more effective methods for journaling dreams. This would include instruction on documenting both the dream narrative plus noting any waking life emotionally significant events experienced at the time, as well as discussion of the details which the dream narrative should contain. (Harthan, 2005, pp. 49-57; Hoss, 2005 pp.192, 193, 196, 197)

Session #2 – The Neurology of Dreaming

The objective is to show how the dream experience relates to and is affected by the unusual state of the brain during sleep.

- Neurological Research – a brief summary of basic research methods and findings, including earlier methods using EEG and lesion studies and newer methods using PET scans and various MRI techniques. (Hobson, 2003, p1-35; Dang-Vu et al, 2007, pp.95-114; Domhoff, 2009, pp.27 - 42)
- Neurology and the Dream Experience – a summary of the neurological findings relative to the dream state. It is suggested this begin with the compilation by Hobson of the PET scan results of the active and relatively inactive centers of the brain during REM.
 - Discuss how this unique combination influences the dream experience (Hobson, 2003, p.30) illustrated with dream examples (Hoss, 2010a, b).
 - Imagery – a discussion of the role of various active centers (associative cortex, right anterior parietal cortex) in the creation of picture-metaphor. (Hoss, 2010a, b)
 - Emotion – a discussion of emotional processing by the limbic region and amygdala and the influence of emotion on the dream plot and the contents of the dream imagery.

- Adaptive Learning – a discussion of the influence of the anterior cingulate and frontal regions on adaptive learning and dream cognition. (Pace-Schott, 2007; Domhoff, 2003, p9-25; Moorcroft, 2003; Hoss, 2010a, b)
- The Function of REM and Dreaming – a description of some of the more accepted or debated theories on the functions of REM dreaming (when our most vivid dreams occur) that many researchers have proposed based on recent findings.
 - Functions of Sleep – an introductory discussion of the findings related to the functions of sleep. (McNamara, 2007)
 - Function of Dreaming – a summary of the theories and debates surrounding the function of REM sleep and of the dream itself. (Hobson, 2003, p71-82; Hobson, 2003, p3-50 and 246; Solms, 2003, pp. 51-58 also pp. 247-251; Wamsley, 2007; Moffitt, 1993)
 - Evolutionary Hypothesis – a discussion of the evolutionary hypothesis related to dreaming. (Valli, 2007)
 - Contemporary Theory – a summary of the various theories and theorists that attribute an “adaptive” or learning function to dreams, for example: Harmann (2011) as well as French and Fromm, Palombo, Breger, Cartwright, Jones, Koulack, Fiss, Greenberg and Perlman, and Milton Kramer (included in Hartmann, 1996).
- Application to Dreamwork – an illustration, using dream case examples, of how some of the above theories might apply to how we understand and work with dreams.
 - Hartmann’s concept of the picture-metaphor and in particular the Contextualizing Image (CI), containing the “feeling-state” or emotions of the dreamer. (Hartmann 2007 and 2011)
 - Metaphor – a discussion of the theory of metaphor. (Domhoff, 2003, p.33) with some dream examples to illustrate how a bizarre or seemingly meaningless dream might be a combination of meaningful associations and metaphors which the dreamer can “connect” with in relation to their waking life situation. (Hoss, 2005, pp. 50-54, 135-141)
 - Adaptive Learning – a few dream examples to illustrate the concept of how one might recognize the point at which new connections are made (typically points of surprise or apparent guidance), and where adaptive learning seems apparent (reward reinforcement). (Hoss, 2010a,b; Hoss, 2005, pp.87,88)

Session #3 – The Varied Dream Experience – Content

This session introduces the concept of content analysis and demonstrates how dream content changes with age, gender, personality and somatic influences.

- Content Analysis - a brief description of the Hall/Van de Castle research method (Van de Castle, 1994, p291-310; Domhoff, 2003, pp. 53-105)
- Somatic Influences – a summary (perhaps in tabular form) of various studies on the incorporation of external stimuli (water on the skin, sound, flashes of light, tightening of a pressure cuff on the leg) into REM-dreams. (Dement, 1958; VDC, 1994, p 361-370)

- Gender Differences
 - Content differences for male and female dreamers. (VDC, 1994, p312-332; Schredl, 2007, p29-48; Domhoff, 2009, pp.153-166; Domhoff, 2003, pp. 26-38, 73)
 - Women's Dreams – a discussion of some of the unique content variations in women's dreams due to such factors as pregnancy and body image. (Garfield, 1990; Krippner, 2002, pp. 57-66)
 - Erotic Dreams – a brief discussion of the nature of erotic dreams as a response to physiological factors (Paley, 1990) as well as a more a more symbolic representation of the archetypal forces of integration (Jung, 1971).

- Age Differences
 - Content Variation from Childhood to Adulthood – perhaps a tabular compilation from various studies showing common increases and decreases in certain elements as we move from childhood to adulthood. (Domhoff, 2003, pp.21-30)
 - Children's Dreams – a description of the somewhat unique nature of children's dreams and how to work with children and their dreams. (Siegel A., 1998; Van de Castle, 1994, pp.312-317; Domhoff, 2003, p21-25)
 - Life Changes – a description of how dreams change as we age and are impacted by life changes and as we near death. (VDC, 1994, pp. 352-357 and pp. 291-310; Siegel, 2002)

- Personality Differences – personality influences on recall and content (Blagrove, 2007)

Session #4 – The Varied Dream Experience – Nightmares and Sleep Disorders

This session introduces the experience of the nightmare and that of various sleep disorders in contrast to the “normal” dream experience described previously.

- Nightmares (Hartmann, 1998)
 - Definitions - the definition of a nightmare, a description and classification of various nightmare experiences and some statistics on the frequency of nightmares in the general population. (Galvin and Hartmann, 1990)
 - Common Causes – a discussion of the common causes of the various types of nightmares (extreme stress, unresolved emotional conflict, trauma, etc.)
 - Recurrent Dreams – theories on why some dreams and nightmares recur. (Van de Castle, 1994, p340-345)
 - PTSD and Trauma Related Nightmares – a description of the nature of trauma related nightmares and how they differ from other nightmares and dreams. (Van de Castle, 1994, p345-46; Punamaki, 2007;Barrett, 2001b)
 - Nightmare Sufferers – a description of some of the suspected causes and personality types. (Van de Castle, 1994, p347-351)
 - Nightmare Therapy – a description of some of the therapeutic techniques used with nightmares and in particular trauma related nightmares.

- Sleep Disorders – a description of various disorders (such as narcolepsy, sleep walking, night terrors for example), their possible causes and the relationship to nightmares and dreams. (Auerbach, 2007; Fantini, 2007)
- Effect of drugs on dreaming. (Hobson, 2007)

Session #5 – The Varied Dream Experience – Extraordinary Dreams

This session discusses the changing dream experience when a dream seemingly incorporates information that varies from the “norm” – either information about the health of the dreamer, problem-solving or creative information, or information that appears extrasensory in nature. A description of the dream experience or phenomenon should be accompanied with theory and research data that supports the phenomenon.

- Healing and Physical Dreams – a discussion of dreams which appear to incorporate information about the dreamers body state or physical health. At times they may seem to provide remedies or clues to what a person is missing or needs in order to restore physical health. (Van de Castle, 1994, p370-390; Krippner, 2002, pp. 67-76)
- Creative Dreams – a discussion of dreams which appear to solve problems the dreamer is dealing with in waking life, or from which creative, inventive or artistic expression comes forth.
 - History and example of inventions, artistic creations, discoveries and inventions reported to have come from dreams. (Barrett, 2001a)
 - Research into the nature of problem solving dreams. (Barrett, 2007)
- Lucid Dreaming – the varied experiences and research studies related to lucidity. (LaBerge, 2007; Bogzaran, 2009; Waggoner, 2009;)
 - The lucidity experience
 - Research methods and findings
 - Incubating lucidity
- Paranormal Dreams – a discussion of the nature of the experiences plus the research findings. (Krippner, 2002 and 2007; Ullman, 1973; Van de Castle, 1994, p405-436)
 - Research methods
 - Telepathic - mind-to-mind
 - Clairvoyant - perceiving at a distance
 - Precognitive - perception of a future event
 - OOBE - out of the body experience
 - Shared or Collective Dreaming - dream shared by two or more
 - Dream telepathy experiment as homework (optional) – replicating one of the Ullman and Krippner experiments with the students

Session #6 – Cultural, Religious and Spiritual Treatment of Dreaming

This session describes the variation in the dream experience, in particular the extraordinary experiences, from the perspective of various historical and cultural belief systems.

- Historical Perspectives - a brief historical discussion of the human perceptions of dreaming from Biblical times through the middle ages to the psychological movement, or Freud. (Van de Castle, 1994, p10-106; Webb, 1990)
- Cultural Approaches and Ethnography – brief description of the place of dreams and dreaming in the world’s diversity of cultures. (Lohmann, 2007; Garfield, 1974)
- Shamanic treatment (S Krippner, 1990, pp. 185-193)
- Religious Significance of Dreams (Bulkeley, 2007)
- Past Life Dreams (Krippner, 2002, pp. 127-134)
- Spiritual and Visionary dreams and Visitation dreams (Krippner, 2002, pp.147-156)

Session #7 – the Psychology of Dreaming – A Brief History

The objective of this session, and the next three, is to provide a perspective on how psychological theory has evolved and what contributions have been made along the way that have had lasting influence on the approaches we use today.

- Brief History and Contributions – a listing and discussion of some of the key contributions of early psychological theorists such as Freud, Jung, Adler, Lowy, Stekel, French, Erikson, Boss, Perls, Hall, Ullman and Feinstein/Krippner. The material might be best organized as short summaries or in a tabular format, so that the key contributions, differences and common threads are apparent, and in particular the lasting contributions from each might be highlighted. (Hoss, 2005, pp. 65-73; Van de Castle, 1994, p 177-204)
- Focus on Key Luminaries
After the brief comparative history it is suggested that the instructor focus on a few key luminaries that have had lasting contributions or whose theories and approaches have particular relevance today. Some of the factors which might be used in comparing their theories on: the function of dreaming; what stimulates the dream; source of the dream content; role and appearance of the conscious and unconscious in the dream; psychological processes taking place; barriers to resolution and what brings about an eventual resolution (Hoss, 2005, p. 68). A brief description of their dreamworking or analysis methods should be included as well (Hoss, 2005, pp. 65-73; Schwartz, 1990; Singer, 1990; Perls, 1974 and 1976). A focus on the following individuals are suggested:
 - Sigmund Freud (the Psychoanalytic Approach): Discuss the key contributions of Freud that were the basic building blocks of modern theory about dreams and upon which the other great thinkers built their theories or diverged. (Van de Castle, 1994, p 109-139; Schwartz, 1990)
 - Carl Jung (Archetypal Dreamwork): Summarize the relationship with and theoretical departures from Freud including his expanded view of the nature of the

psyche and how he considered dreams to be the expression of the unconscious and a critical part of the process of mental evolution he called “individuation”.

- Fritz Perls (Gestalt Therapy): Summarize his theories including: the natural tendency of the psyche being to obtain “wholeness” or completion; the elements of the dream representing the disowned or alienated parts of our personality which require integration; and the methods used for the dreamer to experience and work through the emotional impasses that stand in the way of integration.
 - David Feinstein and Stanley Krippner (Personal Mythology): Discuss this theory which looks at how dreams accommodate our waking experiences in the context of our personal mythology (which we use to make sense of the world) either by sustaining the myth, creating a counter-myth or integrating conflicting myths. (Hoss 2005, pp. 73-75 and 84-88; Feinstein, 1990; Krippner, 2002, pp.157-167)
- Incubation and journaling assignments should be done at the close of this session in preparation for the following sessions which may include an experiential exercise.

Session # 8 –The Psychology of Dreaming – Focus on Carl Jung

A focused session on Carl Jung is highly recommended due to the major impact that his theories have had on not only dreams and dreamwork but how they relate to the depths of the human “psyche.”

- Jungian Theory – a brief tutorial on Jung’s theory of the “psyche,” its relationship to our mental evolution or “individuation” as well as the relationship to dreams. Discuss Jung’s observations of dreams being the most accessible expression of the unconscious, and that they present the unconscious meaning of a conscious event in emotionally charged picture language. Provide some dream examples to illustrate these concepts. (Jung 1971 and 1973; Hoss 2005 pp. 69-71)
- Archetypal Imagery –a brief introduction to Jung’s concept of the unconscious making itself known not only in dreams but within the mythology of humankind, through patterns he called “archetypes”. Because of the vast amount of material on these subjects, the discussion might be limited to concepts and common patterns most readily observed in dreams such as the inner masculine and feminine (animus and anima), symbols of the Self (balancing, integrating and guiding patterns and forces), the concept of compensation, and the pattern of the death/rebirth associated with transcendence. This can be best done with a pictorial slide or two illustrating the archetypes plus a few dream examples where the patterns can be observed. (Hoss, 2005,pp. 77-132; Jung,1973; Jung, 1971, pp. 273-300)
- Comparative Theories – describe how Jung’s observations on the unconscious nature of dreams and the concept of compensation and transcendence, might be related to the neurological findings and theories discussed previously, in particular those related to adaptive learning and the concept of dreams “making new connections” (Hoss, 2010a, Hartmann, 2011). Consider that the patterns of compensation and transcendence in dreams might be recognized as moments of surprise, guidance and reward (Hoss, 2005, pp. 219,220; Hoss 2010a; www.dreamscience.org/idx_dream_language.htm);

Session # 9 –The Psychology of Dreaming – Focus on Fritz Perls

Fritz Perls broke with the psychological traditions by bringing dreams off the analysts couch and into workshops and becoming an integral part in bringing about the Holistic movement. His methods for exploring emotion is unique and of great value to the field of dreamwork in light of the more recent research on the role of emotion in dreams. (Hoss, 2005, pp. 71-73, 141, 142; Perls 1974 and 1976; Brownell, 2010)

- Gestalt Theory – a discussion of his theories which emphasized that the things we see in dreams are un-integrated fragments of our personality which are to be reclaimed and integrated into the “whole” person (thus the term Gestalt) by working with behavior patterns, body symptoms and dreams.
- Gestalt Therapy and Dreamwork – the principle that emotions and conflicts of the dreamer are readily expressed if the dreamer “became” the thing in the dream in a role-play and dialog methodology.
- Working with Emotional Content and Role-Play – illustrating the Gestalt based role-play approach with dream examples or case studies from the literature, in order to demonstrate how the underlying emotions behind the waking life situation the dreamer is dealing with can be revealed if the dream image can be experienced and “express itself”.
- Experiential Session – using a simple 6 statement scripted protocol for student practice of the role-play technique, all of the students can experience using it with a dream of their own without going too deeply (Hoss, 2005, pp. 213-220; worksheet at www.dreamscience.org).

Session #10 – Dreamwork Practice - Group Dreamwork

This first experiential session begins with a brief history of what some refer to as the “grassroots movement” in dreamwork, involving the work of Hillman and Ullman. A protocol is provided for a class experiential session, which was developed by Ullman and refined by others for “group projective dreamwork” (Ullman, 2006; Haden, 2010).

- Emergence of Grassroots Dreamwork Movement – a discussion of the expansion of dreamwork to the general public in the form of workshops and dream groups including the pioneering work of Hillman and Ullman including the contribution of Jeremy Taylor (Hillman, 2009)
- Group Projective Dreamwork Protocol – a handout and detailed description of the protocol for “group projective dreamwork” developed by Ullman (Ullman, 2006) or a solid derivative of it (Haden, 2010). Discuss the benefits and limitations including ethical and safety measures related to the concept of “projection.” It is important to stress that it is not a group “interpretation”, but rather each group member takes the dream on as “if it were my dream” expressing how the picture-metaphors in it might apply to them personally, with the potential that some of what is expressed might trigger a connection with the dreamer.

- Classroom practice – a group session student willing to share a dream is selected. The instructor should note that dream sharing is on a voluntary basis that the student is not required or expected to reveal their personal situation or even discuss the “connections” which the work triggered if they do not wish to. Before beginning, it should be stressed again that the projections are related to how each group member would apply the dream to their own life, and in no way is to be considered an “interpretation” of the dream for the volunteer student’s dream. Given a two hour class time there should be plenty of time for all members to provide at least one projection if they desire.

Session #11 – Dreamwork Practice - Personal Dreamwork

While there are many protocols and methods for personal dreamwork, it is suggested that the instructor organize a number of the approaches that have been taught so far into a protocol, with a written handout, that students can use for the personal dreamwork exercises. A sample worksheet which can be modified to fit the needs of the class can be found at www.dreamscience.org/idx_dream_language.htm . Each instructor may have their own style of teaching the various methods, however, I have included a reference for each (in brackets) from my own work, which might be useful as a guide. As you describe each method, it would be good to discuss how each might be applied differently when used by a therapist or counselor in a one-on-one session, versus using them for self-help.

- Demonstration Example – a pre-prepared dream example, which has been worked on using the entire protocol, to explain each method that the students will practice. The instructor can take the class through the full protocol with that sample dream (Hoss, 2005, pp. 213-220, 225-236) or alternatively use it to illustrate each approach as you get to it. An alternative is to use a very short dream, volunteered by a willing student, to work on as a demonstration. The instructor would apply a method to the volunteer’s dream to demonstrate it, then ask the other students to apply the same method to their dream before going on to the next. It is still advisable to have a sample dream handy to use in the event the student dream demonstration is inadequate, or the student declines to continue.
- Experiential Session – each student working with their own dream using the methods provided in the handout or protocol. Begin by explaining that each student will work on their own dream but that a voluntary sharing of their experience after applying each approach is welcome and helpful. Explain that dream sharing is on a voluntary basis and there should be no requirement for a student to reveal their personal situation even if they wish to share their experience with the dreamwork (for example: what image they worked on, whether a connection was made or not, confusion about the results etc.). If a student is willing to share their waking life connections or wants to share in order to gain help with the approach, that is good – just remind the class that personal work is being done and the information must remain within the confines of the class.
- Protocol Content – it is suggested that many of the dreamworking approaches discussed in the course be included in the personal dreamwork practice. Suggestions include many or all of the following:

- A review of the journaling homework to check that students recorded the dream as if re-experiencing it, included an appropriate level of detail, gave it a title and noted any emotionally significant events happening in their life at the time; (Hoss, 2005, pp. 196, 197, 227)
 - Metaphor Work – circling and then discussing any phrases in the dream narrative that appear to also describe situations in the dreamer’s waking life;
 - Association Work – using one or more approaches to unbundling associations that various images, events or feelings in the dream might trigger; (Hoss, 2005, 135-148, 194)
 - Exploring Emotional Content – picking at least one dream image that attracts the dreamer’s attention or where the “energy” seemed to be and practicing the role-play approach for exploring the underlying emotions (the simple 6 statement protocol is suggested); (Hoss, 2005, p. 200)
 - Color Work – explore inner feelings which may be associated with the colors which stood out in the dream, perhaps using the color questionnaire developed by this author (Hoss, 2005, p. 201);
 - Adaptive Learning Patterns - explore the dream for patterns where the dream appears to be making “new connections” or testing resolution scenarios (perhaps looking for moments of “surprise” apparent “guidance” or self-reward, with reference to the Jungian archetypal patterns of compensation, integration and transcendence, or the “adaptive learning” theories); (Hoss, 2005, p. 209)
 - Dream Re-entry – a dream re-entry or “imagery rehearsal” exercise whereby the student re-enters their dream at the end and spontaneously completes the dream with a new positive ending; (Hoss, 205 p. 210)
 - Waking Life Reflection - asking each student to relate the insights gained above to situations and perhaps emotional conflicts in their life at the time. Explore insights, from the last two exercises, as possible hints to gaining “closure” in the waking life situation, making sure to check that they are practical, healthy and appropriate. (Hoss, 2005, p. 211)
- Other Methods – as it is practical or possible to expand the course, other methods might be introduced either by the instructor or visiting instructors. Some examples (with accompanying references) include: “dream re-entry”, “dream visualization”, “dream detective” and “dream transformation” (Harthan, 2005); “interview” (Delaney, 1991); dream “mapping” (Hoss, 2005, p.; Harthan, 2005 p. 75; Haden, 2010); “dream themes” (Gongloff, 2006); “amplification” and intuitive dreamwork (Emery, 1999); “Image Activation Dreamwork” and working with dream color (Hoss, 2005); and many more which the instructor might discover as they prepare the course.

Session #12 – Open Discussion, Closure and Exam

- Open discussion covering perspectives gained, questions and answers.
- Source recommendations and reading lists.
- Dream sharing as appropriate and as time permits.
- Quiz based on CE requirements as appropriate.

- Course and instructor evaluations if required to be done in the classroom (note: that you may be required to choose a student volunteer to pick up the evaluations and place them in a sealed envelope for delivery to the continuing education office).

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