



NECET PROUDLY PRESENTS

# The 2023-2024 Conference Series

## From Bob Fox

We are delighted to announce the 2023-24 New England Center for Existential Therapy (NECET) conference series entitled **Being Right; Being Righteous; Being-in-Right Relation: Evolutions in Ethical Practice** exploring the existential dimensions of ethics in psychotherapy. Rich conversations within our new home at the Center for Psychological Humanities at Boston College provide inspiration for this year's theme as well as exciting new collaborations. Indeed, we are honored to co-sponsor the Before Ethics: Ethos in Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Existentialism track for the Psychology of the Other conference and look forward to the collaborative voices from our growing community reflected in both conferences. (Continued ...)

## Important updates and changes

We are also pleased to share that NECET's series will not only be held in person in the customary four-part Sunday meeting format but will also offer more accessible learning options. **We can now provide CEUs for asynchronous and synchronous virtual modes of participation.**

In addition, we will offer one session in livestream virtual mode. Note that the third talk in the series with Dr. Lisa Moore will be entirely virtual, offering the opportunity for local, national, and international attendees to join synchronously. This flexible format aims to support accessibility throughout the NECET community locally and further afield, as well as a rich diversity of voices in our programming.

**Please save the dates and stay tuned for registration details upcoming on our website.**

The new registration structure will be launched in September.

SAVE  
THE  
DATES

Stay tuned for details on our  
website and email list  
[www.necet.net](http://www.necet.net)



October 1, 2023 | Sunday, 12:00-3:00pm

**Challenging the Selfish-Selfless Dichotomy: from Self-Absorption to Self-in-Relation**

Presenters: Robert Fox, LICSW & Robin Chalfin, LICSW  
Respondent: Michael “Mookie” Manalili, LICSW

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December 10, 2023 | Sunday, 12:00-3:00pm

**Heidegger's Openness: The Space Between Identity and Difference**

Presenter: Richard Freid, LMHC

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March 3, 2024 | Sunday, 12:00-3:00pm

**Who Are You? Who Am I?: Reflections on boundaries of self in postmodernity**

Presenter: Lisa Moore, PhD

*\*Please note that this session will be live stream.\**

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April 28, 2024 | Sunday, 12:00-3:00pm

**Residing in the Space Between: Suffering and the Dialectic of Hope and Dread**

Presenter: Karley Peterson, MA, MTS





**Being Right; Being Righteous; Being-in-Right Relation: Evolutions in Ethical Practice** focuses on a radically relational and non-reductive approach to ethics. Indeed, Ethics traditionally has narrowly argued right against wrong and becomes highly intellectualized, often heatedly, demonstrating logical and deeply felt positions about human behavior. With this emphasis on "rightness" inevitably goes self-righteousness and indignation, in which differing conceptions of violence and violation, perpetrator and victim, get posed. In this way, ethics tends to consist either of enflamed rhetoric or its opposite, cool detachment. The core questions: How do we understand suffering, and what do we do about it, get caught up in competing visions of rightness.

This bias toward rightness and the binary of right and wrong can be exposed, explored, and transformed. An ethics free from that bias, informed by psychoanalytic object relations theory, feminist self-in-relation theory, and existential-hermeneutic philosophy, is concerned not with rightness but with developing the right relation to conflicts and

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tensions inherent in being a human being in a world of others. This conference series will explore approaches to right relation from various philosophical and psychological frames of reference.

In our **first meeting on October 1, 2023**, Robin Chalfin and I will co-present the first talk entitled *Challenging the Selfish-Selfless Dichotomy: from Self-Absorption to Self-in-Relation*, an evolution of our pre-conference workshop *Existential Ethics: Recovering from Narcissism* which framed the Before Ethics track for the Psychology of the Other conference. This ongoing discussion of ethics will challenge the trend toward lofty abstractions on morality and alternately righteous conversations of survival; I will begin by untangling ethics from illusions of the separate self in psychology and the history of Western philosophy. While I will look primarily at the problems of grandiosity and self-absorption, Robin will look at its polarity – too little self, loss of self, and the idealization and absorption in the other via a relational reconstruction of the myth of Echo and Narcissus.

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In the **second talk on December 10**, entitled *Heidegger's Openness: The Space Between Identity and Difference*, NECET steering committee member Richard Freid will elaborate on his talk for the Psychology of the Other conference entitled *What is Ethics? From Content to a Mode of Existential Activity*. Drawing upon Heidegger's later work on Identity, Difference and "the openness"; Richard will show how this openness evokes a tenderness that softens the threat of difference. From this perspective, he will show how ethics can shift from defensive, protective rules of right and wrong to a relational mode of existential activity, which can be embodied in clinical practice.



For the **third talk on March 3, 2024**, guest speaker Lisa Moore will join us from the University of Chicago. Her talk *Who Are You? Who Am I?: Reflections on boundaries of self in postmodernity* explores how contemporary practice conditions require us to reconsider outdated notions of self, illusions of anonymity, and constructions of the therapeutic container. Her discussion will move the clinical frame toward more rigorous and less reductive understandings of the practitioner's self in the therapeutic dyad, challenging and reframing the clinical frame and formations of self.

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The **final and fourth talk on April 28, 2024**, entitled *Residing in the Space Between: Suffering and the Dialectic of Hope and Dread* will be given by return guest speaker Karley Petersen. She will turn directly toward working with suffering and the forces of hope and dread in clinical practice. Where these polarizing responses to suffering can reduce the world into black and white, this talk explores how we can stay in the gray areas: what it means to work under conditions of great existential uncertainty while resisting the temptation to cling to comfortable solutions in the face of anxiety.

This rich line-up of presentations promises to be a systematic exploration of ethical and clinical themes that are germane to our time. We look forward to meeting with many of you in person at Boston College this year! And we are delighted to expand participation and stay connected virtually with many more of you! Welcome to the continuation of a new era for NECET and its commitment to exploring philosophical and psychological themes of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and existential philosophy.

Bob Fox, NECET founder 

