

Not In Front of the Children! Childhood and Contemporary Culture

Associate Professor Danielle Egan
FYS – FRPG 189A
Spring 2007

Office Hours

Tuesday 2:30-3:30 and Wednesday 1:00-3:00pm or by appointment
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Class Meeting and Location

Tuesday 12:40-2:10 Carnegie Hall 112
Thursday 1:15-4:15 Piskor Hall 19

Seminar Description

Cultural definitions of “childhood” are slippery at best. In some contexts childhood ends at the onset of adolescence and in others seems to extend into the university. Similarly, it can be measured by chronological age, intellectual comprehension, levels of social and economic dependence, biological, physical and psychological milestones, or the capacity for moral reasoning. We proclaim children are innocent and little angels, and yet television shows such as Nanny 911 or Super Nanny illuminate the spectacle of something far different. Our cultural definitions of childhood both inform and validate social and educational policies (welfare, legal accountability, sex education, freedom of expression or parental rights) as well as social control mechanisms (drinking age, legal curfews and prison sentencing). We will explore the cultural and political implications of the ways we socially construct childhood. Employing film as well as historical, literary, philosophical and sociological texts, we will critically deconstruct childhood in our postmodern culture.

Readings

James, Allison, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout (1998) *Theorizing Childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jenkins, Henry (1998) *Childhood Studies: A Reader*. New York: New York University Press.

Levine, Judith (2002) *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Your Children from Sex*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press

Sanchez-Eppler, K (2005) *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth Century American Culture*. London: Oxford University Press

Sternheimer, Karen (2006) *Kids These Days: Facts and Fictions About Today's Youth*. New York: Roman and Littlefield

Readings found on ANGEL will be designated with **

Class Assignments

Rhetoric and Communication Assignments (135 points total)

Class Participation (50 points)

Your class participation is based on your active involvement in the seminar over the entire semester. Reading and discussing the class materials, participating in small group work and conceptual workshops are all ways you should take part in the seminar. The success of our seminar depends on all of us! So please come prepared and ready to participate.

Small Group Work (part of your class participation grade)

Over the course of the semester, you will be divided into small groups to participate in several workshops. You will be expected to be an active and vocal participant in your group and, at times, present your groups' findings to the course.

Group Presentations on Readings Related to Your Research (30 points)

The seminar will be divided into five groups according to research interest. The members of your group will act as a sounding board and peer review team for your research. Each group should help one another with sources and ideas for each person's research project. To help get the rest of the seminar "on your research bus" each group will come up with two to three readings which represent the key ideas of your research and assign them to the course. Your group will lead class discussion on these readings to the seminar. You will be graded on the quality of the readings and the presentation of the materials.

Conference Presentation (20 points)

We will attend an undergraduate research conference at State University of Buffalo at the end of April. Each student will present their research to other undergraduates and faculty from around the state of New York. In addition to presenting your research, part of your responsibility at the conference will be listening and providing feedback for other research presentations.

Research Paper Presentation (35 points)

The final phase of your research project will be a 15 minute *formal* presentation. You will be graded on the form and content of your presentation. A description of this assignment will be given out in class.

Due: Last week of class

Writing and Analysis (365 points total)**Conceptual and Research Workshops (part of your class participation grade)**

Over the course of the semester we will participate in several workshops. The aims and directions for each workshop will be provided when the assignments are handed out in class.

Five Quizzes on Films and Reading Materials (100 points)

Each 20 point quiz will address the readings in a particular section. They are not comprehensive! Only the reading in a particular section will be found on a quiz. Moreover, they are short answer quizzes not essay format. If you have done the reading you should have no problem answering the questions ☺. These quizzes are not meant to be punitive, rather they are meant to help generate productive class discussions. These quizzes should help you prepare for class discussion and get people ready to interrogate the texts we are reading. Quizzes are on the syllabus. You must be in class to take your quiz—there are no make-up quizzes.

Due weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10

Social Construction and the Child Research Paper (265 points)

Over the course of this semester, you will deconstruct different discourses employed to make sense of the “child.” Your examination will illuminate how the child, within your area of interest, is socially constructed both historically and in our contemporary culture. Your research can focus on one of two directions: You can explore a particular cultural object (i.e., a doll or GI Joe, clothing, etc) over time to see how this object spoke to a particular social construction of the child and how it changed over time. Or you may analyze how a particular cultural debate (i.e., age of consent, violence in the media and its impact on children, or drug panics) employs different discourses to conceptualize the child and how it has changed over time. You will need to examine how childhood was socially constructed in two time periods to illuminate how they are similar and different.

Some discourses that might be most relevant to your analysis may be: the law, media, child development, medicine, parenting guides or education to name just a few.

Drafts and Process

Research Question and Research Plan (10 points)

For this assignment you must write a paragraph that discusses your research question, the historical time period you will examine and at least two discourses that you think might be most relevant to your research. You will also need to create a research timetable or plan outlining how you will proceed with your analysis over the course of the semester. Due week 5

Discourse Assignment (40 points)

For this assignment you will discuss one discourse you are analyzing and how it has changed over time. This requires *extensive* library research. You will need to know how those who shaped the discourse conceptualized the child and crafted a truth regime about it. You will research original sources (e.g., laws, fiction, child development books, etc) to support your discussion as well as draw on at least two scholarly articles on the subject. This assignment will set up a very large part of your research paper and will be the framework for your analysis. This part of your analysis should be about 5 double spaced pages long and should include a full bibliography.

Due week 8 (Thursday for peer review and Friday for final review)

Introduction and Historical Analysis (50 points)

This assignment will comprise the first large section of your research paper. In the introduction you will need to introduce the reader to your topic and provide the question you are seeking to answer. You should also discuss what your research adds to the broader academic conversation about your topic. In this regard, your introduction should answer the following questions: What is my topic? Why does it add? And finally, why is it important (a.k.a. the infamous so what question)? The second section due should provide the historical context of the comparative period you will be examining. You should provide a picture of what significant historical ideas and events were taking place and how childhood was understood during that time period. This assignment should be 5-8 pages (the introduction should be about 2 pages and the rest historical) double spaced typed with MLA or APA citations and a full bibliography.

Due week 9 (Tuesday in class and Writing Conference on Thursday)

Findings and Implications (50 points)

This is an extended and revised version of the discourse analysis you conducted earlier in the semester. You will discuss and analyze two discourses on your topic and how they constructed the child and the debate or cultural object under analysis. Like the earlier assignment, you will need to explore both original

materials as well as scholarly articles on the topic. You will review both the historical and the contemporary discourses and examine their similarities and differences. The implications section should be your conclusion. You should discuss the implications of such constructions and how they made an impact on the broader socio-historical and cultural context. This section of your paper should be about 8-11 double spaced typed pages with MLA or APA citations and a full bibliography. Due week 11

Peer Reviewer Feedback and Response (15 points)

Over the course of the semester you will be asked to peer review a classmate's work. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT JOB. You are serving as the conceptual and creative sounding board and feedback person for your colleague. The person you are reviewing will need to attend to your comments in their paper so they will take your advice very seriously. Why do this? Because our class is a microcosm of the larger academic community and thus we are taking part in the same process that all researchers go through in the broader academic world. Plus you are all smart, insightful and interesting folks and I believe that we can all provide helpful comments to your colleagues. And having more than one pair of eyes on your work always makes it stronger. ☺

Final

Final Paper (100 points)

This is the culmination of all of your hard work over the semester!! Yippee. The final paper is your final revised research project. It will be graded for conceptual clarity, content, attention to revision and form. The final paper should be 17-20 double spaced pages long with MLA or APA citations and a full bibliography. Included with your paper should be **ALL** of the drafts with comments (from me and your peer reviewers). Due Week 13

Grading Scale

4.0	450
3.75	438
3.5	425
3.25	413
3.0	400
2.75	388
2.5	375
2.25	363
2.0	350
1.75	338
1.5	325
1.25	313
1.0	300

Section One: Social Construction and The Child

The Production of Childhood

Week One

Tuesday: Introductions
Social Construction, Discourse and Childhood

Thursday: James, Jenks and Prout *Theorizing Childhood* Chapters 1 and 2
Reading Workshop

Theorizing Childhood

Week Two

Tuesday: James, Jenks and Prout *Theorizing Childhood* Chapters 3 and 7

Thursday: James, Jenks and Prout *Theorizing Childhood* Chapters 8 and 10
Reading and Application Workshop
Quiz One

Constructing Innocence and Sentimentalizing Childhood

Week Three

Tuesday: Zelizer “Pricing the Priceless Child” (Jenkins)
Calvert “Children in the House: The Material Culture of Childhood” (Jenkins)

Thursday: Sanchez Eppler Introduction and Chapter Two

Innocence and the Training in Purity

Week Four

Tuesday: Sanchez Eppler Chapter Four
Quiz Two

Thursday: **Welsh, D.A. (1917) *The Massacre of Innocents*
** Selected sections from Elizabeth Blackwell (1884) *Counsel to Parents on the Moral Education of their Children in Relation to Sex*. London: Hatchards and Piccadilly.
**Selected sections from Beecher and Stowe (1869) *The American Woman’s Home*. Hartford, CT: Harriet Beecher Stowe Center
Discourse Analysis Workshop

Contemporary Culture and Media Discourses

Week Five

Tuesday Kinchloe “Home Alone as A Way of Life” (Jenkins)
Research Workshop **Bring an example of the research topic you are interested in exploring!**

Thursday: Sternheimer Chapters Introduction, 1, 2, 3 and 4
Friday: Research Plan due by noon.

Media Discourses Continued

Week Six

Tuesday Sternheimer Chapters 6 and Conclusion

Thursday: Quiz Three
Conceptual Workshop
Library Workshop Second Half of Class

Cultural Objects and the Social Construction of Childhood

Week Seven

Tuesday: Rand “Older Heads on Younger Bodies” (Jenkins)
GI Joe (Jenkins)

Thursday: Discourse Analysis Peer Review
Friday: Discourse Assignment due by Noon

Gendering Childhood

Week Eight

Tuesday: Rotundo “Boy Culture” (from Jenkins)
Thorne “Boys and Girls Together, But Mostly....Apart” (Jenkins)

Thursday: Introduction Workshop
Quiz Four

Researching Childhood

Week Nine

Tuesday: **Introduction and Historical Analysis Due**
Documentary *Cool Hunting*

Thursday: Research Meetings and Writing Conferences

Sexuality and Contemporary Childhood

Week Ten

Tuesday: Levine Introduction and Chapter One

Thursday: Levine Chapters 2, 4 and 5
Quiz Five

Reading the Research

Week Eleven

Tuesday: Group One Assigned Readings

Thursday: Peer Review of Findings and Analysis

Friday: **Findings and Analysis Due**

Reading the Research Two

Week Twelve

Tuesday: Group Two Assigned Readings

Thursday: Group Three Assigned Readings

Finishing Things Up

Week Thirteen

Tuesday Group Four Assigned Reading

Thursday: **Research Paper Due**
Course Evaluations

Presenting your Project!

Week Fourteen

Tuesday: Presentations

Thursday: Presentations

First-Year Program Philosophy and Goals

The First-Year Program (FYP) and First-Year Seminar (FYS) are the first steps in a four-year process of helping you meet the University's Aims and Objectives and the broader goals of a liberal education. The faculty of the FYP and FYS see themselves as partners and mentors in the process of working with you to acquire the intellectual habits of mind, the writing, speaking, and research skills, and the ethical self-reflexiveness that are at the core of a liberal education. The FYP and FYS will ask you to consider new perspectives on the world and your place in it and will challenge you to confront many of the hidden assumptions you bring to college with you. We hope to open you to new ideas,

help you to see the complexity of the way in which knowledge gets produced and used in society, and encourage you to see yourself as an active contributor in making the world a better place. The course topics, the texts you will read, listen to, and watch, the in-class and out-of-class activities you will engage in, and the writing, speaking, and research assignments you will work on are all designed to introduce you to the depth of critical thinking and the quality and complexity of the communication skills that will be expected of you at SLU and as a citizen of an increasingly diverse society.

First and foremost among our goals are those related to your abilities as a communicator. The work of the FYP and FYS asks you to design and deliver written, spoken, performed and/or visual texts that demonstrate basic skills in the relevant modes of communication and with an increasing degree of rhetorical sensitivity. Our focus on “rhetorical sensitivity” means that we expect you to cultivate the awareness that all of your communication, whether formal or informal, involves having to make choices about your messages, whether written, spoken, aural or visual. To become a good communicator, you need to recognize that the creation of meaningful and powerful written, spoken, performed, or visual texts involves both a creator and an audience, and that therefore the voice you adopt in your communication, the audience you imagine yourself communicating to, and the social and ethical context of the content, matter a great deal in creating such texts. One important way to become a better communicator is to become a better critical reader, viewer, and listener, which is why we will ask you to engage challenging materials in a variety of forms and work with you to learn how to interpret them.

Learning to read, listen, write, speak, do research and/or perform well also requires feedback. As faculty, we submit our work for feedback from colleagues all the time, and giving and receiving constructive feedback from both friends and strangers is central to collaborative work in any field and is itself a form of critical thinking and learning. We further recognize that this feedback process is not linear and that good communication requires that you continually rethink, restructure, and revise your work in order for it to be your best. This is why we require that your writing, speaking, and performance assignments be “projects” that include preparatory exercises and multiple drafts or rehearsals, all of which ask you to continue to reflect critically on the choices you have made in the texts that you produce. Furthermore, we see all of these forms of communication as complementary and intertwined, which is why many of your assignments will ask you to integrate elements of the written, spoken, performed, and visual. Finally, developing good habits of critical inquiry and communication also means reflecting on the ethical dimensions of how your work represents that of others, thus one of our goals is to help you to understand both the nature of academic integrity and the social processes by which knowledge is produced and represented.

To ensure that the program is meeting its stated goals, all FYP and FYS syllabi are read by other faculty in the program to determine if they include a variety of assignments that foster the writing, speaking, research, and critical thinking goals of the program. All FYP and FYS courses have to be approved by faculty in the program before they are offered.

Class Policies

Attendance: You are allowed one absence. Any additional absence (for any reason—dean's excuse exempted) will result in a 15 point loss for every day missed.

Late Papers: I do not accept late papers. If you are going to miss class the day a paper is due, please hand in your paper early.

Respecting Difference and Classroom Environment: Our seminar is a space where all viewpoints are listened too and given respect. We all bring various life experiences to the table and no student's experience should be silenced. This does not mean that critique is impossible; rather it means that when critique occurs it should be based on intellectual arguments, rather than personal attributes. Moreover, if you ever disagree with my interpretations please challenge me! Remember this is a place for you to integrate new material and ways of thinking...that means we don't have to all think the same way.

Multiple Modalities of Learning: Different students may have varying ways of both coming to learn material and/or discussing material; as such, if anyone needs any special assistance of any kind please do not hesitate to contact me. Moreover, if anyone has any learning disabilities please let me know and we can set up any necessary modifications.

Athletes: If you are a student athlete you are expected to bring me your game roster at the beginning of the course. Your roster does not excuse you from any work due on the day of your game rather you will need to turn in any work early. Moreover, if you do not bring me your schedule and miss class more than twice your grade will suffer. In addition, missing class for a game counts towards the absence allowed in this course. Therefore, if you need to miss two classes for games you have used up your absences and anything (except for a game) more will result in a drop in your grade.

Cheating: Students are required to follow the academic handbook standards for academic integrity. So for example you must cite authors in your work when you are a) referring to their ideas 2) paraphrasing their work or 3) using quotations from their work. Moreover, if you are using an idea that you started to develop in another class paper, you should cite your work as well.