

08/12/2020

Introduction to Childhood and Youth Studies PSYC 80103

Wednesdays 4:15-6:15

Roger Hart
Office 6203.13
212 817 1887
roghart@gmail.com
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2pm to 4pm

Course Overview

The interdisciplinary study of childhood has emerged over the past three decades, primarily as a reaction to the past failure of the social sciences to take seriously the study of children and childhood and leaving the study of children and youth largely to the field of psychology. Some also say that the impetus for what is sometimes called the “new sociology/anthropology of childhood” can be traced to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been adopted by all countries except the United States: “The interlocking Articles of the Convention offer children an internationally recognized set of rights that they can hold in independence of the interests and activities of the adults that directly surround them” (Lee 2001, 92). But whatever the combination of forces was for the burgeoning of this interdisciplinary activity, it has become an important complement to the field of psychology. It is often called “critical” childhood study because of a felt need to distance itself from the taken-for-granted, universalizing, views of childhood that have been dominant in the past, through a perspective of critique.

The seminar begins with an introduction to the social construction of childhood and to changing concepts of childhood and adolescence from a variety of historical periods, asking what we mean by “childhood” or “youth” and what is at stake in these definitions? We examine various historical models of childhood and how they survive in different degrees and combinations today, including the romantic child, the sinful child, the sacred child, the child as miniature adult and the developing child. As we do so, we will examine how our shifting—and often contradictory—conceptions of childhood both align and clash with the way children actually live.

We will also look at the ways in which age intersects with other dimensions of social experience: sex/gender, race, class, nation, and religion. In addition, we consider what young people *do*, how they live their lives and imagine their futures. In doing so we will discuss alternative theories to what has been called the “socialization” of children in order to recognize that children participate actively in society, not only constrained by the existing social structures and processes whereby society is reproduced but also contributing to it and

changing it.

Finally, we will look at some childhood experiences that challenge the historically recent notion of a “protected” and “innocent” childhood, including child labor, child sex, and child criminals. We will examine how different institutions, discourses and systems shape how childhood is experienced: including family, school, media and consumer culture. While attending to the force of structural inequalities in cultural and economic arrangements, we will give equal attention to the methodological strategies used by various researchers and practitioners for working *with* rather than on or about children.

Learning Goals: Students will learn the following key concepts that undergird critical childhood and youth studies:

- 1) understanding the construct of childhood, recognizing that across and *within* societies there is no universal agreement on what constitutes childhood or when it ends.
- 2) understanding processes of socialization and child development – rather than characterizing children as “incomplete” en route to becoming adults and as objects rather than subjects of adult socialization, critical childhood studies focuses on children as active agents who contribute to *and* are shaped by social institutions.
- 3) understanding child-adult relationships as existing within power relations, as one of interdependency and oppression rather than deficiency.
- 4) Recognizing how important children’s rights to have a voice has been for their protection, acknowledging the dangers associated with essentializing and romanticizing children’s voice(s).
- 5) Familiarity with new methods that enable children to inform adults about their lives and that minimize adult “voicing over” children’s experiences and perspectives.

Course Requirements

1. **Readings:** The class schedule lists when each reading is due. All papers and chapters listed in the syllabus are available on the CUNY Commons website. The books are available from the Reference desk of the Graduate Center Library

2. **Assignments:**

-- *Facilitating a Class Discussion:* The course will be run as a seminar with everyone required to periodically structure or co-structure discussions of the week’s readings. This involves: locating yourself as a reader of the text(s) and generating questions to promote discussion in the seminar. **These should be posted on the course blog at least two days before the class meets.**

-- *Final Project:* The final project may take the form of a written document or a digital/multi-media format. There will also be small products required along the way to help scaffold your project. The final project can take the form of a paper that involves

original research, it can be a review essay discussing and analyzing literature (over time) on a particular topic (this would be good practice for writing an engaging literature review), or it could, for example, be a critical review of media dialogs regarding an issue of current debate regarding children or childhood. If you have easy access to children, you might even want to use the seminar to keep a log of your observations (and perhaps copies of materials produced by the children) related to a theme of your interest. Collaborative work is encouraged. In addition to the topic itself, your project should include a discussion of the particular social construction of childhood adopted by those who have studied your chosen topic. Two assignments will build towards your final project:

1. Short statement of purpose: This includes a statement of your topic, its significance, your goals; intended audience; and what form your project will take: e.g. a website, video, literature review, original research paper. **Due on September 25.**

2. A draft of your method, process or research design for gathering source material, and how you will work with this material. **Due Oct. 16**

4. **The final project must be handed in on December 18**

3. Learning Goals:

Students will have gained familiarity with the basic tenets of a critical childhood studies approach as evidenced in their analysis of course texts; and as evidenced by their awareness of, support for and engagement in efforts to ensure children's rights.

4. Assessment of learning:

Students will demonstrate their grasp of five basic tenets of critical childhood and youth studies identified above through the following:

- A. Seminar discussion and weekly comments and questions, written in brief, related to your readings on the seminar blog of CUNY Commons
- B. Blog posts regarding your structuring of seminar discussions related to the weekly readings.
- C. A final project that successfully applies elements of a critical childhood perspective, and a short presentation of this in one of the closing two sessions of the seminar.

Course Schedule

Useful Background Readings:

James, A. and Jenks, C. and Prout, A. *Theorizing Childhood*. Blackwell, 1998

James, A. And James, A. (2012). Key Concepts in Childhood Studies

Carmel Smith and Sheila Greene (2015) “Introduction” to *Key Thinkers in Childhood Studies*,” edited by Carmel Smith and Sheila Greene. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mintz, S, (2004) Inventing the Middle Class Child. Ch. 4 of *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*. Harvard University Press.

Duane, A. M. (Ed). *The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities*. University of Georgia Press 2013.

Kessen, W. The American child and other cultural inventions. *American Psychologist*, 1979 - psycnet.apa.org

Rogoff, B. (2003). Chapter 1 of *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*. Oxford University Press.

Erica Burman (2007) Chapter One, “Origins” in *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. Routledge.

August 26

Introductions

- Round-table brief introductions
- What happened to childhood in 2020 in the USA?

September 2

The Social Construction of Childhood

Introduction to the history of the study of children and youth and childhood and the emergence of interdisciplinary child and youth studies.

Background Reading:

Aries, P. (1962). *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. If you do not have time to read this benchmark book, please skim the chapters and read the concise criticism of it in: Harry Hendrick (1992) Children and Childhoods. *The Journal of the Economic History Society*.

Required reading, for open discussion:

James, A. and Prout, A., Editors (1997). Preface and Chapter 1: "A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood?" In *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. NY: Routledge

Corsaro, William A. (1997). Historical views of childhood and children. In *The Sociology of Childhood* (pp. 49-67). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press

Student-led discussions:

Sarah E. Chinn (2020). Enslavement and the Temporality of Childhood. *American Literature*, 92 (1): 33–59.

Fass, P.S. and Mason, A. (2000). *Childhood in America*. Part 4: Discipline. New York University Press.

Bodine, A. (2003). School Uniforms and Discourses on Childhood. *Childhood*, 10, 43

September 9th

The movement for children's rights

A short statement of purpose of your project is due

Background reading:

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

Alston, P. (1994). *The Best Interests of the Child: Reconciling Culture and Human Rights*. Clarendon Press

Bartholet, E. (2011). Ratification by the United States of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Pros and Cons from a Child's Rights Perspective *Annals, AAPSS*, 633, January.
For an example of resistance to the CRC in the USA see:
<http://www.parentalrights.org>

Student-led discussion:

Daiute, D. (2008). The rights of children, the rights of nations: Developmental theory and the politics of children's rights. *Journal of Social Issues*, Volume 64, Issue 4

Hart, R. (1991). *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence, Italy: Innocenti Research Center of UNICEF

Ruck, M., Abramovitch, R. and Keating, D.P. (1998). Children's and Adolescents' Understanding of Rights: Balancing Nurturance and Self-Determination. *Child Development*. Volume 69, Issue 2, April 404–417

Hart, R., Kimiagar, B. and Ataman, A. (2015). *Placing the Perspectives of Children Who Have Experienced Commercial Sexual Exploitation at The Heart of Their Organisations*. Bangkok: ECPAT (Ending Child Prostitution and Trafficking).

September 16th

The Challenges of Researching Children's Perspectives

Background reading:

Greene, S. and Hogan, D. (2008). *Researching Children's Experience: Methods and Approaches*. London: Sage

Westcott, H. & Littleton, S. (2006), Exploring Meaning in Interviews with Children. Ch 3 of Greene, S. and Hogan, D. (Eds.) *Researching Children's Experience: Methods and Approaches*. London: Sage

Student-led discussion:

Daiute, C. and Lucic, L. (2010). Situated Cultural Development Among Youth Separated by War. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. Volume 34, Issue 6, Pages 615-628

Lico & Luttrell, *An Important Part of Me: A Dialogue about Difference*

Fine, M, Torre, M.E., Burns, A. and Payne, Y.A. Youth *Research/Participatory Methods for Reform*. International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School, pp 805-828|

September 23rd

Ethnography and the Study of Peer Culture

Background reading:

Mandell, “The Least-Adult Role in Studying Children

Corsaro, W. (2104) Children’s Peer Cultures and Interpretive Reproduction. Ch. 6 of *The Sociology of Childhood*, 4th edition:
Corsaro, W. (2003). Chaps. 1- 3 of *We're Friends, Right? Inside Kids' Culture*. Joseph Henry Press

Student-led discussion:

Barrie Thorne (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*, Chaps. 1-2

Dikar, M. (2008). *Corridor Cultures: Mapping Student Resistance at an Urban High School*. New York University Press.

Corsaro, W. (2003). Chaps. 1- 3 of *We're Friends, Right? Inside Kids' Culture*. Joseph Henry Press

September 30th

Childhoods through the lens of literature

Due today: A draft of your method, process or research design for gathering source material, and how you will work with this material

Background reading:

Flynn, R. The Intersection of Children’s Literature and Childhood

Studies. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Volume 22, Number 3, Fall 1997, pp. 143-145

Carrie Hintz and Eric L. Tribunella (2019). "Historicizing Childhood" from *Reading Children's Literature: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edition. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Galbraith, M. Hear My Cry: A Manifesto for an Emancipatory Childhood Studies Approach to Children's Literature. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Volume 25, Number 2, April 2001, pp. 187-205

Student-led discussion:

Hintz, C. and Ostry, E. (2003). Introduction to *Utopian and Dystopian writing for children and young adults*. NY: Routledge

Thomas, J.T. (2007) *Poetry's Playground: The Culture of Contemporary American Children's Poetry*. Ch.3: Child Poets and the Poetry of the Playground. Wayne State University Press

October 7th

Unequal Childhoods in the USA

Background reading:

Bernstein, R. *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (Intro chapter and Chapter 2 On "Scripting Things" is on the Commons site and the full book is on reserve in the Grad Center library.

Student-led discussion:

Ritterhouse, L. ((2006). *Growing up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race*. In particular Chapter Two: *Carefully Taught*. Available as a digital book in GC Library:
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/gc/reader.action?docID=10273455&ppg=37>

Lareau, A. (2011) Social class and the daily lives of children a study from the United States. *Childhood*, May, vol. 7 no. 2 155-171

Pugh, A.J. (2011). Distinction, boundaries or bridges?: Children, inequality and the uses of consumer culture

Poetics, 2011

October 14th

Parenting and Caregiving

Background reading:

Fass, Paula S. (2016). *The End of American Childhood: A History of Parenting from Life on the Frontier to the Managed Child*

Student-led discussion:

Hulbert, A (2003). Intro., Ch. 9 and the Epilogue from: *Raising America: experts, parents, and a century of advice about children* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Reid, J. (2012). My Room! Private! Keep Out! This Means You! A Brief Overview Of The Emergence Of The Autonomous Teen Bedroom In Post-World War II America. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*. Vol 5. No 3.

Wrigley, Julia Do Young Children Need Intellectual Stimulation? Experts' Advice to Parents, 1900-1985
Source: *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 1989), pp. 41-75
Published by: History of Education Society
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/368605>

October 21st

Play

Ailwood, J. (2011). *It's about power: Researching play, pedagogy and participation in the early years of school*. Routledge

Chudacoff, H. (2007). The Commercialization and Co-optation of Children's Play, 1950 to the Present. Ch.6 of *Children at Play: An American History*. New York: NYU Press.

Cross, G. (1999). Excerpts from *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood*. Harvard University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 7 and 8 (and Bibliography).

NPR *podcast_ Kids-these-days-growing-up-too-fast-or-never-at-all?*
Atlantic magazine:
<http://www.npr.org/2014/03/20/291922339/kids-these-days-growing-up-too-fast-or-never-at-all>

If you have the time, you can also look at this book in our Reference Selection of the Library:
Louv, R, (2008). *The Last Child in the Woods*. Algonquin Books

October 28th

Work

Background reading:

Liebel (2004) Introduction and Chapter One of *A will of their own: Cross-cultural perspectives on working children*

Student-led discussion:

Luttrell (2012) Making Boys Care Worlds Visible. THYMOS: Journal of Boyhood Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 2012, 186-202

Orellana, M. F. (2001). The work kids do: Mexican and Central American Immigrant Children's Contributions to Households and Schools in California. *Harvard Educational Review*; Fall 2001; 71, 3. (You might want to also take a look at the book of a larger account of this kind of childhood written in 2009 by Orellana: "Translating Childhoods", available from the Reserve Desk of the Grad Center library)

Liebel (2004). The Working Child has a Will of its Own: Subject-Oriented and Participative Research on Children's Work in Latin America. In *November 11th*

November 4th

Violence towards children

Background Reading:

Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
<http://www.end-violence.org/>

Student Lead Discussion:

Kitzinger, J. "Who Are You Kidding?, Power, Struggle Against Sexual Abuse". Allison James, A and Prout, A. (2003). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. Routledge

Delara, E. "Why Adolescents Don't Disclose Incidents of Bullying and Harassment." *Journal of School Violence* 11, no. 4 (October 2012): 288–305.

ECPAT International (2005). *Violence against children in cyberspace: a contribution to the United Nations study on violence against children*. Bangkok: ECPAT

November 11th

Children and New Technology

Buckingham (2000). *The Death of Childhood*. Polity Press

Gregory, E.M. (2013) Children's Media Use. A Positive Psychology Approach. *Oxfords Handbook Online*.

Le Moignan, E., Lawson, S., Rowland, D. A., Mahoney, J., & Briggs, P. (2017, May). Has Instagram Fundamentally Altered the 'Family Snapshot'?. In *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 4935-4947).

Shin, W. (2015). Parental socialization of children's Internet use: A qualitative approach. *new media & society*, 17(5), 649-665.

November 25th

No class

December 2nd

Discussion of personal projects

December 9th

Discussion of personal projects

December 16th

Discussion of personal projects

Final Projects Due: Dec 18

Final Grade Submission: December 30th

