

POLI 3331
Politics of Children/Childhood
WINTER 2024

Tuesday & Thursday: 2:30-4:00 PM
ATAC 2005

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Office Hours: On Request

Course Description

In this course we will explore childhood as a category of exclusion and domination. What defines a child or youth, and what justifies the exertion of power over them? In many countries, children and youth are the only group that can be legally hit, constrained, and intimidated. Do to an adult what many parents do to their children and you will be charged with a crime. Children are told by adults when to eat, when to go to the bathroom, and when to sleep. It is legal to pay young people less money. Most young people are excluded from political decision-making, and yet children are the first casualties of policy and war. Children make up most of the world's irregular migrants, most of the world's labourers, and most of the world's slaves. If you want to disqualify an adult as having rights, you can categorize them as a child, because to be a child is to be only quasi-human rather than a full rights-bearer. Why is that?

Students in this course will become familiar with the concept and history of “the child” as a social and political category, the ways in which this category is used to sustain privilege for adults and sustain systems of power.

Format

Weekly lectures will focus on identified topics. Lectures complement assigned readings and are not summaries. Students must do the assigned reading prior to the lecture. Students are responsible for lecture material, required readings, films and other material covered in class.

Course Materials

All materials will be linked to, or uploaded to, D2L Courselink

Course Requirements

1. Participation and Attendance (15%): Students who attend and participate have an opportunity to earn up to 15% for their time and effort. Attendance is weighted more than participation.

2. Reflection Papers (35%): Students will complete seven reflection papers (worth 5% each), in which they discuss the readings for that particular week. Try to personalize your paper by reflecting on your own experiences. These will be uploaded to D2L.

4. Final Essay (25%): A research paper due on **April 4th**. Must be roughly 10+ pages in length, not including title page, bibliography, etc. Clear your topic with me.

5. Final Quiz (25%): Quiz will be conducted online in the second week of April. It will test students on the topics covered in the course, focusing mostly on the readings. It will consist of two parts: Section one will consist of short answer questions which require students to define specific terms and discuss their relevance for politics. Section two will consist of essay type questions that require students to provide longer and detailed essay type answers.

E-mail

E-mail will be answered within three business days. I welcome e-mail queries and comments. All students are required to have a valid Lakehead e-mail address. It is your responsibility to maintain your e-mail address in good working order. The University expects you to correspond with me through your official e-mail address, and not through a commercial e-mail account.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me, and/or Accessibility Services. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Essays

The goal of the essay is to provide a clear, concise response (argument) to a research question, backed by reasoned consideration of the evidence.

Summarize your response (argument) in a sentence or two – the thesis statement – and appear in the first paragraph of your essay. Be explicit. The reader should be

clear on what you are arguing. Assume an educated reader. Do not spend more than a few paragraphs providing background information. Focus on providing information that advances your argument. While the balance of the paper will defend your argument, you should also acknowledge counterarguments and seek to demonstrate that your argument is superior.

Formatting bibliographies, references

The written assignments will all be double-spaced in 12pt Times New Roman font with standard margins. Essays should be free of spelling and grammatical errors. They must include appropriate citations and complete bibliography. Use whatever citation style you choose, just use an established system, and use it consistently throughout the paper.

Include a title page with your name, the date, the course number, and my name.

In completing the written assignments, students must cite all facts and figures that are not common knowledge and must cite all ideas that are borrowed from other authors. Students must use a recognized standard format correctly in their bibliographies, references, and footnotes. Failure to do so will result in substantial penalty in calculating your assignment grade.

The University takes instructional offences (including plagiarism) very seriously. Please make sure that you are familiar with the regulations regarding instructional offences. Do not use “AI” services to write your papers. Also, it is not acceptable to submit the same assignment in two different courses.

Late Penalties

Assignments are officially due on the dates specified in the course outline. Late papers will technically be subject to a penalty of 2% a day including weekends. That said, if you need extra time to write your best paper, please ask for an extension.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1: Introductions

Tuesday, January 9

“On Childism,” Anne McGillivray

Thursday, January 11

WEEK 2: Concept of Childhood and Development

Tuesday, January 16

“Are Children Human Beings or Human Becomings? A Critical Assessment of Outcome Thinking,” Jens Qvortrup

“Constructing Childhood Sociologically,” Chris Jenks

Thursday, January 18

“The Modern Construction of Childhood: What Does It Do to the Paradox of Modernity?”
Guoping Zhao

WEEK 3: History of Childhood

Tuesday, January 23

“Images of the Young Child in History: Enlightenment and Romance,” David Kennedy

Thursday, January 25

“Evolution of Childhood,” Lloyd DeMause

WEEK 4: Children, Schooling, and Labour

Tuesday, January 30

“A Brief Historiography of Child Labor,” Colin Heywood

Thursday, February 1

“Childhood and Child Labor,” Jane Humphries

WEEK 5: Children and War

Tuesday, February 6

“Children are the first victims of every conflict,” Groundviews

Thursday, February 8

“Children as victims of war: Current knowledge and future research needs,”
Jensen and Shaw

WEEK 6: Child Rights and Welfare Movements

Tuesday, February 13

“The Child-Savers: The Invention of Delinquency,” Anthony Platt

Thursday, February 15

“The oppressive history of ‘child welfare’ systems and the need for abolition,”
Dettlaff and Copeland

WEEK 7: READING BREAK

Tuesday, February 20

No Classes

Thursday, February 22

No Classes

WEEK 8: Children, Entertainment, and Technology

Tuesday, February 27

“Pop Culture Panics: How Moral Crusaders Construct Meanings of Deviance and
Delinquency,” Karen Sternheimer

Thursday, February 29

“Youth, popular culture and moral panics: Penny gaffs to Gangsta-rap, 1830–
1996,” John Springhall

WEEK 9: Children as Political Agents

Tuesday, March 5

“Democracy and Developmentalism,” Toby Rollo

Thursday, March 7

“Against a Minimum Voting Age,” Philip Cook

“Disenfranchisement on the Basis of Immaturity and Insanity,”
Claudio López-Guerra

WEEK 10: Race, Colonialism, and Childhood

Tuesday, March 12

“Feral Children: Settler Colonialism, Progress, and the Figure of the Child,”

Toby Rollo

Thursday, March 14

“The Color of Childhood: The Role of the Child/Human Binary in the Production of Anti-Black Racism,”

Toby Rollo

WEEK 11: Childhood, Sex, and Gender

Tuesday, March 19

“The Dialectic of Sex,” Shulamith Firestone

Thursday, March 21

“Women and Children First! Childhood, Feminisms, and the Co-Emancipatory Model,” Toby Rollo

WEEK 12: Childhood and Disability

Tuesday, March 26

“Beyond Developmentalism,” Valerie Walkerdine

“Deconstructing Developmental Psychology,” Erica Burman

Thursday, March 28

“Implicit Infantilizing Attitudes About Disability,” Kenneth Robey *et al*

“The Oppressive Power of Normalcy in the Lives of Disabled Children: Deploying History to Denaturalize the Notion of the ‘Normal Child’,” Harriet Cooper

WEEK 13: The Future and the Posthuman Child

Tuesday, April 2

“Adult/Child,” Karin Murriss

Thursday, April 4

“Beyond Curricula: Colonial Pedagogies in Public Schooling,”
Toby Rollo