

Children's Health, Education and Welfare
PLSC 400 – Professor Rick Mayes
Fall 2005

Thursdays, 3:45-6:25 p.m.
Weinstein Hall 204

office hours: Monday and Friday 3:45-5 p.m.
or by appointment if these times are not convenient

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From changes in juvenile justice to compulsory education, immunization and child labor laws, Head Start, SCHIP (the States' Children Health Insurance Program), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and an array of other programs and policies, children have become both a top political priority and, arguably, a national obsession. Consequently, "childhood" has become one of the most researched areas of medicine, public health and the social sciences. This senior seminar examines the extraordinary evolution of public policies intended to safeguard children's health, educational opportunities, and general welfare in America; it also endeavors to judge their effectiveness.

As the name of the course suggests, the class will operate entirely as a graduate-level seminar. Your participation will make up a large proportion of both our weekly gatherings and your final grade. The reading load is formidable: at least one major book per week. Therefore, you will need to learn how to digest a lot of material and locate central themes quickly. The course is ultimately designed to generate lively discussions of key childhood issues (education, family life, parenting, health care, etc.), discover new insights and questions related to children, and to encourage you to apply theory to public policy.

Course Readings

- Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Belknap Press, 2004)
- Judith Sealander, *The Failed Century of the Child* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Alexandra Stern, Howard Markel, *Formative Years: Children's Health* (University of Michigan Press, 2004)
- Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children* (Vintage, 2004)
- Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life* (University of California Press, 2003)
- Jason DeParle, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and America's Plan to Rescue the Underclass* (Viking, 2004)
- Juliet Schor, *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture* (Scribner, 2004)
- Jonathan Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation* (Crown, 2005)
- Wes Smith, *Hope Meadows* (Berkeley Press, 2001)
- William Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood* (Pine Forge Press, 2004)

Class Attendance, Preparation and Participation

Given that we only meet once a week, class attendance is mandatory. If you have an emergency or a desperate reason for being absent, please clear it with me in advance.

Honor Code: Every assignment and exam must be submitted with your signature next to the full written pledge:

"I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work."

Failure to do this will result in your work not being graded or accepted for credit.

Assignments and Grading

Class Participation & Discussion	10%
Analysis-Reaction Papers	20%
Senior Thesis Proposal	5%
Senior Thesis Paper	40%
Research Presentation in Class	10%
Team Reports & Debates	15%
Total	100%

Grades

Everyone begins the class with zero points. Through class participation, analysis-reaction papers, debates, your research/thesis proposal, research presentation, and senior thesis paper you **earn** points over the course of the semester. The number of points you earn determines the grade you receive: D/F reflects work that is poor/incomplete; C, adequate; B, excellent; and A, perfect or near-perfect (and rare).

Scoring	A= 100-96	A-= 95-91	B+= 90-88
	B= 87-83	B-= 82-81	C+= 80-78
	C= 77-73	C-= 72-71	D+= 70-68
	D= 67-63	D-= 62-61	F= 60-0

Please be aware that under no circumstances will extra credit be available. Consequently, it is imperative that you do your best on each and every assignment. I am available outside of class to help you.

Late Policy

My policy is firm but fair. I don't expect to use this policy, but if it has to go into effect it will. In brief, paper and lab projects will be automatically reduced one full grade for every day late. Any paper submitted more than 2 days late will receive an automatic "F." Those with genuine emergencies will be given extensions, but they must be cleared with me *in advance*.

Analysis-Reaction Papers [20% of your final grade: 8 total from 10 readings, 2.5 points each; you may skip two]

The purpose of the analysis-reaction paper is to critique the books we read. You should identify a few questions or concerns about the author's main arguments and the methods the author used to analyze the evidence. To what extent do you agree with the author's findings, and why? What questions do you have about the books? What more would you like to know? The paper should be approximately 2 pages long. In general, summarize the book in the first 2/3rds of page one and then analyze the book's strengths and weaknesses for the next 1 and 1/3rd pages.

**** They are due in advance of our seminar and in my office by 1 p.m. at the latest each Thursday. ****

Team Reports & Debates [15% of your final grade: 1 Report (5%), and 1 Debate (10%)/per student]

Students will join up into report teams (of 4) and present reports on select child policy areas in the first half of the class and then into debate teams (of 2) in the second half of the class. The class will collectively evaluate and then score the quality of each report and debate.

Senior Thesis Paper & Research Presentation [40% and 10% of your final grade, respectively]

We will talk extensively about your senior final paper and I will provide you with a handout that outlines the paper's objectives and requirements. You will also make a 15-20 minute research presentation on your research on either November 10 or 17.

ASSIGNMENTS

“If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.”

- **Charles Darwin**

“Never underestimate the power of a few committed people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- **Margaret Mead**

“Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.”

- **Jesus**

I. THE HISTORY of CHILDREN’S HEALTH, EDUCATION and WELFARE

Thursday, September 1

Introduction and Overview

Birth: Life’s Ultimate Lottery

Christina Hoff Sommers, “The War Against Boys,” *Atlantic Monthly*
http://www.richmond.edu/~bmayes/pdf/War_Against_Boys.pdf

Caitlin Flanagan, “The Mother’s Dilemma,” *Atlantic Monthly*
http://www.richmond.edu/~bmayes/pdf/Caitlin%20Flanagan_Serfdom.pdf

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 1 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 3, pp. 45-58

Thursday, September 8

The Good Old Days... How Good Were They? Part I

Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 2 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 5, pp. 83-106

TEAM REPORT 1: **Child-Care** (day care, nannies, Family/Medical Leave, etc.)

Thursday, September 15

The Good Old Days... How Good Were They? Part II

Sealand, *The Failed Century of the Child*

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 3 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 4, pp. 61-81

TEAM REPORT 2: **Health** (SCHIP, Medicaid, WIC, obesity programs, etc.)

Thursday, September 22

The Good Old Days... How Good Were They? Part III

Stern, Markel, *Formative Years: Children's Health*

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 4 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 6, pp. 107-132

TEAM REPORT 3: **Education** (NCLB, charter schools, vouchers, testing)

Thursday, September 29

Anxious Parents: Worried All the Time

Hulbert, *Raising America*

ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 5 DUE

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 7, pp. 133-160

TEAM REPORT 4: **Welfare** (1996 welfare reforms, "Deadbeat Dad" reforms, 1997 Adoption & Safe Families Act, etc.)

II. CHILD POLICY AREAS: FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, PARENTING, HOMES

Thursday, October 6

We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident, that all Men are Created Equal

Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*

! Turn in your Senior Thesis Proposal !

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 6 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 8, pp. 161-189

TEAM DEBATE 1: **Should NCLB testing in schools be expanded or reduced?**

Thursday, October 13

The Consequences of Welfare Reform

DeParle, *American Dream*

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 7 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 9, pp. 191-223

TEAM DEBATE 2: **Should TANFF maintain the 5-year lifetime limit on benefits?**

FALL BREAK (* read Schor's *Born to Buy* over break *)

Thursday, October 20

For Crying Out Loud, Will Someone Please Sell that Kid Something!

Schor, *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*

- PBS Frontline, "The Merchants of Cool" [* watch online *]
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/view/>

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 8 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 10, pp. 229-249

TEAM DEBATE 3: **Should T.V. advertising aimed at children be banned?**

Thursday, October 27

Where Have You Gone, Horatio Alger?

Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation*

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 9 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 11, pp. 251-282

TEAM DEBATE 4: **Should for-profit education companies be allowed to run more public schools?**

See Edison Schools: <http://www.edisonschools.com/home/home.cfm>

Thursday, November 3

Trauma, Tragedy, Survival and Hope Renewed

"Children of Beslan," HBO documentary

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4826372> [* listen to *]

<http://www.richmond.edu/~bmayer/pdf/ChildrenofBeslan.pdf> [* read *]

Smith, *Hope Meadows*

* ANALYSIS-REACTION PAPER 10 DUE *

Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Ch. 12, pp. 283-310

Thursday, November 10

Research Presentations (based on each student's thesis research)

Thursday, November 17

Research Presentations (based on each student's thesis research)

THANKSGIVING BREAK (* work on your Senior Thesis Paper over break *)

Thursday, December 1

meet with me to go over the completion of your Thesis/Research paper

Thursday, December 8

Senior Thesis Papers due at the beginning of class

Summary Conclusion and Review

- Francis Collins: Director, National Human Genome Research Institute,

"Seek A Balanced Life," University of Virginia Commencement Address (2001)

<http://www.virginia.edu/majorevents/speeches/01speech.html>

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