

**ANTH 468/568 THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD**  
**Childhood, Youth, and Culture**

4 credits

Spring 2014- Tuesdays / Thursdays 12-1:50 pm- Weniger Hall 275

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**Course description:**

Scholarly attention to children's experiences and their childhoods is poised to be to the start of the 21st century as women's studies had been to the end of the 20th century. In the last two decades there has been a revival of our intellectual interest in children and young people, in part due to an increasing awareness of how children are both affected by and active participants in contexts of warfare and political violence, poverty and economic survival, and processes of globalization, transmigration, and cultural change. That is, an increasing understanding of how children's lives cannot easily and usefully be disentangled from broader social life and how historical processes are lived and forged by children and young people.

This course will set off with the question of what the examination of children's lived experiences can tell us about the formation of historical and cultural processes. We will read several ethnographic and historical examples to examine how certain phenomena—like changes in the nature of the family, labor, violence, patterns of consumption, and transmigration—can be seen in a new light when children are situated at the center of the analysis. The course will combine an exploration of children's experiences in diverse socio-historical and cultural contexts with readings on the conceptual and methodological genealogies that have constructed children as research subjects.

**Required books:**

Bolin, Inge 2006. *Growing Up in a Culture of Respect: Child Rearing in Highland Peru*. University of Texas Press.

Zelizer, Viviana 1994. *Pricing the Priceless Child. The Changing Social Value of Children*. Princeton University Press.

Hecht, Tobias 1998. *At Home in the Street: Street Children of Northeast Brazil*. Cambridge University Press

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard under course documents.

**In addition, Graduate students will also choose one of these books:**

Myra Bluebond-Langner 1980. *The Private Worlds of Dying Children*. Princeton University Press.

Katz, Cindi 2004. *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

**Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

As a result of successfully completing this course, undergraduate students will be able to:

- Apply core concepts and theoretical perspectives in the anthropology of childhood to the analysis of varied historical and cross-cultural experiences of growing up.
- Analyze from a critical perspective the effects of global capitalism on children's experiences in specific social and cultural contexts.
- Describe and evaluate how an ethnographic focus on children's experiences can shed new light on specific processes of socio-historical and cultural transformation.

These learning outcomes will be assessed in informal writing assignments, student presentations and discussion leadership, and three critical essays drawing extensively upon course readings, ethnographic documentaries and films, and in-class discussions.

As a result of successfully completing this course, graduate students will be able to:

- Describe and analyze the core concepts and theoretical perspectives with which anthropology has contributed to our understanding of varied historical, social, and cross-cultural experiences of growing up.
- Describe and evaluate how an ethnographic focus on children's experiences can shed new light on specific processes of socio-historical and cultural transformation.
- Identify and evaluate the varied methodological approaches anthropologists have developed when working with children in order to capture and integrate children's voices in ethnographies that contribute to knowledge production on children's lives.
- Synthesize different theoretical approaches and conceptual tools related to the anthropology of childhood as they zero in on a specific theme for a MA thesis or PhD dissertation.
- Create a research paper on a topic of their interest drawing extensively upon theoretical and analytical tools from course readings and discussions and self-selected articles.

These learning outcomes will be assessed in two critical commentaries of the visual materials of the course (ethnographic documentaries and films), student presentations and student-led discussions, and a final paper drawing extensively upon course readings and self-selected articles.

### **Course requirements:**

This class will be run in a seminar format, in which we will learn through discussion amongst us all. Students are required to complete the readings before class and come prepared to contribute to class discussions. We will discuss the readings and related themes through a combination of in-class writing exercises and discussion, small group discussions, and students' presentations. Attendance and active participation in class is essential. Student participation includes, but it is not limited to, student presentations and lead discussions. That is, everyone must take an active role in class discussions and contribute comments, ask good questions, or provide thoughtful reactions to other students' comments.

### **Student Presentations and Discussion Leadership:**

A team of two or three students will be assigned to lead each class session. As a team they will present briefly on the main theme of the readings, the conceptual frameworks and methodologies. They will lead the in-class discussion by providing a few questions, and will moderate the discussion. In addition, they will provide the professor and the other students with a handout. This two- page handout will outline the main concepts and arguments of the readings and list two or three questions to initiate in-class discussion.

Graduate students will also make a formal oral presentation on one of the additional books. In the presentation they will provide classmates with handouts outlining the main concepts and summarizing the main argument of the text. Graduate students will be prepared to answer questions from their classmates.

### **Critical commentaries of two videos:**

Graduate students will write two critical commentaries (1-2 pages single space) on the videos and films we will watch in class, on the weeks of their choosing. A critical commentary is not simply a summary of the storyline of the ethnographic documentary or film but a piece of analytical writing directly drawing from conceptual tools and theoretical frameworks in the course readings. In a critical commentary the student has to provide evidence that she knows the reading materials and is able to compare and contrast them with the perspectives provided by the videos. In a critical commentary the student's task is to synthesize the sense and significance of the story in the video, the way it has been framed for specific audiences, and the representations of children's experiences under particular historical and cultural contexts, offering comparing and contrasting points of view in relation to the course readings. A critical commentary is a coherent small essay in its own right. The purpose of this writing exercise is that students engage and digest the readings in a timely and progressive manner. In the assessment of these critical commentaries I will take into account 1) whether the student engages the

relevant anthropological concepts to analyze and contextualize the visual materials, 2) the identification of the main thematic points of the video and their significance for understanding historical and contemporary global forces shaping children's experiences, and 3) the overall coherence, organization, and creativity of your argument and writing.

#### Three Critical Essays for Undergrad Students:

Students are required to complete **3 writing assignments**, each one at the end of the major sections structuring the course, according to the syllabus. **The first two essays will be 4 pages each, double space, and the third essay will be 6 pages double space** (as it will cover more reading materials). In each essay students will demonstrate that they have read and integrated the main arguments of each of the readings and videos and are able to talk about them in a comparative perspective and critical way. In each essay, students will critically discuss and illuminate the main theme(s) running across the course materials for that particular section of the course, exploring and comparing key concepts, and different methodological approaches. How all these course materials speak to your own understanding of the topic? What sticks with you from these materials? What new ideas have you learned? What questions do you have for the authors? What questions were not addressed by the authors?

A critical essay is neither based on personal digression nor simply a collection of aggregated summaries of each of the readings, but a piece of analytical writing directly drawing from conceptual tools and theoretical frameworks in the course readings. In a critical essay the student has to provide evidence that she knows the reading materials and is able to compare and contrast them. The student's task is to synthesize the sense and significance of the texts and videos, the way they examine how children's experiences are shaped by social and cultural forces, offering an analysis of how the course readings complement or contradict each other.

This type of writing should be a coherent small essay in its own right, with a clear structure: 1) the theme or topic that you are going to address, 2) the comparative discussion of the readings, 3) a conclusion.

The purpose of this writing exercise is that students engage and digest the readings in a timely and progressive manner.

In the assessment of the critical essays I will take into account:

- 1) Whether the student engages the relevant anthropological concepts to analyze the course materials
- 2) The identification of the main thematic threads running across the course materials and their significance for understanding contemporary global forces shaping children's experiences, and
- 3) The overall coherence, organization, and creativity of your argument and writing

Please, remember that writing is a process and requires multiple re-writing and editing. The writing structure, therefore, unfolds as your thinking and analysis progresses. The

thinking happens through writing. Take the necessary time to do it creatively and thoughtfully. And ENJOY the writing process.

### Final Paper for Graduate Students:

Graduate students have two options for writing a single final paper of 15 pages, double spaced.

- a) The paper should critically discuss and illuminate an ongoing course theme, for example: the articulation of gender and age in the lived experiences of children, or the reconfiguration of children's practices in modernity, or the inclusion of children's voices in ethnographic writing, or the formation of youth subcultures in particular historical conditions, etc. This sort of paper should incorporate readings and videos from at least 5 different weeks of the course.
  
- b) This paper draws extensively upon theoretical and conceptual tools from the course to explore a theme you are investigating for a MA thesis or PhD dissertation. The type of paper should also incorporate readings and videos from at least 4 different weeks of the course, as well as bringing in at least 4 additional self-selected journal articles or book chapters. A minimum of 10 sources must be listed in your bibliography.

One page paper proposal stating the research question and brief summary of the sources (from course readings as well as 4 additional self-selected readings for students choosing option b) will be due on Week 5 of the term. The proposal has to be approved by the professor.

### **Grading:**

#### Undergraduate students:

Class participation: 5%

Formal presentations: 15%

Critical essays: Essay #1: 25%

Essay #2: 25%

Essay #3: 30%

#### Graduate students:

Class participation: 5%

Formal presentations: 15%

Critical commentaries of the videos: 20%

Final paper: 60%

### **Additional Important Information:**

Students with Disabilities: Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved

through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 737-4098.

Expectations for Student Conduct: Cheating, plagiarism, or fabrication are acts of academic dishonesty and, in accordance with OSU's policy on academic dishonesty, will not be tolerated. Members of the college community are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. To falsify the results of one's research, to present the words, ideas, data or work of another as one's own, or to cheat on an examination corrupts the essential process of learning. Anyone caught engaging in any form of academic dishonesty will fail the course. Please see the following website for OSU Academic Dishonesty Policy: <http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm>.

### **Course organization:**

#### **A. From Culture and Personality to learning as a negotiated process**

We will begin the course with the question of how childhood research has reflected on and contributed to central discussions in the field of anthropology by tracing varied lineages of theoretical and methodological development in the study of children. First, the concern with the reproduction of culture, or adult behavior and values, began with the school of Culture and Personality in the 1940s and 1950s, and still continues in more nuanced and child-agent forms in current critical studies of socialization processes that focus on children as social actors and the negotiated dynamics of growing up.

#### **WEEK 1:**

##### **T April 1**

Introduction to the course.

##### **Th April 3**

Bolin's *Growing Up in a Culture of Respect*. Introduction, Chapter 1 and 2

#### **WEEK 2:**

##### **T April 8**

Growing Up in a Culture of Respect. Chapters 3-4

##### **Th April 10**

Video: Schooling the World

### **WEEK 3:**

**T April 15**

Growing up in a Culture of Respect. Chapters 5-6

**Th April 17**

Growing up in a Culture of Respect. Chapter 7

Leal Ferreira, Mariana 2002, Tupi-Guarani Apocalyptic Visions of Time and the Body, *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 7(1): 128-169.

### **WEEK 4: Theoretical and methodological innovations in representing the child's point of view.**

**T April 22**

Allison James 2007, Giving Voice to Children's Voices. *American Anthropologist* 109: 261-272.

Graduate presentation on Bluebond-Langner's *The Private worlds of Dying Children*

### **B. Childhood as a historically and socially situated construction**

Second, anthropologists with an anchoring in global political economy and history have built on critiques of universalistic notions of age and childhood - inspired by historical studies of the family as a socially constructed domain- to frame another more recent strand of cross-cultural research on varied, changing, and globally interconnected structures of childhood.

**Th April 24**

**First essay due.**

Video: The Devil's Miner

### **WEEK 5:**

**T April 29**

Zelizer's *Pricing the Priceless Child*. Chapter 1-3.

**Th May 1**

Pricing the Priceless Child. Chapters 4,6,7

### **WEEK 6:**

**T May 6**

Schildkrout, Enid 2002, Age and Gender in Hausa Society: Socio-economic Roles of Children in Urban Kano, *Childhood* 9(3): 344-368.

Graduate presentation on Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* [Selections];  
Cunningham, H. 2005. *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*. Longman. [Selections];

Historical studies of childhood as an ideologically constructed domain and their impact in the anthropology of childhood. Schildkrout's pioneering examination of children's practices as different from and complimentary to adults' practices has led to studies of children's contributions to sustaining households and social life, reshaping gender roles, and siblings socializing other siblings.

### **C. The global political economy of contemporary childhoods**

In the last part of the course we will examine how global capitalism is affecting children's lived experiences in different social and cultural contexts, covering anthropological analysis on street children, child laborers, children and armed violence, the commodification of childhood, youth in global commercial culture, transnational childhoods and youths, and transnational adoptions.

**Th May 8: Children and the global political economy**

**Second essay due.**

Video: Consuming Kids

**WEEK 7:**

**T May 13**

Hecht's *At Home in the Street*. Chapters 1-3

**Th May 15**

At home in the street. Chapters 4-5

**WEEK 8: No class this week—Fina will be at the LASA meetings  
Summaries of the readings for this week will be collected next week in class.**

**T May 20**

At home in the street. Chapters 6-7



**Th May 22**

Field, N. 1995. The Child as Laborer and Consumer. The Disappearance of Childhood in Contemporary Japan, in Stephens, S. *Children and the Politics of Culture*. Princeton University Press.

Graduate students will read also:

Leifsen, Esben 2011, Expressed, Muted, and Silenced: Mestizo Childhood and Everyday Violence in a Marginal Neighborhood in Quito, Ecuador, in Six-Hohenbalken, M. and N. Weiss (eds), *Violence Expressed: An Anthropological Approach*. Farnham, Surrey, UK, and Burlington, VT, US: Ashgate Publishing.

Graduate presentation on Katz, Cindi 2004. *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*.

And / or

Sharon Stephens 1995. Introduction. Children and childhoods in Late Capitalism. In *Children and the Politics of Culture*. Princeton University Press.

### **WEEK 9: Children in Political, Armed, and Everyday Violence**

**T May 27**

Pamela Reynolds (1995), "Youth and the Politics of Culture in South Africa", in Stephens, S. (Ed) *Children and the Politics of Culture*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

David Rosen (2007), Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law and the Globalization of Childhood, *American Anthropologist*, 109, 2, pp. 296-306.

**Th May 29:**

Video: The Tiniest Place

### **WEEK 10: The Circulation of Children: Migrations and Adoptions.**

**T June 3**

Jessaca Leinaweaver 2007. On Moving Children: The Social Implications of Andean Child Circulation. *American Ethnologist*, 34 (1): 163-180.

Carpena-Méndez 2011. In and Out of Ireland: Latin American Families and their Children in Transnational Circulation. In *Childhood and Migration in Europe: Portraits of Mobility, Identity, and Belonging in Contemporary Ireland*. Ashgate Publishing.

**Th June 5**

Video: La Mémoire Dure (Memory Resists)

**Final papers are due Monday June 9, before noon in my mailbox or under my office door.**