PY/ED 281: CHILD IN SOCIETY

Instructor: M. Brinton Lykes, PhD Spring, 2003
Office: Campion 201C Gasson 210; Tuesday, 4:30-7:00 pm
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Office Hours: Monday, 3:30-5:30 pm; Tuesday, 2:30 – 3:30; Wednesday, 2-4 pm; or by appointment. Please use sign up sheets on door. Thank you.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course was designed as a capstone or integrative experience for students majoring in Child in Society. It assumes that you have completed all other courses in this major and that we will draw on those experiences as well as your applied work in classrooms and/or human service organizations to develop a critical and culturally grounded understanding of children and adolescents in today’s global societies.

We will begin with where we are, that is, with our own autobiography or life story. We will expand on these important beginnings by reading and viewing films about a range of children and adolescents from differing social class, race, ethnic, national, gender, and sexual backgrounds.

Grounded in our understandings of life story – as told by those who have lived them – we will read social scientific research and human rights documents to develop a critical framework for understanding key social issues – e.g., war, poverty, racism, homophobia, etc. – that affect children and adolescents today. We will also critically examine how these texts “construct childhood and youth,” exploring traditional psychological debates about, for example, the relative contributions of nature and nurture to development, the universality of Western psychological constructs, etc.

During the second half of the semester we will return to life stories, this time drawing heavily on the reflections of a number of psychologists and of an historian/journalist who are critical of mainstream psychological theories and of much humanitarian work in the world today. They draw on interdisciplinary studies, life histories, indigenous beliefs, and cultural praxis and humanitarian work as they struggles to understand the worlds in which children and youth today live and to collaborate with them to create a more just world.

Finally, we will discuss our own efforts to redress injustices that negatively affect children, youth, their families, and their communities, exploring
successes and failures of existing programs as well as attempting to identify necessary elements towards developing alternative resources and strategies.

REQUIRED READING

*The Coming of Age in Mississippi* Anne Moody. (1997) Laureleaf
*All Souls: A Family Story from Southie* Michael Patrick MacDonald (2000). Ballantine


Plus articles from a reading packet notes with * below and available in class..

REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE

1. **CLASS PARTICIPATION.**

This course is designed to facilitate participation of all involved. It is expected that everyone will look for ways to actively contribute to the classroom process. The class format relies on student's informed contributions and, therefore, on students having read the relevant materials **BEFORE** the class in which they will be discussed. I have set up a listserv for this course: py28101-l@listserv.bc.edu You are required to join the list and to communicate with others through the list as indicated throughout the semester. In order to facilitate the discussion/participation process:

- Beginning on **February 11**, each student must sign up at least once during the semester to prepare questions about the readings. These questions must be sent to all students via the listserv no later that Saturday prior to the Tuesday upon which they will be discussed.

- There will be **FREE WRITES** at the beginning of class throughout the semester. These will be short essays written that will be used in class
for discussion and then returned to you the following week. You are required to complete all of them but **SIX** (6) of them will be counted towards your mark for class participation.

- Class participation, discussion questions, & free writes **25% of final grade**.

2. **ESSAY**

Identify one social issue or social problem confronted that Anne Moody and Michael Patrick MacDonald confronted as children. Compare and contrast their experiences, describing what enabled or impeded them from overcoming the challenge(s) they faced in confronting this issue/problem. How would you as a teacher or human service worker have interacted with them in facing that problem/issue. Your paper must be typed and may not exceed 4 double-spaced pages. Any references should be in APA style. **PAPER due at the beginning of class, Tuesday, February 11. (15% of final grade)**

3. **GENOGRAM** (see handout for details)

**Paper due at the beginning of class, Tuesday, February 25 (15% of final grade)**

4. **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY**- (see handout for details). (15% of final grade)

**Paper due, beginning of class, Tues, March 18 (15% of final grade)**

5. **GROUP PROJECT & PRESENTATION**

Students will form working partnerships or groups (no less than 2 and no more than 4 members per partnership/group). Each partnership/group must:

- Submit a list of its members (including full name, email, and phone number) as well as a brief description of the project no later than **Tuesday February 18**. **NOTE:** The partnership/group must submit **two double-spaced typed copies** of its list of members as well as its topic, its country focus (from the list provided in class); one copy will be returned to the group the following week.
• Conduct preliminary background research on the country selected in order to identify at least one but no more than two social issues or human rights abuses, that is, rights that are being violated for children or youth in this country. (See the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for a list of these rights: http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)

• Do a site visit of an organization, church group, etc. that is working with communities, families, or individuals from the country you have selected and conduct an interview of a key informant in this group. OR Interview two individuals from the country and/or community who you are studying focusing on the social issues/problems that you are researching. Include a copy of the interview questions with your final paper (as an appendix) and integrate the information from the interview(s) into your paper.

• Identify theory and research from psychology, sociology AND anthropology to elucidate our current knowledge about the impact of these violations on children’s development and on their families, schools, and communities. For example, if the child’s right to life (from Article 6 of the Convention) is being violated by war, what does research in psychology, sociology, and anthropology tell us about the effects of war on children or youth. You should critically assess/evaluate this research and/or theory drawing on critical psychological theory developed in class and in light of what you know about the country and its children and youth from your research.

• Identify and critically evaluate at least two and no more than three strategies that have been developed at the level of policy and/or practice (including the work of schools, local, regional or national governments, churches, NGOs, international organizations, etc.) in response to these violations. Draw on critical perspectives discussed in your readings to evaluate/critique these policies and practices and recommend how they can be improved or transformed.

• Assign one short reading to the class prior to your presentation. This may be a research article or a piece written for the popular press. Copies must be provided to the class at least one week prior to your presentation.

• Present findings to the class as a whole, using visual materials (with strong preference for a power point presentation) to display findings.

• Engage the class in a critical discussion about your presentation.
• Submit an 8-10 page double-spaced, typed summary of the major findings as well as an annotated bibliography of at least 12 references consulted in the development of the presentation. The written report, which is authored by your partnership or group is due no later than Friday, May 2.

• Each participant must submit an INDIVIDUAL summary/reflection on the group process including a discussion of her/his contributions to the project. This reflection paper must be double-spaced, typed, and no long than 3 pages. These individual reflection papers should be attached to the group paper and submitted at the same time.

• Project, presentation and written documentation: 30% of final grade

COURSE OUTLINE

Tuesday, January 14-February 11: Imaging/imagining children and youth in society

January 14-February 4: Autobiography/life stories as resources for thinking about ourselves and for talking about the child and youth in society.

January 14: Introduction to course

January 21: Coming of Age in Mississippi pp. 1-214


February 4: All Souls: A Family Story from Southie – entire book

February 11: Human Development and Social Contexts NB: Compare and Contrast Paper DUE today

*Kagan, Jerome. The power and limits of parents ... two developmental stories
*Kessen, William. Our disconnected child
*Mead, Margaret & Metraux, Rhoda. A new understanding of childhood.
February 18: Reviewing core concepts: Thinking about the child

*Weiss, Nancy Pottishman. Mother, the invention of necessity: Dr. Benjamin Spock’s *Baby and Child Care*
*Karen, Robert. Becoming attached
*LeVine, Robert A. & Miller, Patrice M. Cross-cultural validity of attachment theory

Tuesday, February 25-March 18: Psychology and the construction of childhood and youth: Critical perspectives

February 25: Thinking critically about the child and youth - and about psychology NB: *GENOGRAM due today*

*Jenkins, Henry: Introduction: Childhood Innocence and other modern myths
*Prilleltensky, Isaac & Nelson, Geoffrey. Power, well-being, oppression & liberation & Theory, research and action
**Critical psychology: Voices for change – selections (pp. 1-20)**

Boston College SPRING BREAK March 3-9, 2002

March 11: Why is the individual child the unit of analysis? Interrogating social constructions of childhood Deconstructing developmental psychology (pp. 1-61)

March 18: Relationships: Parents, families and their challenges NB Autobiographical essay due TODAY Deconstructing developmental psychology (pp. 62-104) *Critical psychology: Voices for change - selections*

March 25: Power relations, developmental theory and the applications of psychology to school, community and beyond Deconstructing developmental psychology (pp. 138-189) *Critical psychology: Voices for change - selections*

Tuesday, April 1 – April 29: Resilience and Resistance: Children and youth as subjects of their lives
April 1: Moral citizenship in a global community: Difference, Tolerance The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience (pp.3-71)

*REVIEW Prilleltensky & Nelson chapters

April 8: Living with conflict within and beyond our borders The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience (pp. 72-190)

April 15: Ethnic war, children and youth, and the modern conscience: Selected psychological responses Critical psychology: Voices for change – selections


Tuesday, April 22 – PARTNERSHIP/GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday, April 29 – PARTNERSHIP/GROUP PRESENTATIONS & FINAL REFLECTIONS COUNTRY FOCUS/PROBLEM FOCUS FOR PARTNERSHIPS/GROUPS (EACH PARTNERSHIP/GROUP SHOULD SELECT ONE AND ONLY ONE COUNTRY)

1. South Africa
2. Central America: Either El Salvador or Guatemala
3. Caribbean Basin: Either Haiti or the Dominican Republic
4. Colombia
5. Brazil
6. Philippines
7. Rwanda
8. Northern Ireland
9. Israel-Palestine
10. USA – select a group of children or youth that have been historically marginalized from access to power and resources