

IR101: Childhood Across Cultures

Course duration: 54 hours lecture and class time (Over three weeks)

LSE Teaching Department: Department of International Relations

Lead Faculty: Dr Catherine Allerton (c.l.allerton@lse.ac.uk)

Pre-requisites: No pre-requisites for study. The course is designed to appeal to a range of students with interests in childhood, education and schooling, comparative human development and child rights.

Course Description:

Is 'child labour' always exploitative? Can modern schooling be harmful as well as helpful? Are there universals in cognitive development that override cultural traditions of childrearing? This course examines childhood in historical and social context, exploring the implications, for human development, of radically different understandings of child-care, child competencies and education.

The aim of this multidisciplinary course is threefold. Firstly, to explore and understand the implications of seeing childhood as a cultural construct; secondly, to investigate how different notions of childhood make a difference to actual children's development; and thirdly, to explore the modern understanding of 'child rights' and its influence – both positive and negative – on children's lives.

Through a variety of social-scientific materials (anthropology, psychology, history, sociology), the course will examine alternative understandings of childhood that can be found across space and time. What difference do these different understandings make to processes of cognitive development? Are there any universals of human development or parenting that can be discerned amidst this cultural diversity? What are the political and social implications for children's everyday lives of particular ways of seeing and treating children? In addition to the course readings, students will view and analyse films, and will visit London's Museum of Childhood.

Texts:

Textbooks relevant to the course, but not essential to purchase, include:

- Heather Montgomery. 2008. Introduction to Childhood: Anthropological Perspectives on Children's Lives. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- David F. Lancy. 2014 (Second Edition). The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Course Structure:

- Lectures: 36 hours (twelve 3 hour lectures with a short break, with films and some discussion)
- Classes: 18 hours (twelve 1.5 hour group work/ discussion sessions)

Formative course work:

- An essay of 1000-1500 words, submitted to the class teacher on Monday 8 August. Questions will be provided at the start of the course.

Assessment:

The assessment consists of:

- An essay of 2000-2500 words (bibliography does not count), submitted by 9.00am on Friday 12 August. The essay will count for 50% of the final mark. Students will be provided with questions by the end of the first week of the course.
- A two-hour written exam at the end of the programme. The exam will count for 50% of the final mark.

Lecture Schedule 2016:

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Monday 1 August – Lecture 1: Introduction: Childhood as a Construction

This lecture introduces the broad theme of the course as a whole by considering what anthropologists, historians and sociologists mean by referring to childhood as a social, historical or cultural 'construction'. We consider case studies from the historical and anthropological record and explore the implications of this incredible diversity of childhoods for human development and culture.

Essential Reading

Heather Montgomery. 2009. What is a Child? Chapter 2 of *An Introduction to Childhood*.

Further Reading

Philippe Ariès. 1998 [1979]. 'From Immodesty to Innocence'. In H. Jenkins (ed) *The Children's Culture Reader*.

Carolyn Dean. 2002. Sketches of Childhood: Children in Colonial Andean Art and Society. In T. Hecht (ed) *Minor Omissions: Children in Latin American History and Society*.

Tuesday 2 August – Lecture 2: Who is a Child?

This lecture explores the shifting boundary between childhood and adulthood. Who counts as a 'child' across space and time? What are the implications of different ways – both scientific and vernacular – of seeing children? How might a society contain more than one understanding of childhood? The lecture investigates this in part by thinking about the radical implications of reincarnation beliefs, and by exploring the problematic determination of age for unaccompanied migrant children.

Essential Reading

Heaven Crawley. 2009. 'Between a rock and a hard place: Negotiating age and identity in the UK Asylum System.' In N. Thomas (ed) *Children, Politics and Communication*.

Maja Haals Brosnan. 2016. Different Childhoods, Different Ethnographies: Encounters in Rwanda. In C. Allerton (ed) *Children: Ethnographic Encounters*.

Further Reading

Jo Boyden. 2001. Scientific Conceptualisations of children and youth: trends and issues. In S. Tremayne (ed) *Managing reproductive life: cross-cultural themes in sexuality and fertility*.

Akhil Gupta. 2002. 'Reliving Childhood? The temporality of childhood and narratives of reincarnation.' *Ethnos* 67(1): 33-56.

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Wednesday 3 August – Lecture 3: Infancy and Care-Giving

In this lecture we consider how different cultures conceptualise and interact with babies. Are there any universals of interaction between caregivers and babies? How might conventional ideas about infant-caregiver interactions be skewed by Western perspectives? How can evolutionary perspectives shed light on child-rearing?

Essential Reading

Suzanne Gaskins. 2006. Cultural Perspectives on Infant-Caregiver Interaction. In N.J. Enfield and Stephen C. Levinson. *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition and Interaction*. Oxford: Berg.

Further Reading

Alma Gottlieb. 2004. Spiritual Beng babies: reflections on cowry shells, coins and colic. Chapter 4 of *The afterlife is where we come from: the culture of infancy in West Africa*.

Sarah Hrdy. 2009. Meet the Alloparents. [Natural History Magazine](http://www.naturalhistorymag.com/features/09270/meet-the-alloparents).
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Thursday 4 August – Lecture 4: Play

Play seems to be a universal aspect of childhood. But what is play for? In this lecture, we explore different forms of play, and consider various arguments about its purpose and meaning. How do adults understand children's play? How does play vary cross-culturally? Can we make a clear distinction between play and work?

Essential Reading

Lanclos, Donna. 2003. At play in Belfast: children's folklore and identities in Northern Ireland. Chapter 2, 'Rudeness and defining the line between child and adult'.

Further Reading

Inge Bolin, 2006. *Growing up in a culture of respect: child rearing in highland Peru*. Chapter 3, 'Children at work and play'.

David Lancy. 2007. Accounting for Variability in Mother-Child Play. *American Anthropologist*. 109(2): 273-84.

Friday 5 August – Lecture 5: Adolescence

This lecture explores debates within psychology and anthropology about the 'universal' status of adolescence. Is adolescence always a time of 'storm and stress', or is this a cultural construction of the West? How might teenagers experience their lives in other cultures? What difference does gender make to cultural expectations for adolescence? We examine in particular the significance of Margaret Mead's research on Samoan youth, and the later refutation of her findings by Derek Freeman.

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Essential Reading

Margaret Mead. 1930. Adolescence in Primitive and Modern Society. In V.F. Calverton and Samuel D. Schmalhausen (eds) *The New Generation: The Intimate Problems of Modern Parents and Children*.

Further Reading

Richard Condon (1990) The Rise of Adolescence: Change and Life Stage Dilemmas in the Central Canadian Arctic. *Human Organization*: Fall 1990, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 266-279.

Philip E. Leis and Marida Hollos. 1995. Intergenerational Discontinuities in Nigeria. *Ethos* 23(1): 103-118.

Monday 8 August – Lecture 6: Cultural Transmission and Children’s Agency

This lecture explores the recent shift in understandings of the role that children play in cultural transmission. By contrast with an earlier idea of children’s ‘socialization’ into cultural worlds, many anthropologists and sociologists now speak of children’s ‘agency’ in shaping those worlds. We consider examples of work that takes children’s competencies and understandings seriously, including studies of seriously ill children, and of language use and learning. We also examine the issue of whether ‘children’s cultures’ exist separately to those of adults, and the limits to children’s agency.

Essential Reading

Amy L. Paugh. 2005. ‘Multilingual Play’: Children’s Code-Switching, Role Play and Agency in Dominica, West Indies. *Language in Society* 34(1): 63-86.

Further Reading

Bluebond-Langner, M. (1978), *The Private Worlds of Dying Children*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 4, ‘How Terminally Ill Children Come to Know Themselves and Their World’ and Chapter 5, ‘Knowing and Concealing’.

Peggy Froerer. 2011. Children’s moral reasoning about illness in Chhattisgarh, central India. *Childhood* 18(3): 367-383.

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Tuesday 9 August – Lecture 7: Education and Inequality

Universal schooling has become a key development goal for all countries. But what are the disadvantages as well as advantages for children of the growing connection between schooling and childhood? What is meant by the ‘hidden curriculum’ of school? How, in particular, are inequalities reproduced in school, and how might the introduction of modern schooling deskill certain children?

Essential Reading

Laura Rival. 1996. Formal Schooling and the Production of Modern Citizens in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In B.A. Levinson, D.E. Foley and D.C. Holland (eds) *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person*.

Lotte Meinert. 2003. ‘Sweet and bitter places: The politics of schoolchildren’s orientation in rural Uganda.’ In Karen Fog Olwig and Eva Gullov (eds) *Children’s Places: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*.

Further Reading

Paul Willis. 1977. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Chapter 2, ‘Elements of a Culture’.

Maurice Bloch. 1998. ‘The uses of schooling and literacy in a Zafimaniry village.’ In M. Bloch, *How We Think They Think*.

Wednesday 10 August – Lecture 8: Childhood in the City

This lecture explores the extent to which cities provide both opportunities and restrictions for children. It does so by considering work on children's access to city space in the Western world, and the phenomenon of 'street children' in the global South. How does economic restructuring influence children's lives? Why is children's presence in the streets so often interpreted as a threat?

Essential Reading

Matthew Thomson. 2013. Chapter 5, 'Out and About: Traffic, Play and Safety' In *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement*.

Rachel Burr. 2006. *Vietnam's Children in a Changing World*. Chapter 5, 'Children on the Streets'.

Further Reading

Lia Karsten. 2003. Children's Use of Public Space: The Gendered World of the Playground. *Childhood* 10(4): 457-473.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Daniel Hoffman. 1998. Brazilian Apartheid: Street Kids and the Struggle for Urban Space. In N. Scheper-Hughes & C.F. Sargent (eds) *Small wars: the cultural politics of childhood*.

Thursday 11 August – No lecture (Essay writing time)

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Friday 12 August – Lecture 9: Child Rights

The final part of the course explores the development, in the twentieth century, of the idea of 'child rights', particularly as it is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this lecture we explore issues surrounding whether or not there can be 'universal' children's rights. Why should 'child rights' be considered separately from broader 'human rights'? Does the UNCRC lead to the globalisation of a particular understanding of childhood? The lecture will also describe the different understandings of childhood seen in The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Essential Reading

Olga Nieuwenhuys. 2001. By the sweat of their brow? 'Street children', NGOS and Children's Rights in Addis Ababa. *Africa. Journal of the International African Institute*. 71(4): 539-57.

Further Reading

Kristen Cheney. 2012. 'Malik and his three mothers' In K. Hanson and O. Nieuwenhuys (eds) *Reconceptualizing Children's Rights in International Development*.

Kristina A. Bentley. 2005. Can there be any universal children's rights? *International Journal of Human Rights*. Vol 9(1): 107-123.

Sonja Grover. 2007. A Response to K.A. Bentley's 'Can There Be Any Universal Children's Rights?' *International Journal of Human Rights* Vol 11(4): 429-443.

Monday 15 August – Lecture 10: Child Labour and Children’s Economic Worth

This lecture considers the vexed issue of ‘child labour’, an issue that is often at the forefront of campaigns for children’s rights. How have historians described the process by which children in the West came to be considered ‘priceless’ rather than of economic worth? How do contemporary campaigns against child labour misrepresent children’s work, and do they do more harm than good?

Essential Reading

O. Nieuwenhuys. 2000. The household economy and the commercial exploitation of children’s work: The case of Kerala. In B. Schlemmer (ed) *The Exploited Child*.

Further Reading

S. Levine. 1999. Bittersweet harvest: Children, work and the global march against child labour in the post-Apartheid state. *Critique of Anthropology* 19(2): 115-20.

Viviana Zelizer. 1985. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. Chapter 2, ‘From Useful to Useless: Moral Conflict Over Child Labor.

Tuesday 16 August – Lecture 11: Violence, Innocence and Resilience

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This lecture considers the growing literature on children’s experiences of war, conflict and violent displacement, including work on child soldiers. What are the problems with over-emphasising children’s innocence and vulnerability in such contexts? How have researchers documented both trauma and resilience?

Essential Reading

Kristen Cheney. 2004. ‘Our Children Have Only Known War’: Children’s Experiences and the Uses of Childhood in Northern Uganda. *Children’s Geographies* 3: 23-45.

David Rosen. 2007. Child soldiers, international humanitarian law and the globalization of childhood. *American Anthropologist* 109(2): 296-306.

Further Reading

Susan Shepler. 2014. Chapter 5, ‘Distinctions in the Population of “Child Soldiers”.’ In *Childhood Deployed: Remaking Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone*.

Harry G. West. 2004. Girls with Guns: Narrating the Experience of war of FRELIMO’s ‘Female Detachment’. In J Boyden and J de Berry (eds) 2004. *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*.

Wednesday 17 August – Lecture 12: The Power of Children: Representations and Appeals

In the final lecture we return to the issue of how children and childhood are represented, and how we can understand the emotional power of such representations. We will consider representations of children and childhood in the context of peace campaigns, child sponsorship and children as AIDS victims. We will also discuss recent representations of children caught up in the contemporary 'migrant crisis'.

Essential Reading

Liisa Malkki. 2010. Children, Humanity and the Infantilization of Peace. In Ilana Feldman and Miriam Ticktin (eds) 2010. *In the Name of Humanity: The Government of Threat and Care*. Duke University Press. Pp58-85.

Further Reading

Erica Bornstein. 2001. Child Sponsorship, Evangelism and Belonging in the Work of World Vision Zimbabwe. *American Ethnologist* 28(3): 595-622.

Didier Fassin. 2013. Children as Victims: The Moral Economy of Childhood in the Times of AIDS. In Joao Biehl and Adriana Petryna (eds) *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health*. Princeton University Press. Pp109-129.

Thursday 18 August – No lecture (Exam preparation)

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Friday 19 August - EXAM

Credit Transfer: If you are hoping to earn credit by taking this course, please ensure that you confirm it is eligible for credit transfer well in advance of the start date. Please discuss this directly with your home institution or Study Abroad Advisor.

As a guide, our LSE Summer School courses are typically eligible for three credits within the US system and 7.5ECTS in Europe. Different institutions and countries can, and will, vary. You will receive a digital transcript and a printed certificate following your successful completion of the course in order to make arrangements for transfer of credit.

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