

Childhood in African America

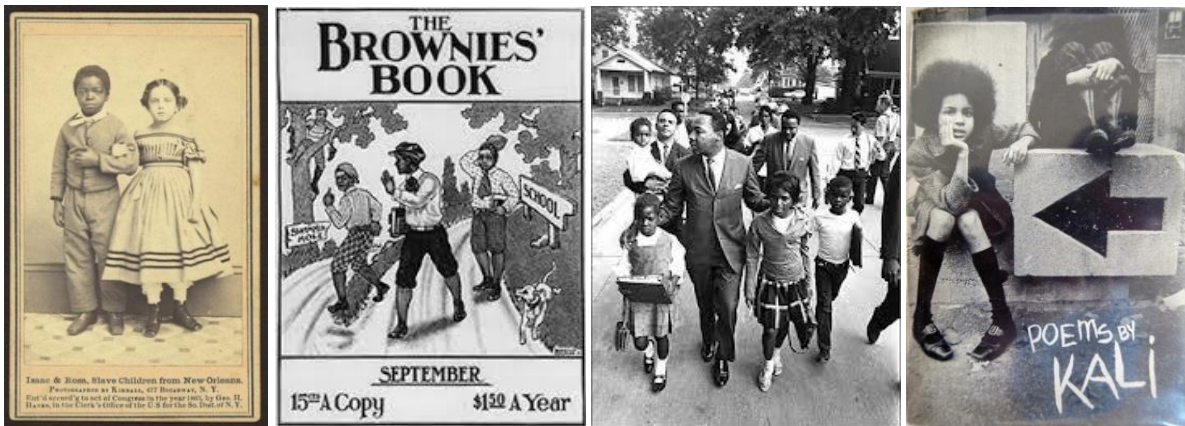
African and African American Studies 186x
Fall 2017, Mondays 1-3pm
Barker Center, Room 218
Harvard University

Prof. Robin Bernstein

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Black children's lives matter. That is the central premise of this course. Our goal is to understand *how* black children's lives have mattered over the past two centuries.

Toward this end, we pursue several lines of inquiry. First, what have the diverse lives of African American children been like since the nineteenth century? How have African American children experienced family, education, play, work, and activism? How have they been affected by social structures, particularly schools and the criminal justice system? How have they enacted agency and resistance? How have their experiences changed over time? Second, how have African American children been useful to large-scale racial politics? How, for example, have images of and ideas about African American children, as well as individual African American children, been useful to abolition, to New Negro politics, to the Civil Rights Movement, and to #blacklivesmatter? And third, how have African American children represented themselves, particularly in writing? What kinds of texts have African American children made, and how might we analyze these texts? And how have African American adults spoken *to* black children through writing and art?

Our study of African American children in life, in politics, and in texts proceeds chronologically. We aim, of course, to learn about African American children and childhood—but as we do so, we enable ourselves also to re-examine adults and adulthood. By looking at and through childhood, what might we learn about mothers, fathers, teachers, religious leaders, and other community members? How might African American history, literature, and politics look different if we re-view these subjects through the lens of children and childhood?

Requirements:

Discussion co-leadership (varying dates)	20%
Thoughtful, engaged, prepared, and respectful classroom participation	30%
Mid-semester assignment, due Tuesday, October 10, 3pm	10%
Email indicating selection of online interview, due Sunday, October 15, 3pm (graded full credit/no credit)	5%
Prospectus for final paper, due Friday, Nov. 3, 3pm (graded full credit/no credit)	5%
Final paper, due Monday, December 11, 3pm	30%

General information:

All books are on reserve at Lamont Library and for sale at the Harvard Coop.

Each undergraduate student will co-lead one class discussion; each grad student will co-lead two.

Each student will complete a substantial final paper that relates clearly to the topics, ideas, or materials in this course. Undergraduates' papers should run 10-15 pages; graduate students' papers should run 20-25 pages.

Late assignments will be docked one third of a letter grade for each day or partial day overdue. Please note that failure to complete any assignment can lower your final grade in excess of the stated percentage.

Professor Bernstein's office hours vary week to week. Please sign up online with your Harvard ID.

With a student's consent, meetings during office hours will be "walking meetings." The professor and student will talk while strolling around campus. *Any student may opt for a traditional, "sitting meeting" instead.* If you opt for a sitting meeting, you need not offer any explanation, and no questions will be asked. We will of course stay inside during inclement weather. For more information about the intellectual and health benefits of walking meetings, see Nilofer Merchant, "Sitting is the Smoking of Our Generation," *Harvard Business Review* 14 January 2013 <http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2013/01/sitting_is_the_smoking_of_our_generation.html>. On the intellectual benefits of walking (not necessarily during meetings), see Ferris Jabr's "Why Walking Helps Us Think," *The New Yorker*, 3 September 2014 <<http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/walking-helps-us-think>>.

Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations should present a letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation.

This course adheres to Harvard University policy on permitted collaboration, which reads as follows:

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books,

articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

Required Books (on reserve at Lamont Library and for sale at the Harvard Coop):

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Penguin, 2015)

National Museum of African American History and Culture, *Double Exposure: Picturing Children* (Smithsonian Institution, 2016)

Recommended book and films (on reserve):

Wilma King, *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

Let's Get the Rhythm: The Life and Times of Miss Mary Mack, dir. Irene Chagall, 2014

Four Little Girls, dir. Spike Lee, 1997

The Murder of Emmett Till, dir. Stanley Nelson, 2003

To Be Heard, dir. Amy Sultan et al, 2010



SCHEDULE:

August 30. Introductions

- Read in class: selections from *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*.

September 4. LABOR DAY. NO CLASS.

September 11. What was it like to be an enslaved child?

- Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855): chapters I and II. Access online through Hollis.
- "Childhood" in Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1984): 5-12. Access online through Hollis.
- Heather Andrea Williams, "Fine Black Boy for Sale: Separation and Loss among Enslaved Children," chap. in Williams, *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012): 22-45.

September 18. Freedom and Literacy

- Heather Andrea Williams, "If Anybody Wants an Education, It is Me: Students in Freedpeople's Schools," chap. in Williams, *Self Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005): 138-173.
- *The Freedman's Third Reader* (Boston: The American Tract Society, 1866). Online at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.FIG:005517334> Read "Note" on unpaginated page before table of contents), "Introductory" pp. v-x, and Lessons VIII, X, XVIII, XX, XXI, XXX, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXIX, LVI, LIX, LX, LXX, LXXIV, XCVIII, CXI, CXII, and CXIV. Be sure to pay close attention to the images.
- Selection of writing by students in the 1830s in the New York African Free School.
- RECOMMENDED for undergrads, **REQUIRED for grad students**: Anna Mae Duane, "'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African Free School and in *My Bondage and My Freedom*," *American Literature* vol. 82, no. 3 (2010): 461-488. Access online through Academic Search Premier (EBSCOhost).
- RECOMMENDED: Peruse "Examination Days: The New York African Free School Collection" <<https://www.nyhistory.org/web/africanfreeschool/>>

LESSON VIII.

teach	hum-ble	priv-i-lege	con-tin-ue
young	schol-ar	ig-no-rant	school-mas-ter
seven	neigh-bor	com-pa-ny	re-spon-si-ble



HOW FATHER HENSON LEARNED TO READ.

September 25. Reconstruction and Segregation

- Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Excerpts.
- Albon L. Halsey, "Learning How to Be Black," *American Mercury* 16 (April 1929): 421-425. Online at <<https://www.unz.org/Pub/AmMercury-1929apr-00421>>.
- Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dial Press, 1968). Excerpts.

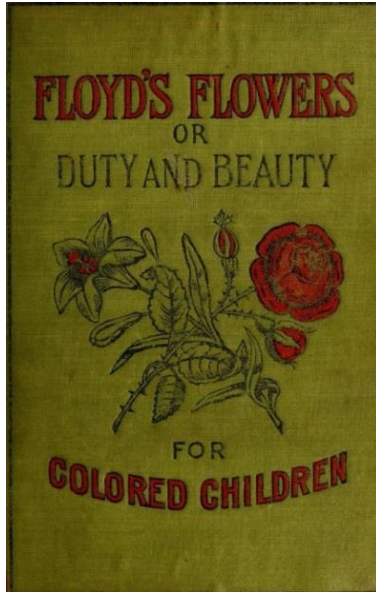
October 2. Literature Addressed to Black Children: *The Brownies' Book*

- *The Brownies' Book*: read ALL of January 1920 and December 1920 issues, online at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbc3&fileName=rbc0001_2004ser01351page.db>. Note that the Library of Congress offers the full run of *The Brownies' Book* as a single file. January 1920 runs p. 1-35 and December 1920 runs p. 375-410 by the LOC file's pagination (the pagination of the magazine itself is different). Plain text, plus some images, is also available at <<http://childlit.unl.edu/topics/edi.brownies.html>>.
- W. E. B. Du Bois, excerpt from "The Immortal Child," in Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920).
- Michelle H. Phillips, "The Children of Double Consciousness: From *The Souls of Black Folk* to the *Brownies' Book*," *PMLA* 128.3 (May 2013): 590-607. Access online through Hollis.
- RECOMMENDED: Katharine Capshaw Smith, "*The Brownies' Book* and the Roots of African American Children's Literature," online at <<http://childlit.unl.edu/topics/edi.harlem.html>>.

October 9. COLUMBUS DAY. NO CLASS.

TUESDAY, October 10, 3pm: MID-SEMESTER ASSIGNMENT DUE! Please submit your paper to Robin Bernstein's mailbox in the Department of African and African American Studies, Barker Center.

SUNDAY, October 15, 3pm: EMAIL DUE TO PROFESSOR rbernst@fas.harvard.edu: Each student must select ONE interview from the website, "Youth in the Civil Rights Movement," which highlights recent interviews with adults who recall their activism, as children, in the Civil Rights Movement <<https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/youth-in-the-civil-rights-movement/>>. Students will email their selections to the professor on October 15, and the professor will compile the selections and send the complete list to the students by the next day. **In preparation for our class discussion on October 23, you will read or view the interview you select. You will then come to class ready to share with your colleagues what you learned about from that interview about African American children or childhood.** Please note that most of the interviews run between one and two hours.



October 16. Respectability and Citizenship

- Katharine Capshaw Smith, "Childhood, the Body, and Race Performance: Early 20th-Century Etiquette Books for Black Children," *African American Review* 40.4 (2006): 795-811. Access online through JSTOR.
- Silas X Floyd, *Floyd's Flowers or Duty and Beauty for Colored Children* (New York: Hertel, Jenkins & Co., 1905): selections TBD. Online at <http://archive.org/stream/floydsflowersord00floy#page/n5/mode/2up> or <http://ia700503.us.archive.org/7/items/floydsflowersord00floy/floydsflowersord00floy.pdf>
- Marcia Chatelain, "'Did I Do Right?' The Black Girl Citizen," chap. in Chatelain, *South Side Girls: Growing Up in the Great Migration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015): 130-166

October 23. Black Children Changing the World

- GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Francoise Hamlin, Brown University <https://vivo.brown.edu/display/fhamlin>
- Paul Finkelman, "Brown v. Board of Education," *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Paul Finkelman. Access online through Hollis database, "Oxford African American Studies Center."
- Rebecca de Schweinitz, "No Place for Children: Childhood, *Brown*, and Stories about the Southern Struggle for Racial Equality," chap. in *If We Could Change the World: Young People and America's Long Struggle for Racial Equality* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009): 91-150.
- Selections: "Youth in the Civil Rights Movement" highlights recent interviews with adults who recall their activism, as children, in the Civil Rights Movement <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/youth-in-the-civil-rights-movement/> >.
- *Mighty Times: The Children's March*, Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, dir. Robert Houston, 2004 <https://vimeo.com/83236126> 40 mins. Be aware that some of the scenes in this film are recreations using vintage film.
- Robin Bernstein, "African American Children and Childhood" (Oxford Bibliographies, 2015). Read this annotated bibliography to guide you as you begin envisioning your final paper.



- RECOMMENDED: *Four Little Girls*, dir. Spike Lee, 1997
- RECOMMENDED: *The Murder of Emmett Till*, dir. Stanley Nelson, 2003

October 30. Black Children as Text-Makers, 1930s-the Present

- LaKisha Michelle Simmons, “Fantasy, Romance, and Black Girls’ Writing Culture,” excerpt from Simmons, *Crescent City Girls: The Lives of Young Black Women in Segregated New Orleans* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 180-189.
- Kali Grosvenor, *Poems by Kali* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970).
- Katharine Capshaw, “The Black Arts Movement: Childhood as Liberatory Process,” chapter in Capshaw, *Civil Rights Childhood: Picturing Liberation in African American Photobooks* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): 155-211.
- RECOMMENDED: Christina Moody, *A Tiny Spark* (Washington, DC: Murray Brothers Press, 1910). <<http://www.archive.org/stream/tinyspark00mood#page/n3/mode/2up>>.
- RECOMMENDED: Black Girls Rock! <http://www.blackgirlsrockinc.com/>
- RECOMMENDED: *To Be Heard*, dir. Amy Sultan et al, 2010

FRIDAY, November 3, 3pm: PROSPECTUS FOR FINAL PAPER DUE to Prof. Bernstein’s mailbox, Department of African and African American Studies, Barker Center

November 6. Looking at Black Children

- *Double Exposure: Picturing Children* (read the entire book and look closely at all the photographs)



November 13. School to Prison

- Ann Arnett Ferguson, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001). Excerpts.
- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, with Priscilla Ocen and Jyoti Nanda, “Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected.” African American Policy Forum and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, 2015. http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/sites/default/files/uploads/BlackGirlsMatter_Report.pdf
- Phillip Atiba Goff et al, “The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106.4 (2014): 526-545. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-a0035663.pdf>

- RECOMMENDED: Robin Bernstein, “Let Black Kids Just Be Kids,” *New York Times* 26 July 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/26/opinion/black-kids-discrimination.html?_r=0>.

November 20: Boys, Men, Love, Danger

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Penguin, 2015)
- Javon Johnson, “cuz he’s black,” 2013 National Poetry Slam semifinals. Online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9Wf8y_5Yn4>

November 27. Two Hundred Years of Play

- Wilma King, “‘When Day is Done’: Play and Leisure,” chap. in King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995): 43-65.
- “Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-O,” 18-minute film by white ethnographers Bess Lomax Hawes and Bob Eberlein of African American girls playing in 1967 and 1968. Online at <<http://www.folkstreams.net/film,73>>
- Kyra Danielle Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* (New York: NYU Press, 2006). Excerpts.
- RECOMMENDED: *Let’s Get the Rhythm: The Life and Times of Miss Mary Mack*, dir. Irene Chagall, 2014.
- RECOMMENDED: Camille A. Brown, *Black Girl: Linguistic Play* <http://www.camilleabrown.org/black-girl-linguistic-play/> . See also <http://www.npr.org/2015/09/22/442536371/black-girlhood-takes-center-stage-in-a-work-thats-serious-about-play>

Monday, December 11, 3pm: Final papers due to Prof. Bernstein’s mailbox in the Department of African and African American Studies, Barker Center.



Enjoy your break!