

Tomboys, Angels, and Dolls: Girls in American Culture

Harvard University
Studies in Women, Gender, and Sexuality (WGS) 1408
Spring 2006
Wednesdays 1-3 pm

Course website: <<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~rbernst/WGS1408.htm>>



Norman Rockwell, "The Problem We All Live With," 1964.
This painting was inspired by six-year-old Ruby Bridges,
who integrated a New Orleans elementary school in 1960.

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Why is it important that the central figure in Norman Rockwell's painting, "The Problem We All Live With," is a girl—and not a boy, woman, teenager, or man? What makes this girl useful to the story that Rockwell wants to tell about not only desegregation, but about American identity and history? This course foregrounds such questions as we examine the cultural histories of girlhood in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. We trace constructions of girlhood in popular novels, performances, advice manuals, visual art, and material culture, and we locate the discursive history of girlhood in relation to other configurations of age and gender, including boyhood and womanhood. As we do so, we consider the ways in which these constructions both reflect and influence broader historical changes. We also think about the relationships between girlhood and "real" girls. Most of all, we analyze the cultural work that girls and girlhood have performed toward the formation of ideas about race, nation, gender, sexuality, consumption, and American identity.

Required Texts (all are available at The Harvard Coop; most are on reserve at Lamont Library and in the WGS Resource Room):

Bridges, Ruby. *Through My Eyes*
Coolidge, Susan. *What Katy Did*
Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy*
Fitzhugh, Louise. *The Long Secret*
Hoxie, W.J. *How Girls Can Help Their Country*
Jenkins, Henry, ed. *The Children's Culture Reader*
Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*
Nabokov, Vladimir. Annotations by Alfred Appel Jr. *The Annotated Lolita*
Porter, Eleanor H. Foreword by Marion Dane Bauer. *Pollyanna*
Porter, Eleanor H. *Pollyanna Grows Up*
Tripp, Valerie. *Meet Felicity*

The required Sourcebook ("SB") is on reserve at Lamont Library and in the WGS Resource Room.

Please note: This course does not intend to provide a comprehensive history of American childhood or children. If you would like to encounter such a history, I recommend Steven Mintz's *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* or Harvey J. Graff's *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America*. Both these books are available at the Harvard Coop or on reserve at Lamont Library. Also, you will receive in class a lengthy bibliography of additional recommended texts on childhood and gender. These resources may assist you as you conceive, research, and write your final paper.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Attendance and informed, productive participation	35% of final grade
Mid-semester Paper (five pages, due Monday, March 6)	15% of final grade
Prospectus (due Monday, April 10)	10% of final grade
Draft of Final Paper (due Monday, May 1)	10% of final grade
Final Paper (15-25 pages, due Monday, May 20)	30% of final grade

The papers and prospectus are due in the WGS office by 3 pm of the due date.

Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day overdue.

The prospectus and draft are graded "full credit/no credit."

Failure to complete any assignment can lower your grade in excess of the stated percentage.

The assignment for the mid-semester paper will be distributed on February 22. The assignments for the final paper, plus instructions for the prospectus and draft, will be distributed on March 8.

This course focuses on pre-adolescent US girls and girlhood. Students' final research projects may duplicate this focus, or may place the course's key ideas into conversation with related topics including non-US girls, teenage girls and youth culture, boys and boyhood, "tweens," or "grrls."

Graduate students who wish to take this course will receive different writing assignments and will be required to attend four lunchtime or dinnertime meetings in which we will read and discuss works by leading thinkers in the field of Childhood Studies. Further information about all writing assignments will be distributed on February 22.

Classroom Policies:

Students will take collective responsibility for the success of every discussion. This responsibility involves two components. First, you are required to arrive in class having read and *thought about* all the reading. In other words, merely gulping down the reading is inadequate. You should come to class having chewed and digested the material thoroughly. You are expected to prepare your own thoughts, opinions, and questions before every class. Second, you must express your ideas in a respectful manner that advances our conversation. Practices that disrespect your colleagues (for example, interrupting, hogging the floor, launching personal attacks, or answering cell phones) will hinder conversation; such practices, therefore, are unacceptable.

Unit 1: Discourses of American Childhood

This unit introduces fundamental concepts in the study of girlhood in the United States. We trace the histories and cultures of childhood over the past two centuries, and we ask and answer the following questions: What is “discourse”? What is “cultural work”? Why are these concepts useful to the study of girlhood? How does power figure in the construction of children’s “innocence”? To what political projects has the “girl,” as a category of analysis, been useful? What cultural needs have girls and girlhood fulfilled, especially with regard to the formation of race and nation?



“Cherry Ripe” by Sir John Everett Millais, 1879. A mass-marketed lithograph of this British painting became a very popular home decoration in the United States.

February 1. Sugar and Spice?

Read in class: excerpts from Martha Finley, *Elsie Dinsmore* (1867)

Read in class: excerpts from Anne DuCille, "Shirley Temple of My Familiar," *Transitions* 73 (1997) 10-32

Look at in class: Sir John Everett Millais, "Cherry Ripe" and Norman Rockwell, "The Problem We All Live With"

View in class: Shirley Temple "Baby Burlesks"

February 8. Histories and Cultures of Childhood to 1900

Karin Calvert, "Children in American Family Portraiture, 1670 to 1810." *William and Mary Quarterly*, III, 39.1 (Jan 1982), 87-113 (SB or online through JSTOR)

Sylvia D. Hoffert, "'A Very Peculiar Sorrow': Attitudes Toward Infant Death in the Urban Northeast, 1800-1860." *American Quarterly*, 39.4 (Winter 1987): 601-616 (SB or online through JSTOR)

Anne Scott MacLeod, "The *Caddie Woodlawn* Syndrome: American Girlhood and the Nineteenth Century," in Mary Lynn Stevens Heininger et al, *A Century of Childhood 1820-1920* (Rochester, NY: The Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, 1984), pp. 97-119 (SB)

Wilma King, "Within the Professional Household: Slave Children in the Antebellum South" and "No Bondage for Me: Free Boys and Girls Within a Slave Society," in *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 39-69 (SB)

Karin Calvert, "Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood," pp. 67-80 in Henry Jenkins, ed., *The Children's Culture Reader* (hereafter "Jenkins"):

Viviana A. Zelizer, "From Useful to Useless: Moral Conflict over Child Labor," pp. 81-94 in Jenkins

Stephen Kline, "The Making of Children's Culture," pp. 95-109 in Jenkins

Miriam Formanek-Brunell, "The Politics of Dollhood in Nineteenth-Century America," pp. 262-381 in Jenkins

Recommended: Harvey J. Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America*, chapters 1-4 and/or Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, chapters 1-9

February 15. Histories and Cultures of Childhood, 1900 to the Present

David Nasaw, *Children of the City At Work and At Play* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 101-137 (SB)

Wilma King, "Black and Red Education at Hampton Institute: A Case Study of the Shawnee Indians, 1900-1925" in *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 93-105 (SB)

Kenneth Kidd, "Boyology in the Twentieth Century," *Children's Literature* 28 (2000), 44-72 (SB)

Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 1-55 (SB)

Barrie Thorne, "Boys and Girls Together... But Mostly Apart," pp. 318-336 in Jenkins

Allison James, "Confections, Concoctions, and Conceptions," pp. 394-405 in Jenkins

Lynne Vallone, "Grrrls and Dolls: Feminism and Female Youth Culture," in Beverly Lyon Clark and Margaret R. Higonnet, eds., *Girls, Boys, Books, Toys: Gender in Children's Literature and Culture* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 196-210 (SB)

Juliet Schor, *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*. (New York: Scribner, 2004), pp. 9-38 (SB)

Recommended: Harvey J. Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America*, chapters 5 and 6 and/or Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, chapters 10-17

February 22. Constructing Children's Innocence

Philippe Ariès, "From Immodesty to Innocence" (41-57 in Jenkins)

Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), pp. 15-49 (SB)

James Kincaid, "Producing Erotic Children" (241-253 in Jenkins)

James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 51-109 (SB).

Valerie Walkerdine, "Popular Culture and the Eroticization of Little Girls," pp. 254-265 in Jenkins

Assignment for Paper #1 distributed.

March 1. Childhood and Cultural Work

Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Temperance in the Bed of a Child: Incest and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century America" *American Quarterly* 47.1 (March 1995), pp. 1-33 (SB or online through JSTOR)

Caroline F. Levander, "'Let Her White Progeny Offset Her Dark One': The Child and the Racial Politics of Nation Making." *American Literature*, 76.2 (June 2004): 221-246 (SB or online through Project Muse)

Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires like Children: Race, Nation, and Religious Education," *American Literary History* 8.3 (Autumn 1996), pp. 399-425 (online through JSTOR)

Gail S. Bederman, "'Teaching Our Sons to Do What We Have Been Teaching the Savages to Avoid': G. Stanley Hall, Racial Recapitulation, and the Neurasthenic Paradox." Chap. in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995 (SB)

William Leach, "Child-World in the Promised Land," in James Gilbert et al, *The Mythmaking Frame of Mind: Social Imagination and American Culture* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 209-238 (SB)

Recommended:

Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Elián González and 'The Purpose of America': Nation, Family, and the Child-Citizen," *American Quarterly* 55.2 (2003): 149-178 (online through Project Muse)

Lori Merish, "Cuteness and Commodity Aesthetics: Tom Thumb and Shirley Temple," in Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed., *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 185-203 (SB)

Tavia Nyong'o, "Racial Kitsch and Black Performance," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 15.2 (2002): 371-391 (online through Project Muse)

Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Playing at Class," *ELH* 67.3 (2000), pp. 819-842 (online through Project Muse)

Ann Laura Stoler, "A Sentimental Education: Children on the Imperial Divide," chap. in *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 112-139 (SB)

Unit II: Reading American Girlhoods

In this unit, we apply the knowledge and analytic methods we encountered in the previous unit. We read rich primary texts that provide opportunities for us to think about discourses of American girlhood.

March 6. Mid-Semester Paper due 3 pm to the WGS office

March 8. The Angel in the Home

Susan Coolidge, *What Katy Did*

All remaining assignments distributed.



March 15. Topsy and Eva in and beyond *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

View before class: *Dimples*

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* chapters 14, 15, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27 (SB or online at <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/uthp.html>>

George L. Aiken, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) Act II, scenes 1, 2, 4; Act II, scenes 2, 4; Act IV, scenes 2, 3; Act V, scene 2; Act VI, scene 6. SB or online at <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/onstage/scripts/aikenhp.html>>

Listen online:

“Oh, I’se So Wicked” (1852)

<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/songs/sowickedf.html>>

“Eva to her Papa” (1852)

<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/songs/evatopapaf.html>>

“I Never Had a Mammy” (1923)

<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/songs/duncanmammyf.html>>

“The Entrance of Topsy” (1910)

<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/onstage/sound/topsentf.html>>

Anonymous, “Topsy, Or, The Slave Girl’s Appeal,” *The Liberator* 3 December 1852. SB or online at <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/songs/sopo02bt.html>>

Anonymous, *Little Eva, The Flower of the South*. Aunt Mary's Picture Book (New York: Phil J. Cozans, 1853) SB or online at
<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/childrn/cbcbambt.html>>
View Topsy-Eva doll at <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/tomituds/topsyevadoll.html>>
Anonymous, *The Story of Topsy from Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Chicago, IL: Reilly and Britton, 1908) (SB or online at
<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/childrn/cbcbhbat.html>>
Peruse "The Duncan Sisters in Topsy and Eva"
<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/onstage/duncanhp.html>>
Jim O'Loughlin, "Grow'd Again: Articulation and the History of Topsy." SB or online at
<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/interpret/exhibits/oloughlin/oloughlin.html>>
(graduate students should substitute Jim O'Loughlin, "Articulating *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *New Literary History* 31.3 [2000]: 573-597 [online through Project Muse])

March 22. Girls' Racial and National Responsibilities

View before class: *The Little Colonel*

W.J. Hoxie, *How Girls Can Help Their Country*

Silas X. Floyd, *Floyd's Flowers, or, Duty and Beauty for Colored Children* (Atlanta, Chicago, and Boston: Hertel, Jenkins & Co., 1905; reprint, New York: AMS Press), excerpts in SB

The Brownies' Book, excerpts in SB

Zitkala-Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" and "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (SB or online at <<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/zitkala-sa/stories/stories.html>>)



March 29. NO CLASS! Enjoy your Spring Break!

April 5. Glad Girls and the Mind Cure

View before class: *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*

Eleanor H. Porter, Foreword by Marion Dane Bauer. *Pollyanna*

Eleanor H. Porter, *Pollyanna Grows Up*

Monday, April 10: Prospectus due by 3pm to WGS office.

April 12. Sexualized Girls

Nabokov, Vladimir. Annotations by Alfred Appel Jr. *The Annotated Lolita*

Recommended: Henry A. Giroux, "Stealing Innocence: The Politics of Child Beauty Pageants," pp. 265-282 in Jenkins

April 19. Girls as (Secret) Agents

Louise Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy*

Louise Fitzhugh, *The Long Secret*

Ruby Bridges, *Through My Eyes*

April 26. Girls and Beauty

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Anne DuCille, "Shirley Temple of My Familiar," *Transitions* 73 (1997), pp. 10-32 (SB and online through JSTOR)

Peruse <www.shirleytemple.com> and <www.shirleytempldolls.com>

Monday, May 1: Draft of Final Paper due to WGS office, 3 pm.

May 3. The American Girl

Valerie Tripp, *Meet Felicity*

Selected articles on a recent controversy regarding the partnership of the American Girl company with Girls Inc. (SB)

Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 37-69 (SB)

Peruse the website of American Girl <www.americangirl.com> in depth.

Peruse <www.elsiedinsmore.com>

Go to a bookstore that has a children's section and browse through the display of American Girl books and other commodities. How does the display construct knowledge about what an "American Girl" is, was, and should be?

Monday, May 20: Final Paper due to WGS office, 3 pm.

Enjoy your summer!