

50:163:240 Childhood in Global Cinema
Spring 2023

Course Website: <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/229592>

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Course Description:

This class will explore representations of children in films from around the world. The course will introduce and enable the practice of analytical skills necessary to discuss cinematic form and style. Each week, we will watch and discuss a feature-length film. Through screenings, readings, discussion, and writing, students will consider how films produced around the world represent multiple constructions of childhood (with respect to children's experiences, challenges, and opportunities in a range of global contexts). The course will focus on the cultural, political, and historical significance of children as cinematic subjects with a secondary interest in children as audiences and producers. Examples will be drawn from across genres and styles.

Required Readings

- There are no required books to purchase for this class
- Readings will be included as PDFs on Canvas or linked through the Rutgers Library ebook central: <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/indexes/ebrary>

Additional Resources Online

- The Columbia Film Language Glossary: <https://filmglossary.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/>
- Yale Film Analysis Guide: <https://filmanalysis.yale.edu/>
- Andrews, Ian Wojcik. "Children in Film," Oxford Bibliographies, May 2015. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0087.xml>
- Children, Teens, and Families in the Movies and TV: A Bibliography of Materials in the UC Berkeley Library. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/teenpixbib.html>

Required Films

- Each week, you will watch a feature-length (1.5-2.5 hour) film.
- Access varies depending on films, and links will be provided. Most films are available for streaming through the library. A few will require you to rent from a streaming platform (Netflix, Google Play, itunes, Amazon) for a nominal rental fee (\$3-5 each). Estimated cost for film rentals for the full semester is approx \$20-25.

Assignments

This course is designed to require a moderate amount of work each week (vs. a large project at the end). There is no final exam. Your final course grade will be assessed through the following assignments.

Weekly reading + movie quizzes (20%)

Active engagement and participation are important in this class, and your success on written assignments depends on completing the readings and watching the films assigned each week. Short (approx. ten questions) weekly quizzes based on the readings and films will be due by end-of-day each Wednesday. Quizzes are open book/open note, no time limit.

Weekly discussion post (Due each Thurs, respond to a classmate by Fri) (20%)

Each Module/Film includes a required discussion forum. You will be divided into discussion groups of 8-10 people. These discussions are similar to small group discussions in class. They are an opportunity to discuss the film, the week's themes, and the readings. If your discussion post follows all the instructions clearly, includes specific details, and is relatively free from spelling/grammar errors that would make it difficult for readers to understand, you will receive full credit. If your post does not meet those full-credit expectations, you will get feedback on how to improve future posts.

Film Response Papers (due each Sunday) (25%)

You will write a 350 to 450 word paper responding to each week's Module/film. A complete grading rubric and sample papers are available under "assignments." These response papers are an opportunity to build on the insights gained in the discussion and demonstrate your knowledge of and response to the content of each week's Module.

Film Project (25%)

Your Film Project assignment will ask you to imagine adding a film to the course syllabus. You will select a film and write a short proposal, collect and assemble materials into a "dossier" (information about the film) and write a review of the film.

- Proposal (Due at the end of Module 8) (5)
- Dossier (Due at the end of Module 11) (10)
- Review (Due at the end of Module 13) (10)

Reflection Assignment (Due by end-of-day Thursday, May 4) (10%)

As a culminating assignment, you will prepare a 4 to 6-page assignment in which you reflect on what you have learned from watching the films over the course of this semester. Your reflection should identify common topics and themes that stood out to you, and how the films we have viewed represented those themes. What assumptions about childhood did the films reinforce for you? What assumptions were challenged? How do you think about childhood differently now than you did at the beginning of the semester? A short proposal form will be due before your final reflection that will help you plan and organize your thoughts before you begin writing.

Module Schedule

Deadlines are 11:55 pm unless otherwise noted. Each module is available one week ahead of its listed start date in case you want to work ahead.

Module 1	1/17 (Tuesday) – 1/22
Module 2	1/23 – 1/29
Module 3	1/30 – 2/5
Module 4	2/6 – 2/12
Module 5	2/13 – 2/19
Module 6	2/20 – 2/26
Module 7	2/27 – 3/5
Module 8	3/6 – 3/12
HAPPY SPRING BREAK!	
Module 9	3/20 – 3/26
Module 10	3/27 – 4/2
Module 11	4/3 – 4/9
Module 12	4/10 – 4/16
Module 13	4/17 – 4/23
Module 14	4/24 – 5/1 (Monday)

Weekly Schedule

(Subject to change: Any changes will be posted on Canvas)

Module 1: Welcome to the Course!

- Watch: *The Red Balloon* (Dir. Albert Lamorisse, 1956)
- Read: Debbie Olson “Introduction: Childhood,” ix-xvii. In *The Child in World Cinema*, Ed. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018) **Can skip pp. xiii to middle of pg. xv to para. beginning “We acknowledge that...”
- *Make sure to review the full canvas Module and complete the Quiz, Discussion, and Response Paper

Module 2: Girlhood, Mobility, and Cinematic Realism

- Watch: *Wadjda* (Dir. Haifaa al-Mansour, 2013)
- Read: Marguerite La Caze “Realism as Resistance: The Case of *Wadjda* (2013),” *Angelaki*, 25:5, 156-170.

Module 3: Family, Belonging, and the “Children’s Film

- Watch: *My Life as a Zucchini* (Dir. Claude Barras, 2017)
- Read: Noel Brown “Change and Continuity in Contemporary Children's Cinema,” 225-243 in *The Palgrave Handbook of Children’s Film and Television*, Ed. Casie Hermansson and Janet Zepernick. (London: Palgrave, 2019).

Module 4: Fairy Tales, Imagination, and Agency

- Watch: *Pan’s Labyrinth* (Dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2006)
- Read: Evy Varsamopoulou “Entering the Labyrinth of Ethics in Guillermo Del Toro’s *El Laberinto Del Fauno*.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of Children’s Film and Television*, edited by Casie Hermansson and Janet Zepernick, 245–60. London: Palgrave, 2019.

Module 5: Memory and Urbanization

- Watch: *Suburban Birds* (Dir. Sheng Qiu, 2018)
- Read: Eagan, Daniel. “‘This Will Be the Final Version If the Authorities Have No Objections’: Qiu Sheng on Suburban Birds, New Chinese Censorship Laws and Filming with Children.” *Filmmaker Magazine* (blog), April 4, 2019. <https://filmmakermagazine.com/107322-this-will-be-the-final-version-if-the-authorities-have-no-objections-qiu-sheng-on-suburban-birds-new-chinese-censorship-laws-and-filming-with-children/>; Lizotte, Chloe. “Short Take: Suburban Birds.” *Film Comment*, April 2019. <https://www.filmcomment.com/article/short-take-suburban-birds/>.

Module 6: Exploitation and Social Stigma

- Watch: *I am Not a Witch* (Dir. Rungano Nyoni, 2017)
- Read: Obenson, Tambay. “‘I Am Not a Witch’: How a Satire About Misogyny Is Transforming Zambia’s Film Industry.” *IndieWire* (blog), September 17, 2018. <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/i-am-not-a-witch-rungano-nyoni-interview-zambia-1201999906/>; Silverstein, Melissa. “Cannes Interview: ‘I Am Not a Witch’ Writer-Director Rungano Nyoni Talks Misogyny, Witches, And....” *Women and Hollywood*, May 30, 2017. <https://womenandhollywood.com/cannes-interview-i-am-not-a-witch-writer-director-rungano-nyoni-talks-misogyny-witches-and-2500317f6da6/>.

Module 7: Citizens and Students (I)

- Watch: *The Class* (Dir. Laurent Cantet, 2008)
- Read: Victoria Flanagan, “Citizenship in the Classroom: The Politicization of Child Subjects in Nicolas Philibert’s *To Be and To Have* and Laurent Cantet’s *The Class*,” in *Childhood and Nation in Contemporary World Cinema* pp. 131-146.

Module 8: Citizens and Students (II)

- Watch: *To Be and To Have* (Dr. Nicolas Philibert, 2003)
- Read: (Review last week's reading): Victoria Flanagan, "Citizenship in the Classroom: The Politicization of Child Subjects in Nicolas Philibert's *To Be and To Have* and Laurent Cantet's *The Class*," in *Childhood and Nation in Contemporary World Cinema* pp. 131-146.
- Reminder: Film Project Proposal due by end-of-day Sunday

* SPRING BREAK! *

Module 9 Rural and Urban / Life Cycles

- Watch: *Boy and the World* (Dir. Alê Abreu, 2013)
- Read: Lucia Rabello de Castro, Paula Ugione, and Adelaide Rezende de Souza "From the Countryside to the City: A Boy's Journey and the World to Know" in *The Child in World Cinema* 43-60.

Module 10: Poverty and Children's Rights

- Watch: *Capernaum* (Dir. Nadine Labaki, 2018)
- Read: *To Be Announced*

Module 11: Globalization and Exclusion

- Watch: *Kaakka Muttai* (Dir. M. Manikandan, 2015)
- Read: Swarnavel Eswaran "Kaakka Muttai/Crow's Egg (dir. M. Manikandan, 2015): Tamil Children in World Cinema," In Debbie Olson ed. *The Child in World Cinema*. Lanham, Maryland, and London: Lexington Books, 2018, pp. 259-274.
- Reminder: Film Project Dossier due by end-of-day Sunday

Module 12: Orphan Archetypes

- Watch: *Summer 1993* (Dir. Carla Simón, 2018)
- Read: Stuart Davis, "The Time of the (Orphan) Child: Viewing Carla Simón's *Estiu 1993/Summer 1993* (2017) with Carlos Saura's *Cría Cuervos/Raise Ravens* (1976)." *Studies in Spanish & Latin-American Cinemas* 17, no. 1 (March 1, 2020): 117-36.

Module 13: Storytelling and Creative Expression

- Watch: *Liyana* (Dir. Amanda and Aaron Kopp, 2018)
- Read: Rachel D. Cohen, "The Story of *Liyana*: How 10 Orphans From eSwatini Helped Write A Prize-Winning Movie," *NPR Goats and Soda* (PDF linked in Module).
- Reminder: Film Review for Film Project due by end-of-day Sunday

Module 14: Concluding Thoughts; Enduring Questions

* Reflection Paper Due by end-of-day May 4 *

Course Philosophy and Approach

The topics children and cinema are enormous, and no single course could offer a complete survey of their intersections. By necessity, including *some* films results in the *exclusion* of others. In keeping with the multidisciplinary scope of our program, this course approaches the intersection of children and cinema through a series of themes, rather than as a historical or regional survey. Each week's topic is meant to introduce a set of questions and preoccupations about children and cinema along with one or more cinematic examples to provide a starting point for discussion, application, and further research/exploration. I would be happy to provide additional suggestions for more films to watch, and would be happy to hear your suggestions, as well! (In fact, your Film Project assignment invites you to add to a growing list of movies!)

Course Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Course Learning Objectives:

- [1] Survey a range of representations of children in contemporary international cinema, including films from diverse regional and national contexts.
- [2] Introduce the fundamentals of formal analysis and cinematic language.
- [3] Critically reflect on cinema as an artform that can expand western conventions of children and childhood.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- [1] Produce written accounts of various recurring themes and tropes concerning the representation and deployment of children as characters and performers in contemporary international cinema (for example, the child as emblem of the nation, the child as close to nature).
- [2] Conduct written analyses of films that consider formal elements in concert with critical or theoretical themes related to children and childhood.
- [3] Demonstrate how global cinema offers opportunities to complicate western constructions of children and childhood by sharing multiple perspectives (such as challenges to the construction of "childhood innocence").

POLICIES:

Email

I will make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours. Emails sent after 5 pm or over weekends may not be answered immediately. I will use email and Canvas to communicate information related to our class, so please ensure that Canvas forwards notifications to your preferred address.

Late assignments

All due dates and times are final; late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangements. In extenuating circumstances, or if there has been a documented emergency, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange timely completion of your work.

Exceptions! You have two special passes to use once each during the semester. **In order to use them, you must email me during the Module when you want to use them (any requests *after* the module will not be granted).** Make sure you get a confirmation for your request.

Special Pass 1: One-module extension. Email me to request a one-week extension on your module Quiz, Discussion, and Response Paper. Your late work is due *no later than* the end of the following module (for example, if you want to submit work late for Module 3, it is all due by end of Module 4).

Special Pass 2: Skip a Module! Email me to request to skip a Module's regular content (Quiz, Discussion, and Response Paper). This is a good option if there's a film that you really would prefer not to watch, if your workload is especially busy one week, or if you just need a break.

Note: Special Passes do not apply to extra assignments (such as the parts of your Film Project). Special Passes only allow you to get an extension on or skip *regular* Module assignments (Quiz, Discussion, Response Paper).

Statement on Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity requires that all academic work be wholly the product of an identified individual or individuals. Plagiarism may earn you a failing grade in this course and can be reported to the Dean of Students' Office for additional disciplinary action. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): Copying someone's words *verbatim*, paraphrasing without attribution, borrowing the structure, concepts, or ideas of another's work without attribution, and turning in the same work for multiple classes without permission. If in doubt, ask for guidance.

Students are strongly encouraged to review the complete Policy on Academic Integrity: [https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/sites/deanofstudents/files/Academic Integrity Policy.pdf](https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/sites/deanofstudents/files/Academic%20Integrity%20Policy.pdf)

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protections for persons with disabilities. Additional information is available here: <https://success.camden.rutgers.edu/disability-services>