

***SOCIOLOGY 601.83***  
***Sociology of Childhood***  
***Winter 2010***

**Reading course for: Amanda Heron**  
**Instructor: Dr. Gillian Ranson**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This reading course is intended in part to offer a general introduction to the sociology of childhood, and to the theoretical and methodological issues that emerge from research with and about children. Readings will cover the emergence of “childhood” as an identifiable development stage, and hence the acknowledgement of childhood as a social construction. We will consider the implications of this approach to childhood, and to children as social actors. Readings will also focus on relationships between children and their parents, in terms of such issues as class reproduction, parents’ perceptions of children’s needs, and the organization of children’s daily lives.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

There are two main components to this reading course. The first is a thoughtful attention to the assigned readings, followed by discussion during our meetings, scheduled at two-week intervals during the term. As a basis for our discussions, I will ask you to send me, the day before each meeting, a two-page summary of the assigned material, with attention to any specific questions we may have agreed on ahead of time. This component – doing the readings, writing about them, and discussing them with me – will constitute 30% of the course grade.

The remaining 70% will be awarded for a paper, to be developed out of the course readings, and intended to contribute to the literature review for your MA research project. We will finalize details of the paper later in the term. For now, I am proposing that you write a paper of about 8,000 words, drawing on a minimum of 30 scholarly sources. The paper should be completed by April 30, but the due date is negotiable.

**TENTATIVE READING LIST:**

Readings for the first half of the term will be selected on a meeting-by-meeting basis from the following tentative list. We will jointly construct a reading list for the second half of the term based on specific interests as they emerge, and the direction you would like your final paper to take.

Ariès, Philippe. 1962. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Vintage Books.

Zelizer, Viviana. 1985. *Pricing the Priceless Child*. New York: Basic Books

Prout, Alan and Allison James (eds.) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Childhood*. London: Falmer

Frønes, Ivar. 1997. "The transformation of childhood: Children and families in post-war Norway." *Acta Sociologica*, 40: 17-30.

Mintz, Steven. 2004. "The social and cultural construction of American childhood", in Marilyn Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong (eds.) *Handbook of Contemporary Families: Considering the Past, Contemplating the Future*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Prout, Alan. 2000. "Children and participation: Control and self-realisation in British late modernity." *Children and Society*, 14: 304-315.

Ehrensaft, Diane. 2001. "The kinderdult: The new child born to conflict between work and family", in Rosanna Hertz and Nancy L. Marshall (eds.) *Working Families: The Transformation of the American Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families". *American Sociological Review*, 67: 747-776.

Pugh, Alison. 2009. *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children and Consumer Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Agger, Ben and Beth Anne Shelton. 2007. *Fast Families, Virtual Children: A Critical Sociology of Families and Schooling*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.