

Comm 720 Mass Media Seminar, Fall 2016
Children's Media, Identity & Culture

Wednesdays, 5:30-8 p.m., CAC 227

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Office hours: Tu/Th 12:30-1:30 and by appointment

About this course

How and why do young people use and produce popular media to construct and negotiate their own identities and cultures, and to respond to and engage with adult worlds? What does it mean to be a child in dynamic media environments? In this class we will analyze popular debates about the relationship between children and media while moving beyond "moral panics" to critically engage with what researchers are learning about how and why children consume, produce and make meaning with media texts and technologies. We will also explore the perennial and vexing question of how media affect children. In the process, we will become familiar with several theories and methods that we can use to conduct research on this and other communication phenomena, and we will develop skills needed to conceptualize a focused study and produce the introduction, explanation of significance, literature review, and methods sections of academic research papers.

Required Readings

Greene, Sheila and Diane Hogan (2005). *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*. London: Sage Publications. Available for purchase at the University bookstore.

Buckingham, David (2000). *After the Death of Childhood: Growing up in the age of electronic media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Additional required weekly readings will be distributed via electronic reserve.

Assignment and Grading

Participation 25% of final grade

As a seminar, the success of this class depends significantly on the active engagement and participation of every member. In order to productively participate, you will need to read assigned materials critically and carefully (often more than once), taking notes to bring to and consult in class; you will need to participate in class discussion; and you will need to bring examples relevant to the week's topic or to the course more broadly to present to the class to further stimulate and deepen the way we think about children and media.

Discussion 25% of final grade

My role in this course is to provide a framework and core materials for critically thinking about children, media, identity and culture, and to provide you with intellectual tools for succeeding in your graduate thesis or project. Your role in this course is to engage the materials and take an active part in shaping and leading class discussions. Each week, one of you will be assigned to step into the role of discussion leader. Your primary task

will be to lead us in critical discussion of the assigned readings. To do so, you may need to go beyond these readings, conducting background research and perhaps finding media or research examples to bring to class.

Final Paper 25% of final grade

Throughout the semester, you will work on developing a paper that will include, a) an introduction clearly presenting a research question relevant to this class and explaining why/how this question is theoretically and empirically significant, b) a literature review explaining what scholars have found in relation to your research question, c) a methods section outlining how you propose to study your question and justifying your methods theoretically, and d) a reflection section in which you think about how this study might be conducted differently if it were focused on adults rather than children, and in which you reflect on how what you've learned in this class might enrich your other academic work and/or non-academic life pursuits.

Presentation 25% final grade

During the last two class meetings, you will have a chance to give a formal 20-minute presentation of your research. Since you will not have completed your study, you will not be giving a typical conference presentation of your work. Instead, you will be introducing us to your topic and research questions, and you will be helping us understand why and how they matter. You will also be providing us with one model for how your study could be conducted. These presentations will give us the chance to further expand the range of topics that we discussed over the course of the semester.