

Course: **HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH**  
Instructor: Kyle E. David  
Course level: Upper-level undergraduate  
Enrollment: 15 – 30

Is age a useful category of historical analysis? How have “childhood” and “youth” been socially and culturally constructed? How have the goals of these periods of physiological growth and maturation changed over time? Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, students will examine children and youth from various perspectives, including psychological, political, economic, social, cultural, religious, and educational. Assigned readings emphasize the intersectionality of age with gender, race, and class in order to highlight the varied experiences of childhood across the globe and over time.

Throughout the course, students answer such questions as: To what degree and in what contexts have children exercised their own agency? How have adults used children and their representations to achieve various goals? How have states made children and youth the object of state paternalism? In what ways have the rights bestowed on to children complicated traditional parent-child power relationships? In the process, students will learn how the objectives of institutions such as public schooling, state welfare, public health, and others have shifted over recent decades. Assigned reading will take the form of a wide variety of articles and book chapters, all of which will be available electronically on the course website. The major summative assignment for this course will be students’ construction of a “childhood museum.” In groups, students will develop over the course of the term an exhibition that charts the historical development of a particular theme such as child labor, child rights, toys and consumerism, childhood and rights, etc. Exhibitions may take the form of posters, a magazine, a tableau, skit or film, etc. Students will present their exhibitions on the final day of the course.

Week 1: Age as a Category of Historical Analysis  
Week 2: Children in Ancient and Medieval Societies  
Week 3: Children in Early Modern Societies  
Week 4: Children and the Transatlantic World  
Week 5: The “Discovery” of Childhood  
Week 6: Sentimentalization and Social Welfare  
Week 7: The Birth of the Modern Child  
Week 8: Socialization and Education  
Week 9: Literature and Literacy  
Week 10: Children, Family, and the State  
Week 11: Children and Religion  
Week 12: Children and War  
Week 13: Pediatrics and Public Health  
Week 14: Psychology, Puberty, and Youth  
Week 15: Law, Reform, and Rights  
Week 16: Consumerism and Current Controversies