

Girlhood in the Media
Spring 2015



The Shining, 1980



The Hunger Games, 2012

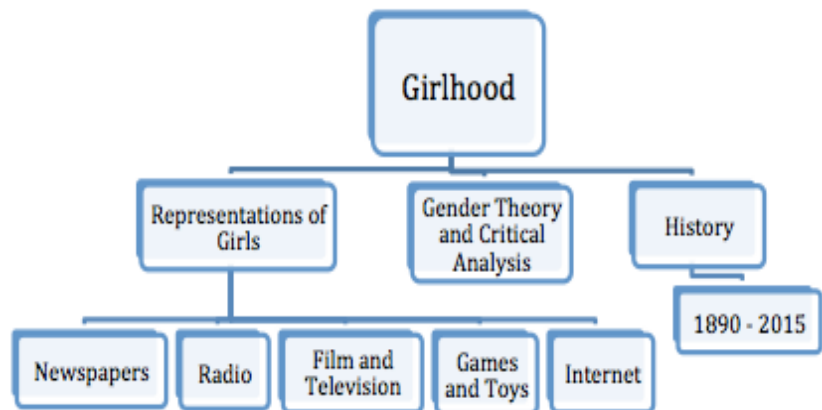
Course Information

Writing Intensive Course: WGS 21:512:406:Q1 and History 21:988:389:Q1

Room: Conklin 348

Instructor: Molly Rosner
molly.rosner@rutgers.edu

Office Hours by
Arrangement



Course Description

Children, and particularly girls, have been represented in all kinds of media for dramatic and varying reasons. Girls are portrayed as innocent victims, helpless and naïve people in need of saving but also as rambunctious, cruel, even horrifying demons. The image of the girl undermines, bolsters and complicates debates that touch on class, citizenship, race and sexuality in the United States.

Through an exploration of the representations of girls in the media, this course will trace changing conceptions of girlhood over the course of the 20th century. Moving chronologically, this course will look at wide array of media – from film, radio, song, advertisements, magazines, toys and TV – to understand the way the idea of girlhood has served different purposes at different times in American History.

Key Questions:

- How has the idea of girlhood changed across different media and over time?
- How does the term girlhood apply differently across class and racial lines?
- Who is included and excluded from definitions of girlhood?

Objectives:

- Students will locate, identify and deconstruct primary source documents and learn to “read” and popular texts from throughout the late 19th and the 20th century.
- Students will gain a grasp of girlhood and the history of the United States during the 20th Century.
- Students will generate a collaborative digital project for the class.

Grading Policy

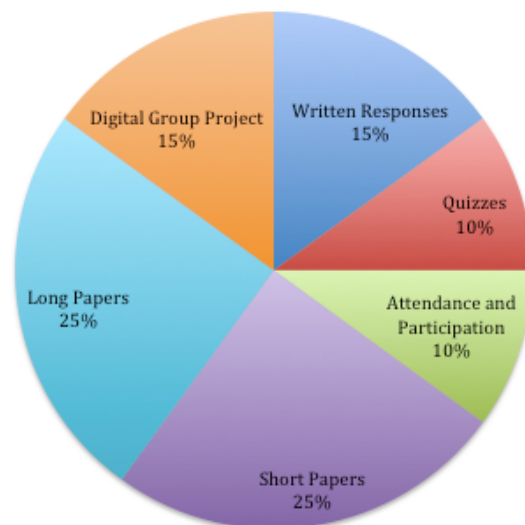
10% Digital Group Project
20% Attendance and Participation
20% Presentations and Journal
25% Short Papers
25% Final Project

Grading Scale:

92-100=A; 87-91=B+; 81-86=B; 77-80=C+; 70-76=C; 60-69=D; 0-59=F

Note: there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

Grades



Required Assignments

Weekly Short Responses – Will be randomly checked throughout the semester

3 Response Papers:

3 Responses to Readings – 2 Page Each

Must complete 2 of the 4 possible due dates:

One on either January 29 or February 26

One on either March 31 or April 14

AND

One mandatory paper due April 21

Media Paper & Presentation:

Present on original piece of media and put it in historical context

e.g. Choose a song and analyze the way it portrays girls

1 Final Paper:

5-7 Page Paper

1 Class Digital Project:

TBD in class

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Course Overview/Intro to Concepts

January 20 – Introduction/Go Over Syllabus
What makes a 'girl'? Changing definitions of a "girl".

January 22 – Slavery and Childhood
19th Century Victorian Childhood

Robin Bernstein, Miriam Forman-Brunell

Week 2: Child Labor and Reform, 1910s

January 27 – Advent of Modern Childhood / Triangle Shirtwaist Fire
How was the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire reported in the paper?
How were the workers portrayed?

Materials: Selections TBD:

- <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/1076/>
- <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>

Excerpts: Nan Enstad, Kathy Peiss

January 29 – Arguments for Reform, *A Little Princess*

Materials: *A Little Princess*

David Nasaw, *Children of the City*, Excerpts

Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, Excerpts

Week 3: 1920s – 40s, Ethnicity and Race

February 3 – Great Migration to Early Civil Rights

Materials: TBD

February 5 – Orientalism, Immigration, and the Department Store,

Materials: William Leach

Wizard of Oz

Week 4: 1930s – Sugar, Spice and the Great Depression

February 10 – FSA, Orphan Annie. Shirley Temple

Materials: Annie Comic Strips

Listen to Annie Radio Show Clips Online

Watch New and Old Annie Trailers

February 12 – Valentine’s Day and Girls

Materials: Kewpie Dolls
I Love Lisa – Simpsons Episode

Week 5: 1940s, War, Propaganda and Boyhood

February 17 – Girls and the war effort / Propaganda / Pin-Up “Girl” / Wonder Woman

February 19 – **Boyhood:** Peter Pan, *Hey Arnold*, Boy bands, Boy Scouts

Week 6: 1950s, Dolls and Toys

February 24 – Barbie, Plastic and the Postwar Family
Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, Excerpts
Lynn Spiegel, “Seducing The Innocent: Childhood and Television in Postwar America”

February 26 – Brown vs. Board of Ed - Kenneth and Mamie Clark Doll Study
Robin Bernstein selections

- http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-brown-v-board-of-education/2014/05/16/fd84b82c-dc3b-11e3-8009-71de85b9c527_story.html

Week 7: 1950s - 1960s, Race and Space

March 3 – Desegregating Schools

Materials: Norman Rockwell’s painting, “The Problem We All Live With”
Read about Ruby Bridges

March 5 –Disney and TV Sitcom Family

Materials: *Alice in Wonderland* and *Cinderella*

Week 8: Overflow and Midterm

March 10 – Review for Midterm

March 11: Screening of the Film “New Black”

March 12 – **MIDTERM**

March 17 & 19 – SPRING BREAK

Week 9: Late 1960s – 1970s, Children in Cold War Politics

March 24 – LBJ Ads – Daisy and Atomic Bomb

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDTBnsqxZ3k>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-VzZQGWOqA>

March 26 - Feminist Movement and Childcare

Comprehensive Child Development Bill of 1972.

Roth, William. The Politics of Daycare: The Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971. 369-76.

Week 10: 1980s and the Consumer Child

March 31 – Portrayals of Family during Reagan

Wonder Years

The Cosby Show: Season 2 Episode1 – First Day of School

April 2 – Group Project Work

Week 11: 1990s, Nickelodeon and Girl Power

April 7 – Nickelodeon and “Girl Power” and Consumer Citizenship

Materials: *All That*

April 9 – American Girl Doll, The Bechdel Test

Week 12: Postfeminism and Current Debates

April 14 – Frozen / Class Presentations #1 and/or Project

Materials:

- <https://medium.com/@directordanic/the-problem-with-false-feminism-7c0bbc7252ef>
- <http://feministdisney.tumblr.com/post/72728984022/is-disney-frozen-in-time-or-moving-forward>
- <http://geekmom.com/2013/11/feminist-controversy-frozen-misses-point/>

April 16 – NO CLASS (NCPH)

Optional: Visit the American Girl Place store in New York City
or Museum Visit

Response Paper Due

Week 13: Current Debates, Pt. 2

April 21 – Twitter and post-feminism
Hashtags: #womenagainst feminism
#likeagirl campaign
#banbossy

GoldieBlox Toy vs. The Beastie Boys

Materials:

- <https://www.youtube.com/user/goldieblox>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II Gy Va 5Xftw>
- <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/beastie-boys-settle-lawsuit-over-girls-toy-commercial-20140318>

***Mandatory Response Paper*: Is Frozen Feminist?**

April 23 – Ferguson and Sasha and Malia Obama / Paper Revision Workshop

Materials: Read Cheryl Walls, “On Little Black Girls and Dolls”

- <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/12/01/367780460/gop-staffer-resigns-after-comments-about-obama-daughters>

Start Reading The Hunger Games for April 30

Week 14: Presentations

April 28 – Final Presentations #2 and Group Project

April 30 – Hunger Games

Week 15: Group Work

May 5 – **Wrap Up / Digital Project**

May 7 Exams Begin - **Final Papers Due**