Political Contestations and Constructed Representations of Childhood
In Twentieth-century East Asia

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Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:45
Office Hours:

Course Description. Modern childhood has, in part, been defined as vulnerable and in need of “special care and attention,” according to UNICEF, but that definition begs the question: who should protect children, and to what ends? This seminar examines major discursive debates about childhood in twentieth-century East Asia as an internationally contested site, while also examining representations of childhood experiences and abuses, especially as victims of infanticide, economic disadvantage, colonialism and wartime atrocity, as well as controversies over child-rescuing activities, immigration policies, international adoptions, and modern consumerism.

Childhood welfare and protection are a complicated issues deeply entangled in factors of economic class and national ethnicity. This course asks students to think through different perspectives on the issue of child welfare as an international problem within the specific context of twentieth-century East Asian history. In the first half of the course, we will read materials that construct specific representations of childhood, especially in light of the context and aims of the writers who produced those narratives. In the second half of the course, we will debate issues with contemporary resonance. This instructor does not seek to persuade students to take any specific perspective, and students will be randomly assigned roles in debates in order to protect privacy and anonymity.

Course Goals. The main goals of this seminar are: (1) to introduce students to international conflicts concerning childhood in East Asia during the twentieth century; (2) to allow students both to understand and deconstruct representations of childhood according to historical context; (3) to challenge students to argue across different perspectives.

Assignments.

Grading.
Attendance: 10%
Class Participation: 20%
Response Papers: 20%
Written Preparation for Class Debates: 15%
Oral Presentation during Class Debates: 25%
Final Exam: 10%

Course Schedule and Readings
1. **Tu 8/27. Introduction**

Handout: Declaration of the Rights of the Child


According to Moyn, what is the distinction between national emancipation and individual rights? Why does he draw this distinction, and how does it influence his argument? Would he consider the Enlightenment to be the intellectual forerunner of Amnesty International? How is his history of human rights an intervention in conventional narratives?

According to Fass, what is the distinction between childhood protection and individual rights? Why does she draw this distinction, and how does it influence her argument?

Comparing Moyn and Fass, where do their ideas about national protection and individual agency converge or diverge?

**Missions as International Intervention for Childhood Protection?**

3. **Tu 9/3. Religion and the Special Category of Childhood**


4. **Th 9/5. Discourses of infanticide**

Michelle King, Introduction, “Drowning Daughters.”

According to King, where do our impressions of Chinese infanticide come from? What can infanticide tell us about cultural and intellectual interactions between Chinese and Westerns in the nineteenth century?

5. **Tu 9/10 Childhood across Cultures**


Why were French children recruited to

**Children’s Protection for National Modernization**

6. **Th 9/12 Childhood as an Actor in Modernization Narratives in China**

Lu Xun

Or, maybe Joan Judge instead?

7. **Tu 9/17. Childhood and Modernization in Japan**
   Higuchi Ichiyo, “Child’s Play,” in Robert Lyon Danly, tr., *In the Shade of Spring Leaves*.

**Childhood and the Creation of the Middle Class**

8. **Th 9/19 Childhood and Consumer Products**
   Film: “Little Playthings” (1933).
   Fernseber and Jones begin with interpretations of the film, “Little Playthings.” What techniques do they use to analyze the national and economic significance of the film? What are their larger arguments?

9. **Tu 9/24. Childhood as a Marker of the Middle Class in Japan**
   Mark A. Jones, “Introduction,” *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class In Early Twentieth Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).
   Discussion: What role of class play in defining a national modernity in China and Japan?

**Children under Japanese Occupation**

    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4fdhAz0VSw

11. **Tu 10/1. Children in Taiwan under Japanese Colonization.**
    Discussion.
    According to Ching, was education a tool of colonialism in Taiwan?

**Children’s Wartime Experiences**
12. **Th 10/3 Children in Nationalist China during WWII**
   [http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001258558](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001258558) (Read either section 1, 2, or 3.)
   Lin Yutang's children were living in the United States during WWII, and they wanted to go back to China to support the resistance against Japan. How do these short essays depict the three girls, who were aged 10 to 14?

13. **Tu 10/8 Japanese Children in the Aftermath of WWII**
   Movie: "Graveyard of the Fireflies."
   What difficulties did Japanese families face after the bombing of Hiroshima? What spoke to you most about these stories? Why is the relationship between older brother and younger sister so strong in these stories? Did children suffer in a different way from adults? How are infants and street urchins used differently by adults in this graphic novel? What do you think Nakazawa's purpose is in telling this story? How is the genre of a graphic novel different from anime film, and what effect does this have on the messages of the novel and film? What differences or similarities appear between “Barefoot Gen” and “Graveyard of the Fireflies”? How do you think that these personal stories might fit into larger narratives about Japanese experiences about the War?

14. **Th 10/10 The politics of historical memory.**
   Arata Osada, ed. *Children of Hiroshima* (Harpercollins, 1982).
   *Discussion.* The nuclear bombings were a taboo subject during the American occupation, but teachers later assigned and then republished (sometimes without the consent of the students) the personal memoirs of victims. Do you notice common themes among the three sources, as well as differences in the different media (class assignment, graphic novel/memoir, and anime film)?

15. **Tu 10/15 Debate:** What is the story of the Pacific War, and how should it be remembered?
   Required Reading:
   [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7020335.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7020335.stm)

**The Specter of Mixed-Race Children in Post-Colonial East Asia**


How would you characterize interactions between Occupied Australian and American forces and the Japanese population? How did the government try
to mediate sexual interactions between the two groups, and how were those mediations a departure from traditional sex work (legal in Japan for the prior three centuries) as well as Japanese military organization of forced sex work for soldiers during WWII? Why were these interactions threatening for both Japanese and Americans? How were mixed-race children of these liaisons treated? Why did they lack citizenship? How did the racial mixture affect the treatment of these children? Why and how did Australian and American immigration policy change toward Japanese war brides and their children?

16. Th 10/17 Children of the Vietnam War

17. Tu 10/22 Mixed-race children in Korea

18. Th 10/24 Debate. Should mixed-race children of US military in Asia automatically be granted visas for immigration to the United States?
   Reading:

The One-Child Policy in China (Chinese Family Planning)
At the end of this unit, students will be able to understand that population policy has changed in China over time, and that it has involved many complexities. Students will identify the ways in which population control has deepened state intervention in personal life, as well as the ways that policy has weakened state legitimacy. Furthermore, students will be able to articulate arguments both in favor and in opposition to family planning, especially in terms of its effects on infanticide and child abandonment as well as

19. Tu 10/19 Historical Context: “Patriotic families” and Population Policies in China

20. Th 10/31 Human Rights Violations Regarding Chinese Family Planning
   Cecilia Nathansen Milwertz, "Interaction between Women and Birth Planning Workers,” *Accepting Population Control* (Surrey: Curzon, 1997), 86-120.
   - What measures did the government take in order to implement the one-child policy? How did the government enforce this policy?
   - Was the one-child policy universally applied? What loopholes existed?
   - What were general attitudes toward the one-child policy and people who tried to violate the policy? Why were their perspectives different from the
ethnographers? How do the examples cited indicate a different system of social justice?

- How does the ethnographer read the relationship between “voluntary” and “coercive” and between “care” and “concern”? What do these relationships imply to you about Lisa Ling, “China’s Lost Girls,” National Geographic.

21. Tu 11/5  Demographic Problems Arising from Chinese Family Planning and Adjustments to Chinese Family Planning Policies

22. Th 11/7 Debate. Should the United States grant visas and amnesty to Chinese couples wanting multiple children?

**International Adoption**

23. Tu 11/12 History and Race in International Adoption

24. Th 11/14 Adoption from the Perspective of American Families
Film:

25. Tu 11/19 The Factor of Religion in International Adoption

26. Th 11/21 Debate: Should restrictions be placed on Americans who wish to adopt children from East Asia? What should the requirements and parameters be for international adoption?

Recommended: Neil Postman, “The End of Childhood.”

28. Th 12/5 **Review.**

**Final Exam.**