HIS 401.02
The History of Childhood
Satisfies: WRTD, EXP+, SPK

Tu, 1:15-4:05pm

Prof. Lori Flores

Childhood is assumed to be a phase of life that people pass through, with some qualities in common—innocence, protection, youth, play, experimentation, and preparation for adulthood. Yet history shows us that childhood is constructed and experienced very differently for people depending on geography, race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, able-bodiedness, global conflict, and other circumstances. This senior seminar pairs classic and innovative works of history alongside narratives of childhood in other disciplines (memoirs, psychology, law, medicine) to explore the following questions. Does “childhood” today mean something totally different from childhood in the past? Is childhood “disappearing”? Who gets to experience a childhood, and for how long? How do we research and write about children in history, and give them space and voice as historical agents instead of passive receivers of history? Topics include children, slavery, and labor; boarding schools and youth education; race and innocence; violence, war, and kidnapping; gender, sexuality, and pop culture; delinquency and criminality; and unaccompanied or DREAMer migration. As this is a capstone seminar, high verbal participation is expected in weekly discussion. Shorter writing assignments will culminate in a final original research paper (with primary and secondary source work) on an episode in the history of childhood in the United States, another part of the world, or between places/countries. In a “mini-conference” at the end of the semester, each student will share a 10-minute presentation about their research.