

# ***Knowing Children: The Modern Child in the Field of Culture***

## **English 9056A**

Western University Department of English and Writing Studies

Fall 2016  
Tuesday 11:30-2:30  
STVH 1140



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Hours: Tues 3-5

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued that, in the twentieth century, the closet is not a superseded regime of knowing, and that subjectivity is still very much organized around the axes of knowledge and ignorance. If that's true, then it is "the child" that best reflects the problem of closets, for it is the child around which our culture's most potent assumptions about knowledge and ignorance take their force. This course examines the figure of the modern child in theory, literature and film. At the heart of the course are questions of epistemology and its discontents, sexuality and its symptoms, innocence and its uses. We will look at the child constructed and disciplined by psychoanalysis, the child as phantasmatic screen for adult preoccupations, the child in critical theory and the child as critical theory—that is, the way in which this remarkably arbitrary category underpins so much intellectual machinery of the contemporary period.

### **Required Texts:**

Lewis Carroll, ed. Richard Kelly, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Broadview Press)  
Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (Oxford Paperbacks)  
Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (Oxford Paperbacks)  
J.M. Barrie, ed. Anne Hiebert Alton, *Peter Pan* (Broadview)  
Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Vintage)  
John Wyndham, *The Midwich Cuckoos* (Penguin)  
Steven Millhauser, *Edwin Mullhouse, The Life and Death of an American Writer, 1943-1954*,  
by Jeffrey Cartwright (Vintage)  
Emma Donoghue, *Room* (Mass Market Paperback)

### **Required Film Viewing:**

Mervyn LeRoy, dir. *The Bad Seed*  
Jonathan Glazer, dir. *Birth*

**+ theoretical readings available on Owl**

(image source: [http://www.onefineart.com/en/artists/chawky\\_frenn/page4.shtml](http://www.onefineart.com/en/artists/chawky_frenn/page4.shtml))

**Evaluation Scheme:**

Teaching presentation	20%	as per sign-up sheet
Short Essay (8-10 pages)	25%	due two weeks after presentation
Major paper (15-20 pages)	45%	open topic, due Tuesday 3 January 2017
Class participation	10%	

**Teaching Presentation:**

You are required to lead the class for at least 45 minutes on one day. This leadership should not take the form of talking-head lecture; rather, it should present a problem in the theory and/or the fictional text, open up discussion through questions or other techniques, and draw that discussion toward a conclusion. Come to class with a clear sense of the problem, a strategy for how you would like your colleagues to explore that problem, an example in the text(s) of where that problem can be located, and a good sense of where you want the class to arrive. This will allow you to direct the discussion while incorporating or encouraging other points of view or unexpected insights. In the interests of time and focus, please come with *one* major idea you want to explore. While you can and should expect that idea to produce a lot of conversations and side excursions, avoid the tendency to want to eat the world by presenting on a number of huge questions. Your colleagues need to feel that they are settling in on one major problem and that they can explore it fully. Also, there may be someone else teaching on the same day as you, and this person deserves the same amount of time and scope as you to explore a problem fully.

Should two of you be teaching on the same day, you are required to consult with each other to find out what the other plans to do. Please be sure you don't repeat or preempt your colleague. You are welcome to team-teach. Just remember that I need to mark each of you separately, so your strategy for team-teaching should make clear to me who is responsible for what.

**Short Essay:**

This paper, 8 to 10 pages in length, is due two weeks after your teaching presentation. It will focus on your initial concerns for your chosen seminar, but it will have the advantage of class discussion and time to re-think. My agenda for the length of this essay is that it be appropriate for an academic conference (ACCUTE, the MLA, etc.), and may become a more formal academic credential.

**Major Essay:**

While your short essay will probably consider only one work, the major essay should expand your range and develop problems over a number of texts we've been discussing. For the sake of broad coverage, choose a topic or work that you did not write on in your short essay. Those of you who are doing your teaching presentation on or after November 15 must come and see me to negotiate a different due date for your major paper. I do not want to put you into the situation where you have two papers due at the same time (and all the evaluation appearing at the end of the course), so you will be handing in your major paper earlier in the term. While this means that you will write your major work before you have some of the material under your belt, you will also do your teaching and write your shorter paper with more material than your colleagues have who teach earlier in the term. It all evens out, and sanity is maintained.

**In-class participation:**

A real seminar works only by the full participation of everyone in the room. Thus, I expect that everyone will come having read the work and being ready to discuss it. While attendance is necessary for participation, it is not sufficient; be prepared to talk. If for some reason you cannot attend a class, please leave me a voice-mail or email message and let me know.

**Statement on Academic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)



A bad seed...

**Graduate Course Health and Wellness:**

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year; for example, please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and Western's McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

## Syllabus

September 13	Carroll, <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass</i>
20	James, <i>What Maisie Knew</i>
27	<i>What Maisie Knew</i> : Freud, "Infantile Sexuality"
October 4	James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i>
11	Barrie, <i>Peter Pan</i> ; James Kincaid, "The Wonder Child in Neverland"
18	LeRoy (dir), <i>The Bad Seed</i> ; Kelleher, "How to Do Things With Perversion"
25	Nabokov, <i>Lolita</i>
November 1	<i>Lolita</i> ; Stockton, "What Drives the Sexual Child?"
8	Wyndham, <i>The Midwich Cuckoos</i>
15	Millhauser, <i>Edwin Mullhouse: The Life and Death of an American Writer, 1943-1954</i> , by Jeffrey Cartwright
22	<i>Edwin Mullhouse</i> ; Kristeva, "Adolescence, A Syndrome of Ideality"
29	Glazer (dir), <i>Birth</i> ; Henry Jenkins, "The Sensuous Child: Benjamin Spock and the Sexual Revolution"; James Kincaid, "Recovered Memory"
December 6	Donaghue, <i>Room</i>
January 3, 2017	Final Paper due <b>[no extensions without necessary documentation]</b>



...what Miles knew.