



HISTORY 3261G (570)
Canadian Childhood and Youth
Fall/Winter 2025 - 2026

Instructor: Dr. Heather Ellis
Email: hellis3@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

An historical study of the discourses and practices of childhood and youth. Students will explore how and why various actors, groups, or movements have participated in and shaped growing-up in Canada.

Antirequisite(s): Childhood and Social Institutions 3361F/G.

Prerequisite(s): 3rd or 4th year standing.

Antirequisite(s): n/a

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: History

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course, or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

CYS3361G / HIS3261G
Childhood in Canadian History
Winter 2026
In-Person

Course Instructor: Heather Ellis
Email: hellis3@uwo.ca
Office Hours: TBD (see final syllabus)

Course Description

We often think of childhood as an unchanging concept. Yet, historical studies of childhood and youth investigate how broader social forces consistently shape and change the construction of childhood. In this course, we will explore how race, gender, and class, impact childhood and consider the use of 'age' as another category of historical analysis. The course will demonstrate that children and youth were not passive actors in history, rather they were **active participants** in private and public spaces. Furthermore, this course will explore how adults (parents, charitable organizations, government bodies, social welfare groups, and religious organizations) attempted to control and create an ideal childhood. We will explore children's lives from the nineteenth century up until the digital age through a series of weekly case studies.

Questions that will be explored include:

- Is childhood an invented concept or a natural state?
- How have experts used institutions like education, medical and psychological research, sociology theories, media and religious doctrines to understand and control children and youth?
- How have children and youth adopted and rebelled against dominant socio-cultural norms?
- How does race, gender, class and disability impact the experience of childhood in Canadian history?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

- Articulate how childhood was shaped by past socio-economic forces
- Analyse a variety of primary and secondary sources to evaluate how Canadian children and youth experienced daily life
- Understand and critically evaluate different historical approaches to studying childhood
- Collect and evaluate primary and secondary sources to create a piece of scholarship
- Link current events in Childhood and Youth studies to historical themes in verbal and written formats
- Demonstrate through verbal discussion their ability to synthesize secondary and primary sources, and analyse their contribution to our understanding of historical childhood
- Create argumentative narratives (verbal and textual) based on historical evidence

Required Readings

All readings, videos, or artefacts for the week will be provided on OWL. No textbook purchase is necessary for this course.

Methods of Evaluation

These are brief explanations of the assessments that will be used for this course. Full descriptions including success criteria and rubrics will be made available on Brightspace.

Assignment Title	Due Date
Class Discussion (20%)	Ongoing
Discussion Leadership (15%)	Selected during first week
Research Proposal & Primary Source Analysis (15%)	February 6
Childhood History in the News (20%)	March 13
Research Project (30%)	April 9

Class Participation (20%)

Your participation grade reflects your ability to **think critically and engage meaningfully** with course materials, your peers, and class activities. The bulk of your participation grade will be based on your ability to engage in scholarly debate and discussion. Contributing meaningful ideas that demonstrate analysis, interpretation, and questioning of the readings rather than short summaries. To succeed in weekly discussions, you must come prepared with notes that identify key arguments, evidence and assumptions in the assigned texts. Bring questions that challenge an idea or connects the reading to a broader theme. Aim to interpret the author's main purpose, evaluate the strength of their evidence, and consider alternative viewpoints. Your participation will be graded on the quality of your contributions to the discussion/activities for the week, rather than the quantity, or the number of comments made during tutorial. A passing grade for class participation requires active contribution to discussion or activities that take place in seminar. If you struggle to participate in class discussion, please speak with me early in the semester so we can plan for you to be successful in classroom discussions.

You will receive a tentative participation grade in the middle of the term. This grade will also provide you with feedback regarding your contributions thus far in the course and some suggestions to improve (if necessary). **At the end of the term, the lowest grade will be dropped.**

Discussion Leadership (15%)

Each week a group of students (2-3) will share seminar leadership. Seminar leaders will be responsible for creating a lesson plan and guiding discussion of the assigned secondary sources for their week, with the assistance from the course instructor. A full description of the assignment and the expectations will be available on Brightspace. Group members will complete a reflection after their presentation as part of their grade.

Proposal & Primary Source Analysis (15%)

Your proposal will include a brief explanation of your topic, what your research questions are, and a short bibliography of sources that you could use to help you create this project. Your bibliography should contain at least **six scholarly sources** and **one primary source**. The proposal portion of the assignment is worth (5%). The primary source analysis is worth (10%) and will evaluate your ability to choose and analyse a primary source that could be useful for your final project, either through annotations or written analysis. You must attach a copy of your primary source in your assignment.

Childhood History in the News (20%)

Choose a current issue in Canadian childhood and write a brief article historicizing this issue. Your article should be written for a general audience who is interested about the history of childhood. The article should use 3-4 secondary sources to historicize your topic. The length of the assignment is 1000-1200 words.

Research Project (30%)

Choose a topic on Childhood Canadian history that you would like to research. A list of suggested topics will be posted on the course website. This assignment can be written as a formal essay or in an alternative format. Your alternative format must have a written component to meet the essay requirements of the course (e.g. if you are creating an exhibit on children at work, you must include a narrative that meets the minimum word requirements). We will discuss this final assessment in the first few weeks of class. Your research project should use at least six secondary sources and one primary source.

Minimum word requirement for alternative assessments: 1600 + 500 word reflection

Minimum word requirement for essays: 2000

Note: since this is an Essay course, you must receive a passing grade in both the Childhood History in the News and the Research Project to pass the course.

Class Schedule

Below is a sample of course readings and primary sources for this course. Please see the Brightspace site for the final list of reading materials.

WEEK 1: Course Introduction (Jan 8)

**Choose discussion leadership weeks

WEEK 2: Historical Foundations: Childhood Until the Mid-Nineteenth Century (Jan 15)

Choose one of the following articles to read for this week:

Frijhoff, William. "Historian's Discovery of Childhood," *Pedagogica Historica* 48, no. 1 (2012): 11-29.

Gleason, Mona. "'Children Obviously don't make History: Historical Significance and Children's Modalities of Power.'" *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 16, no. 3 (2023): 343-360.

Gleason, Mona. "Avoiding Agency Traps: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education." *History of Education* 45, no. 4 (2016): 446-459.

WEEK 3: From the Factory to the Schoolhouse: Shifting Childhood Experiences in the Late Nineteenth Century (Jan 22)

Bullen, John. "Hidden Workers: Child Labour and the Family Economy in Late-Nineteenth Century Urban Ontario." *Labour/Le Travail*. 18 (Fall 1986): 163-187. (24 pages)

Primary Source: "I worked in a pulp-mill': Part of the Work Force." In *"I want to join your club:" Letters from Rural Children, 1900-1920*. Edited by Norah Lillian Lewis. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996: 242-250. (8 pages)

Primary Source: "'We have no school here': Education and Schooling." In *"I want to join your club:" Letters from Rural Children, 1900-1920*. Edited by Norah Lillian Lewis. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996: 58-76. (18 pages)

WEEK 4: Rough Boys and Gentlemen: Negotiating Masculinity from the Turn of the Century until the First World War (Jan 29)

Cook, Tim. "'He was Determined to Go:' Underage Soldiers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force." *Histoire sociale/Social History* 41, 81 (2008): 42-74. (32 pages)

Grose, Jessica. "The 'Boy Crisis' is Overblown." *New York Times: Opinion*. July 23, 2025.

Putnam, Robert D. & Richard V. Reeves. "Boy Crisis of 2025, Meet the 'Boy Problem' of the 1900s." *New York Times, Opinion*. August 15, 2025.

Primary Source: "Steven's Favourite Rifles" (Advertisement)

WEEK 5: Dancing Through the Dust: Girlhood and Youth Culture 1900-1920 (Feb 5)

WEEK 6: The Challenging Decades: The Great Depression and the Second World War (Feb 12)

WEEK 7: READING WEEK

WEEK 8: Cold War Kids: Growing up in Atomic North America (Feb 26)

WEEK 9: Bodies Under Watch: Childhood and Biopower (March 5)

WEEK 10: Residential Schools & The Sixties Scoop (March 12)

WEEK 11: Rebels, Records and Revolution: Postwar Youth Movements (March 19)

WEEK 12: The Moral Panic of Growing Up: Youth Sexuality in Historical Perspective (March 27)

WEEK 13: TVs, Texting, TikTok, Oh My!: Children and Media from the 20th to the 21st Century (April 9)

Teaching Rationale

This course will incorporate both weekly lecture and seminars. The first half of the class will be devoted to lecture, where I will give an overview of our topic for the week. The second half will be a seminar that will focus on the readings, lecture material, and your upcoming assignments. Both lectures and seminar discussions will incorporate *active learning*. Participating in these activities will not only help your understanding of the course material but help you build skills that you will use in your assignments and other courses. For example, in lectures you might be asked to briefly discuss with a peer an image and then share these ideas with the class. Using these methods in lecture allows me to gauge your learning.

I have found that the most successful classrooms are ones that are built by the instructor and students. We will frequently discuss course and assignment expectations as a class. Discussions should be a place where you are comfortable to share your ideas and experiment with your analysis skills. I want you to know that your ideas are valued and respected in our weekly discussions.

Finally, I wanted to make a note on the nature of our course. History can be an extremely rewarding but also challenging subject to discuss. As we will discuss throughout the course, the history of childhood is rife with examples of race, gender, and class exclusions. Some of these case studies might be difficult to learn about, I encourage you to take care of your personal well-being. There will be content warnings at the beginning of some seminars to try and mitigate these issues. If you become overwhelmed with the content, please do not hesitate to leave the classroom and return when you are ready. We will also give time in lecture to reflect on the material learned at the end of some classes.

Course Policies

Email Policy

If you have any questions about the course, please email me (hellis3@uwo.ca). I will respond to your email within 24 hours during the work week (Monday-Friday) and within 48 hours on the weekend.

CYS Late Policy

All written assignments have a 72-hour submission window. E.g. Assignments that are due on February 6 will be accepted until February 9. After this window has passed, the CYS policy late policy applies.

Penalties for late papers or projects may be avoided if extensions are requested in advance. Otherwise, a two-mark deduction will be taken for each of the first five days it is late (including weekends). After 5-days without communication, a zero will be assigned.

Students are expected to schedule appointments and other responsibilities around class time. To be excused from participatory requirements (attendance or homework, etc.) due to

temporary illness or an unavoidable scheduling conflict, contact the instructor directly via email as soon as you are aware of the problem. Ordinary problems of this nature do not require documentation or communication with the Dean's Office; they will be dealt with by the course instructor.

If a student experiences a disruption in their ability to study or participate in the course for more than one week, or if there is a personal loss or trauma of a serious nature, they may request more extensive accommodations, counselling, and other forms of help. The best way to do this is to contact the instructor and/or the Academic Dean's Office.

CYS AI Policy

Intentional usage of artificial intelligence or language generation or translation applications by students to summarize readings or complete assigned work for this course must be approved by the instructor and noted by the student in the submitted work itself. This mandate does not refer to aspects of AI programming embedded into applications such as Word, Chrome, etc. It applies to all intentional usage of AI as a 'co-reader' or 'co-writer.' Students must do their own reading and writing to construct their own voices as democratic citizens. They are not allowed to write text and feed it into a computer application to improve it or translate it. Asking an application to compose text and then changing words before submitting it as your own, constitutes plagiarism. The use of Grammarly or similar applications is prohibited. Using plagiarism checkers to see if plagiarized text has been altered enough to avoid detection is itself a form of academic dishonesty. Students must compose text, choose words, construct logic flow, structure sentences and paragraphs using their own minds and in response to what they read, hear, and experience. When you borrow words or ideas from another person or from a machine this must be placed in quotation marks and properly cited.

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/S-MC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools)

are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.