

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 10.28

CHILDREN ON THE STREETS



Still from the film *Pixote* (Hector Babenco, 1981)

MWF 10:10-11:15; x-hour: Th 12:15-1:10

Room:

Professor Jessica Smolin

Email:

Office:

Office Hours:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Child homelessness has been viewed as a persistent social problem throughout the modern world. Children living, working, and struggling to survive have been a visible part of the streetscape of New York, London, São Paulo and other major cities, attracting the attention of writers, artists, filmmakers and anthropologists. Some current and former homeless children have also found the means to depict their own experiences with homelessness. In this course we will be examining a wide range of texts featuring homeless children as protagonists. These texts will be an entryway into broader discussions about class, race, and ethnicity; the meaning of citizenship; gender and sexuality, and representations of the modern city. How have artists complicated the relationship between activism and aesthetics? What can we learn from comparing texts of different time periods, genres, and nationalities that treat

a similar subject matter? We will be studying a diverse range of materials, including fairy tales, documentaries, novels, and ethnographies from the United States, Brazil, Morocco, England, and elsewhere.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

One ultimate aim of this course is to expose you to texts that, I hope, will be a joy to read and discuss and will lead you to read and find meaning in literature (including in translation!) long after you have left Dartmouth. In terms of more immediate objectives, through our work this term you can expect to:

1. Gain experience with different critical and theoretical approaches to the study of literature and see what comparative literature looks like in action.
2. Interrogate the ethical and social implications of literary and filmic representation of poverty, violence, and social exclusion
3. Gain in-depth knowledge of major works of literature and film by writers and artists in the United States, Morocco, Brazil, Japan, and Mexico
4. Hone your ability to express your ideas eloquently and precisely in speaking and writing.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Jorge Amado, *Captains of the Sands* (Avon Books, ISBN: 978-0380897186)
- Mohamed Choukri, *For Bread Alone* (Telegram Books, ISBN: 978-1846590108)
- Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick* (Norton, ISBN: 978-0393925890)
- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Belknap, ISBN: 978-0674049321)
- Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Norton, ISBN: 978-0393962925)

Other readings and films will be available online or on reserve. All novels will be on reserve at Baker-Berry.

OFFICE HOURS:

My office hours are on *** and on ***. I encourage you to stop by at least once during the course. If you can't make this time, feel free to email me to set up another meeting.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

Grade percentages:

Classroom participation: 10%

Canvas discussion: 5%

Presentation: 5%

First short paper: 20%

Second short paper: 25%

Final paper: 35%

Classroom participation:

1. General participation:

In order for us to have a lively and engaging seminar, it is essential for each student to complete all readings and be ready to participate in a detailed discussion. It is also essential that you have the readings in front of you when we discuss them, as we will often look closely at particular passages. **It is impossible to have a rigorous, detailed discussion of a text if we**

are only relying on your memory of it. Since this course is a seminar, we will be working together to explore ideas and discover new things. This is not a lecture course—you should not expect to be a passive attendee. Your attendance is essential to the quality of our term together.

2. Participation in Canvas Discussion Forum:

Starting **Friday, September 15th**, each student will post a one or two paragraph response to the assigned material on the Canvas Discussion Forum by 8:00 am the morning before class. These posted responses are an informal way for you to begin developing your ideas about the texts and to prepare for class discussion. There are many different ways to approach these posts. You might discuss how you think a text sheds light on an aspect discussed in class earlier, briefly analyze an element of the text you found interesting or even examine your own subjective response to the material. The best responses will demonstrate a strong critical engagement with the material; please do not summarize the reading. I encourage you to keep track of all of your responses, since they might form the basis of your final paper or a later project. Be sure to read responses from your peers as well!

Presentations:

Presentations will take the form of a “deep dive” into an issue that is relevant to the course subject matter. This could be a presentation on a text or film we have not looked at in class, an article touching on ideas relevant to the class, or a subject of your own devising. Presentations should consist of a ten-minute discussion, a brief analysis of how your chosen topic relates to the course, and a few questions for the class. These presentations should be thoughtful and thought-provoking but need not be formal. Powerpoint presentations are unnecessary unless you want to share specific images, quotes, etc. You will sign-up for presentations a couple of weeks into the term and will need to chat with me about your presentation idea at least one week before you are scheduled to present.

Written Assignments:

I strongly suggest each student meet with me at least two times during the term with at least one meeting about the final paper.

ALL PAPERS SHOULD BE UPLOADED TO CANVAS BY THE STATED DEADLINE (NO PRINTED COPIES).

- **1ST PAPER (~1000 WORDS, DUE BEFORE CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, 9/27).** For this paper you will make an argument about one of the texts we have read using close readings of selected passages to support your ideas. You will not need to consult secondary sources for this paper beyond what we have read and discussed in class—your focus should be on analyzing the text and using your observations to come up with an original insight. Your goal with this paper will be to develop a compelling argument and support it well with textual evidence.
- **2nd paper (~2000 WORDS, DUE BEFORE CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, 10/18).** This second paper, longer than the first, should also develop an argument about one of the texts we have read using close readings of selected passages to support your ideas. It is expected that you will also make use of secondary sources, either those we have read for class or others from your own research.
- **FINAL PAPER (Research paper, ~3000 words, due on Friday, November 18 by midnight).** Your final paper is a research paper that will involve comparative study of at least two works. You may not write in depth about a text you have written about before, although you may refer to one if it fits with your argument. Unless you have a novel take, it is also suggested that you not write about a work we have discussed at length in class.

Your final paper should include substantial research into secondary sources (beyond those we have read in class) as well as detailed close readings. I will be suggesting topics and additional works to read throughout the term, and I strongly suggest you meet with me to discuss your plans.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED CLASSES

We are all managing multiple demands. My expectation is that you will manage yours in a mature, thoughtful, and responsible way. With that in mind, I have established the following course policies for late assignments and missed classes.

Papers: The papers are graded out of 100 points. 3 points will be deducted for each day your paper is late.

Missed Classes/postings: Your attendance is critical. If you must miss class, I will expect you to keep up with readings and assignments, get notes from peers, and give me a head's up in advance or, if this is not possible, communicate with me soon after your absence. I will accept two late postings from each student; any additional late responses will not be accepted.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Dartmouth's Academic Honor Principle

I expect all students to abide by the Academic Honor Principle. Please review it here: <https://policies.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle-1> *Use of AI technology for any student written work in this course is explicitly prohibited.*

Covid-19

By enrolling in this course, you agree to comply with Dartmouth's current guidelines for masking, which we will follow throughout the term. *If you feel ill, please do not come to class.*

Potentially Disturbing Material

Some students may find aspects of our material controversial or offensive. I will do my best to note potentially disturbing material in advance, but I cannot predict how everyone will respond to a text. I hope you will be as open to hearing and reading other viewpoints.

Electronic Devices

In order to avoid distractions to others, electronic devices are only permitted for use for class-specific purposes. Please respect this guideline. *Be sure to turn off any cell phones before class starts.*

Student Accessibility and Accommodations

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Apply for Services webpage](https://student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu); student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as

what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Socioeconomic Difference and Financial Difficulties

If you encounter financial challenges related to this class, including purchasing textbooks, please let us know. We've been impoverished students earlier in our lives, we know what it's like!

Travel and Religious Observances

If you are part of a College team or organization that requires you to travel and miss class during the term, please let me know before the end of the second week of class. Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students' religious observances and diverse faith practices. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

Mental Health and Wellness

The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including your undergraduate dean (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/undergraduate-deans/>), Counseling and Human Development (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/health-service/counseling/about>), and the Student Wellness Center (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/>). We encourage you to use these resources to take care of yourself throughout the term, and to come speak to us if you experience any difficulties.

If you have any concerns at any point about your ability to learn and participate in the class to your fullest potential, please get in touch. I will ensure that everyone has equal opportunity to thrive in this class.

Consent to Record

We do not plan to record any aspects of this class and we do not give permission for any aspects of this class to be recorded. Nonetheless, there will be at least one class that we will conduct by Zoom this term. Therefore, by enrolling in this course,

a) I affirm my understanding that the instructor may record meetings of this course and any associated meetings open to multiple students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, within any digital platform, including those used to offer remote instruction for this course.

b) I further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and my distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part to any person or entity other than other members of the class without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth.

(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings

By enrolling in this course, I hereby affirm that I will not make a recording in any medium of any one-on-one meeting with the instructor or another member of the class or group of members of the class without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and I understand that if I violate this prohibition, I will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law. I understand that an exception to this consent applies to accommodations approved by SAS for a student's disability, and that one or more students in a class may record class lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and review sessions and take pictures of essential information, and/or be provided class notes for personal study use only.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Title IX

At Dartmouth, we value integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of others, all central to our Principles of Community. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus where all have equal access to the educational and employment opportunities Dartmouth offers. We strive to promote an environment of sexual respect, safety, and well-being. In its policies and standards, Dartmouth demonstrates unequivocally that sexual assault, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are not tolerated in our community.

The Sexual Respect Website (<https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>) at Dartmouth provides a wealth of information on your rights with regard to sexual respect and resources that are available to all in our community.

Please note that, as a faculty member, we are obligated to share disclosures regarding conduct under Title IX with Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator. Confidential resources are also available, and include licensed medical or counseling professionals (e.g., a licensed psychologist), staff members of organizations recognized as rape crisis centers under state law (such as WISE), and ordained clergy (see https://dartgo.org/titleix_resources).

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for the Guarini School. Their contact information can be found on the sexual respect website at: <https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>.

Additional Resources:

Take advantage of the great resources Dartmouth provides to help you make the most of your classes. The Research Center for Writing and Information Technology (RWiT) provides support with the writing process, and the Academic Skills Center can help with time management and other learning strategies.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS:

WEEK ONE: Children "Out of Place"

M 9/11

Introduction to the course

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Daniel Hoffman, "Kids out of Place." *NACLA Report on the Americas*. May/June 1994. [Recommended] (BB)

- W 9/13 ***Fairy Tales and Child Abandonment: Brothers Grimm***
- Brothers Grimm, "Hansel and Gretel" and Joseph Jacobs, "Molly Whuppie" in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, pp 184-190; 209-211. (BB)
 - Francisco Orlando, "Topoi of Realism: The Metamorphosis of Colors" in *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, pp 209-216. (BB)
- F 9/15 ***Grounds for Comparison: Little Match Girls and Boys***
- Hans Christian Andersen, "The Little Match Girl" in *The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen*, ed. Maria Tatar, pp 214-222. (BB)
 - Fyodor Dostoyevsky, "The Boy at Christ's Christmas Party" in *A Writer's Diary*, Vol. I, pp 310-314. (BB)
 - Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar" in *Mimesis* (BB)

WEEK TWO: What is (Literary) Childhood?

- M 9/18 ***Childhood in Comparative Context***
- Philippe Ariès, "The Discovery of Childhood" in *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, pp 33-50. (BB)
- W 9/20 ***From Virtue to Vice: Nobility and Wildness***
- Hugh Cunningham, "Savages" in *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century*, pp 97-132. (BB)
 - Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea" in *Tropics of Discourse*, pp 150-182. (BB)
 - Rene Denfeld, *All God's Children*, pp xv-xxvii; 3-36. (BB)
- F 9/22 ***Representing Childhood on the Streets***
- Louisa May Alcott, "Our Little Newsboy" in *Aunt Jo's Scrap Bag* (BB)
 - Culler, Chapter 3 ("Literature and Cultural Studies"), pp 43-55.

WEEK THREE: Constructing Identities

- T 9/25 ***The Street Family and the Utopian Future***
- Jorge Amado, *Captains of the Sands*, pp 3-79.
- W 9/27 ***The Street Family and the Utopian Future, cont.***
- Jorge Amado, *Captains of the Sands*, pp 80-end
 - Culler, Chapter 7 ("Performative Language"), pp 95-108.
- F 9/29 ***Street Life and Psychoanalysis***
- Tobias Hecht, "Speaking of the Street" *At Home in the Street: Street Children of Northeast Brazil*, pp 26-34. (BB)
 - Film: *Los Olvidados* (Luis Buñuel, 1950)

WEEK FOUR: Literature and Ethics

- M 10/2 ***Can Literature Shape an Awareness of Human Rights?***
- UNICEF, "Convention on the Rights of the Child" (BB)
 - Lynn Hunt, "Torrents of Emotion: Reading Novels and Imagining Equality" in *Inventing Human Rights*, pp 35-69. (BB)
 - Culler, Chapter 9 ("Ethics and Aesthetics"), pp 121-133.

- W 10/4 ***The What and Why of Pity***
- Friedrich Nietzsche, sections 132-142; 289; 383 in *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, pp 131-145; 287; 384. (BB)
 - F.H. Saunders and G. Stanley Hall. "Pity." *The American Journal of Psychology*. 11.4 (1900): 532-591. (BB)
 - Lydia Maria Child, "Letter XIV" in *Letters from New York*, pp 59-63. (BB)
- F 10/6 ***The Affective Fallacy***
- William K. Wimsatt Jr. And Monroe C. Beardsley. "The Affective Fallacy" in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, pp 1387-1402. (BB)

WEEK FIVE: The Postcolonial Self and the Street Child

- M 10/9 ***Testing Social Taboos***
- Mohamed Choukri, *For Bread Alone*, pp 3-131.
- W 10/11 ***Testing Social Taboos (cont.)***
- Mohamed Choukri, *For Bread Alone*, pp 132-end.
 - Culler, Chapter 8 ("Identity, Identification, and the Subject"), pp 109-120.
- F 10/13 ***Testing Social Taboos (cont.)***
- Film: *Ali Zoaua* (Nabil Ayouch, 2002) (BB)

WEEK SIX: Capitalism and the City

- M 10/16 ***Life on the Streets in American Mythology***
- Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*, pp 1-71.
- W 10/18 ***Life on the Streets in American Mythology, cont.***
- Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*, pp 72-end.
 - Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (selections) (BB)
- F 10/20 ***Urban Geographies***
- Film: *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, 2008) (BB)
 - Paulo Colina, "August" (BB)

WEEK SEVEN: Crime and Punishment

- M 10/23 ***From Broadway to Hollywood: The "Dead End" Phenomenon***
- Sidney Kingsley, *Dead End* (BB)
- W 10/25 ***From Broadway to Hollywood: The "Dead End" Phenomenon, cont.***
- Sidney Kingsley, *Dead End* (BB)
 - Jeffrey Turner, "On Boyhood and Public Swimming: Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End* and Representations of Underclass Street Kids in American Cultural Production" in *The American Child*, pp 208-25. (BB)
- F 10/27 ***Documenting Cause and Effect***
- Film: *Pixote* (Hector Babenco, 1981) (BB)
 - Robert M. Levine, "Pixote: Fiction and Reality in Brazilian Life" in *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies*, pp 231-273. (BB)

- George Csicsery, "Individual Solutions: An Interview with Hector Babenco." *Film Quarterly*, 36.1 (1982): 2-15. (BB)

WEEK EIGHT: Stories and Society

- M 10/30 ***The World of Oliver Twist***
 • Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, pp 17-108.
- W 11/1 ***The World of Oliver Twist, cont.***
 • Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, pp 109-254.
- F 11/3 ***The World of Oliver Twist, cont.***
 • Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, pp 255-331.

WEEK NINE: Stories and Society, cont.

- M 11/6 ***The World of Oliver Twist, cont.***
 • Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, pp 332-end.
- W 11/8 ***Fiction and Media***
 • Film: *Bus 174* (José Padilha, 2002) (BB)
 • Amy Villarejo, "Bus 174 and the Living Present." *Cinema Journal* 46.1 (2006): 113-18. (BB)
- F 11/10 • Film: *Grave of the Fireflies* (Isao Takahata, 1988)
 • David C. Stahl, "Victimization and 'response-ability': Remembering, representing and working through trauma in *Grave of the Fireflies*" in David C. Stahl and Mark Williams, *Imagining the War in Japan*

WEEK 10: Conclusion

- M 11/13 Roundtable on Final Paper topics
- W 11/15 Final discussion
- TBA *****FINAL PAPER DUE*****

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ariès, Phillippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Knopf, 1962.
- Bergmann, Hans. "Hot Corn!": Encounters with Street Children." *God in the Street: New York Writing from the Penny Press to Melville*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995. 93-113.
- Boal. Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto, 2008.
- . *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Brace, Charles Loring. *The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years Work Among Them*. New York: Wynkoop and Hallenbeck, 1872.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.
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- Hunt, Lynn. *Inventing Human Rights*. New York: Norton, 2007.
- Leitch, Vincent, Ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton, 2001.
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- Penglase, Ben. *Final Justice: Police and Death Squad Homicides of Adolescents in Brazil*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994.
- Sanchez-Eppler. "Playing at Class." *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Levander, Caroline F. and Carol J. Singley. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003. 40-62.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992.
- . and Daniel Hoffman. "Kids out of Place." *NACLA Report on the Americas*. May/June 1994.
- Sollors, Werner, Ed. *The Return of Thematic Criticism*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993.