

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR COURSE PROPOSAL
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **FSEM 100 topics** courses for review **or any other existing course** that you wish to have designated to meet the first year seminar requirement.

COURSE NUMBER:	FSEM 100		
COURSE TITLE:	TOYS AS HISTORY		
SUBMITTED BY:	Susan Fernsebner	DATE:	9/10/2008
<i>This course proposal has the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.)</i>			X

NOTE: Click on the link for “first year seminar” at www.jtmorello.org/gened to see the criteria used to evaluate courses proposed to meet the first year seminar requirement. See the report entitled “General Education Curriculum as Approved by the Faculty Senate” for additional details.

COURSE DESCRIPTION. In the space below, provide a one to two sentence description of this class. The description will be entered in Banner, and will also be used in other publications about the first year seminar program (such as the “Eagle Essentials” booklet).

A workshop on the history of toys in the late twentieth century that introduces collegiate level skills in research, writing, and spoken presentation.

RATIONALE. Using only the space provided in the box below, **briefly** state why this course should be approved as a first year seminar course.

This course introduces first year students to a topic of interest (and specialty of my own research) in a workshop format that will inculcate collegiate-level skills in writing, speaking, research and analysis as well as digital technologies while we explore a topic of popular culture in historical perspective. Students will work extensively with primary sources (textual, visual, and material) and secondary readings amidst a classroom culture of collaboration and guidance. This class will follow a workshop model I have utilized for other classes at diverse levels, one in which students and professor collaborate in each step of a project, sharing works in progress and mutual feedback amidst shared engagement with a learning curve.

SYLLABUS. Attach a course syllabus.

SUBMIT this form and attached syllabus **electronically as one document** to Warren Rochelle (wrochell@umw.edu) or Maya Mathur (mmathur@umw.edu). All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

**FSEM: Toys as History
Spring 2009**

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Course Description:

The playthings of a late 20th century childhood abound today in garage sales and e-bay offerings as the flotsam and jetsam of another generation's toy box. And yet these same objects hold a historical relevance in the perspectives they provide on the meaning and formulations of childhood and identity for the generation(s) who enjoyed them. This First-Year Seminar is a workshop in the exploration of the historical relevance of toys as well as that of related items of consumption including childhood fashion, television, and games for the latter decades of the twentieth century (1960s-1990s).

Goals:

a) As a semester-long workshop, we will work together in sharing self-designed projects on a particular toy or other related and pre-approved subject of focus (e.g., a toy or toy line, a television show or character, game, item of fashion or child-rearing tool...) We will also explore diverse readings on the topic of childhood, toys, gender, identity, and consumption as a background to our own projects.

b) This workshop is further aimed towards the development of hard skills that will serve you throughout your college and professional career, including:

- reading strategies and techniques of analytic development
- research skills
- writing and speaking skills
- digital proficiencies

Course Framework:

This is a workshop course, one in which the focus lies upon a group conversation and collective brainstorming towards intellectual and creative insight. Feel free to think aloud, experiment, and share questions and constructive critique. Feel free to play with ideas while exploring the readings and sharing your own research, in process, with the class...

Do be sure to keep up with readings and assignments, as these will be directly related to our group progress in developing individual research projects on particular toys as well as an understanding of the broader significance of toys and their relationship to childhood itself.

Required Texts:

Cross, Gary. *Kid's Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997 [full]

Note: Our other course readings will be available online at the course website.

Assignments

Weekly Blogs (as Research and Reading Journals) / Class Participation - 25%

Topic Proposal and Bibliography – 15% - wk4

Primary Source Analysis (3 pgs) – 15% - wk7

Paper Outline – 5 % - wk 10

Final Paper – 30% - wk 12 (grade = average of rough and final drafts)

Final Presentation - 10%

Participation. All students are expected to be active and vocal participants in class discussion. Students who seldom speak or who miss classes are likely to receive a failing grade for participation. Ungraded assignments, blog entries, and blog comments on classmates' posts also are considered part of your participation performance. Remember that class is a workshop – thinking aloud, experimenting with ideas, and developing analytical skills in a friendly environment is the aim.

Blogs. Good research and analysis is always a process of dialogue, creative experimentation, collaboration and exchange. All students in the course will be required to compose entries for their own web-logs at least once a week, and as otherwise assigned, and are encouraged to contribute comments for classmates' blogs.

The blog is at heart a log of the thinking, conjectures and analysis you are building over the course of the semester. It also should function as a diary of your own research topic as you explore it, of the sources you discover, of practical problems for which you seek advice. It is most particularly a space for your own exploration of ideas as you develop your project to its conclusion and one that allows you to share (and receive) advice and feedback from your classmates and our collegiate community.

Late Policy and Pop Quiz Notice: All assignments are due at the start of class or by the deadline noted in the syllabus. Late papers will be graded a full grade off (10 points) for each day late, including those turned in late on the day on which they are due. Papers will not be accepted electronically unless prior permission has been granted. Ungraded assignments due on dates for classroom discussion will not be accepted beyond their due-date unless prior permission is received.

Also note that if students do not appear to be keeping up with readings and assignments, pop quizzes may be offered at any time.

Honor Code

The Honor Code is an integral part of one's collegiate education at Mary Washington and all of your work for this course is considered covered by the virtue of your signature on a paper or exam. Those who do cheat or plagiarize will be subject to disciplinary action and will have their cases brought before the Honor Council. It is important, however, to recognize the difference between such compromises of academic integrity and the very constructive experience of sharing and commenting upon one's academic work with classmates, friends, and family. If you have any questions about these matters, feel free to contact me at anytime.

Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you already receive services through the Office of Disability Services and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Please bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise.

If you have not contacted the Office of Disability Services and need accommodations, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I will be happy to refer you. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266

Please note that this course is subject to change – stay in touch with our course website and check your UMW email regularly...

Week 1 - Introduction to Themes and Tools

Blog: Self-Introduction, favorite toy as a child

1/13 Introduction to the Course
- Introduce interview assignment for 1/22

- 1/15 Digital Resources Workshop with Jim Groom
- Blogging and Portfolios
- If you have a laptop computer, please bring it to class.

Week 2 - Kid's Stuff and Reading Strategies

Blog: Interview Reports

- 1/20 Discussion: *Kid's Stuff* and Reading Strategies
Reading: Gary Cross (1997): v-vii, 1-49
- 1-pg Outline of Cross' Introduction (pp. 1-10) is due
- SF Introduce Choosing a Topic Worksheet
- 1/22 Discussion: *Kid's Stuff*
Reading: Cross (1997): 50-81

Week 3 - Kids Stuff and Topic Development

Blog your research ideas and comment on a classmate's post

- 1/27 Discussion: *Kid's Stuff* and Topic Development
Reading: Cross (1997): 82-146
- 1/29 Reading – Gary Cross *Kid's Stuff*
Reading: Cross (1997): 147-240
- completed Choosing a Topic Worksheet due

Week 4 - Topic Proposals and Children's Play

Open Blog Week

- 2/3 Topic Proposals – 2 min presentations
Assignment: Bring topic proposal and annotated bibliography (2 copies)
- to consider: topic and lines of questioning, ways in which this topic can shed light on broader historical period...
- final format question to consider (don't need to answer until Week 5's final proposal):
research paper or research web site? [Bring Jim Groom in for 15-20 minute presentation on the possibilities re: the latter?]
- 2/5 Reading: Children and Play
Reading: Howard Chudacoff, *Children at Play: An American History* (2007): 154-215
[Blackboard]
- Bring written feedback form for proposal and bibliography for your classmate.

Week 5 - Imagery of Childhood

Blog: Find and share images related to childhood with your own working analysis

- 2/10 Methodology Discussion: Visual Culture
Reading: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* [Excerpt avail. on Blackboard]
- 2/12 Workshop: Working with Images
Assignment: Create VoiceThread Image Portfolio re: Childhood
[minimum 3 images] – must be posted with link shared by midnight Wednesday

Week 6 - How Do We Analyze Stuff? Things and History

Blog – Report on your own research: what are the key sources? What might they reveal? Challenges of working with them? Next steps? *And...* Comment on classmate's blog post.

- 2/17 Methodology Discussion: Material Culture
Reading: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Molly Ocket's Pocketbook" in Ulrich (): 249-276 [Blackboard]
- 2/19 Workshop: Analyzing Objects and the "Stuff" of Everyday Life
- Bring childhood object to class, blog an analysis of it in advance of our meeting and prepare a 2 min. commentary for classroom discussion.

Week 7 - Gender and Childhood

Open Blog Week

- 2/24 Key Primary Sources: Research Workshop
Assignment: Primary Source Analysis due
- 2/26 Gender and Childhood
Reading:
- Amy T. Y. Lai, "Consuming Hello Kitty: Tween Icon, Sexy Cute, and the Changing Meaning of 'Girlhood' (2005) [Blackboard]
- A. Ducille, "Dyes and Dolls: Multicultural Barbie and the Merchandising of Difference" *differences* 6 (1994): 46-68. [Blackboard]
- Barbie Liberation Organization, "Barbie / G.I. Joe Home Surgery Instructions" [see course site for weblink]

Assignment: Bring in an object, image, or advertisement (internet links permitted) linked to a toy that invokes specific, gendered frames of reference...

Week 8 - Spring Break

3/2-3/6 No class meetings

Week 9 – Consumer Culture and Video Games

Open Blog Week

- 3/10 Swimming in Commodities
Reading:
- K. Brooks, "Nothing Sells like Teen Spirit: The Commodification of Youth Culture" in Mallan and Pearce (2003): 1-16. [Blackboard]
- Margaret Crawford, "The World in a Shopping Mall" in Sorkin (1992): 3-30. [Blackboard]
- 3/12 Chasing Pac-Man: Video Games and Youth in 1970s-1980s Culture
Readings: [TBA / Blackboard]

Week 10 - Project Development

Blog Project Update *and* Comment on Classmates Blog Post by 9 pm Thursday

- 3/17 Workshop: Project Updates
- Outline of Paper Due
- 3 min presentation of progress

3/19 Workshop: Project Updates
- 3 min presentation of progress

Week 11 – Animated Childhoods, Social Commentary

Open Blog Week

3/24 Viewing: *Spirited Away* (d. Hayao Miyazaki, 2001)

3/26 Viewing and Discussion: *Spirited Away*

Week 12 - Drafts and Presentation Prep

Open Blog Week

3/31 **Rough Draft of Research Paper due** (2 copies)
Assignment for Friday - read draft and provide written feedback for classmate (see form)

4/2 Death by Powerpoint: Presentation Workshop
- Bring sample of visual you will incorporate into your presentation

Week 13 – Final Presentations

Blog: Primary Source Excerpt and/or Visual rel. to your project (presenters)

4/7 Research Presentations

4/9 Research Presentations

Week 14 – Final Presentations

Blog: Primary Source Excerpt and/or Visual rel. to your project (presenters)

4/14 Research Presentations
Final Draft of Research Paper due (1 copy)

4/16 Research Presentations

Week 15 – Final Presentations and Course Conclusion

Blog: Primary Source Excerpt and/or Visual rel. to your project (presenters)

4/21 Research Presentations

4/23 Conclusion Session