Honors 300 (TJ): Orphans! Adoption & Foster Care in US History, Literature, Law

& Public Policy Hollenbeck 215 // Spring 2020
Professor Lori Askeland

Professor/Chair of English Spring 2020 Office Hours:
Office: 123 Hollenbeck Hall 10:30-11:40--MWF
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Cell Phone: 937. 266-0046 (Texting is good for urgent issues; https://meet-with-laskeland.appointlet.com

I ask only that you treat my cell phone access with discretion, please.)

Texts (in order of use):

Required:
Harriet E. Wilson, Our Nig; Or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black. 1859. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. Knopf/Doubleday, 2011. Ann Fessler, The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before Roe v. Wade. Penguin, 2006. Dan Savage, The Kid: What Happened After My Boyfriend and I Decided to Go Get Pregnant. Plume, 2000. Laura Briggs, Somebody’s Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption. Duke, 2012.

Shannon Gibney, See No Color. Carolrhoda Lab, 2015.

Jane Jeong Trenka, The Language of Blood. Graywolf, 2005.

Recommended:

Askeland, editor. Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care. ABC-Clio, 2006.

Jane Jeong Trenka, Sun Yung Shin, Julia Chinyere Oparah, editors. Outsiders Within: Writings on Transracial Adoption.

South End Press, 2006.

* There will also be a lot of handouts/readings, downloadable from Moodle.

Catalogue Description: HONR-300TJ ST: Orphans/Adoption/Foster (4 Credits) (33 words)

An overview of the history of children separated from their families in the US, through European colonialism, enslavement,

Native boarding schools, the "Baby Scoop" era, and current issues like immigration and LGBTQ+ adoption/fostering.

Section specifics: Secrecy and privacy, shame and joy. Adoption and foster care are institutions grounded in complex

emotions and complex realities—in both loss and love. As institutions, they purport to be “in the best interest of the child,” but of course that means that they always address adult needs and desires, and the broader social/State need for certain

kinds of citizens (stable, healthy, informed), as well. They are deeply shaped by policies and social practices related to settler

colonialism, enslavement, immigration (and anti-immigration efforts), mass incarceration, racism, and poverty—all of which have produced

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Course Requirements/Grading

Initial analytical paper, 5-7 pages (Due Feb 14)** 10% [Objectives 1-3, 5]

Moodle journal/quizzes?/daily work* 20% [Objectives 1-3, 5]

Midterm take home exam (Due March 6)** 15% [Objectives 1 & 2]

Service learning: reporting/reflection paper, presentation, attendance** 20% [Objective 4]

Annotated bibliography, abstract, presentation (Due last week of class)** 10% [Objectives 1-5]

Research Paper (Due on Final Exam date)** 15% [Objectives 1=5]

Attendance/participation* 10%

TOTAL 100%

*Note that 30% of your grade comes simply from your being here as an active, engaged participant. You can miss 3

classes with no explicit penalty, but after 4, you should discuss the course with me in person and whether your best

option is to drop the course.

**Assignments marked with two asterisks must be completed in order to receive a passing grade for the class, even if

they are so late that they will receive a zero.

Aspiration: Kind, Open Communication.

My aspiration for our communications is that we will write and speak honestly, respectfully and with co

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been designed in partnership with the agencies with our course goals and your learning needs in mind, as well as the needs

of the community as identified by the agency.

Writing in this course: The still-new field of adoption studies is extraordinarily rich because it is interdisciplinary—hence the

long course title! This is an “H” credit course, so we’ll be focusing on taking a historical perspective, and the course is

organized historically. But, due to the subject matter, this course has been deliberately structured around readings from a

variety of disciplines and backgrounds, and you are all advanced honors students, coming from a variety of disciplines.

And, of course, this is obviously a “writing-intensive” course. A reminder: that means your writing is supported with class

time and plenty of attention to the writing process, more than it means a specific page limit.

Just as I believe the interdisciplinary nature of adoption studies to be a necessity and strength of the discipline, I seek to see

your various backgrounds as a strength. I rea

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• C&Y Chapter 2: “Adoption Reform, Orphan Trains, and Child Saving, 1850-1929” (Holt) and Kansas City Star

• C&Y Chapter 8: "'Orphan Trains,' Child-Saving, and the Modernization of Adoption Law, 1851-1929" (these are

selected documents relevant to chapter 2)

In class: View Film: "The Orphan Trains." Dir. Janet Graham and Edward Gray. The American Experience, PBS. 1995.

• Complete Transcript: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/orphan/orphants.html. No need to take elaborate notes, just

watch carefully and then use the transcripts to get the quotations you need.

• Here's an excellent List of Resources used in making the film. Please feel free to read/consult!

(*)For