

COURSE OUTLINE: PHIL 2320
CHILDREN, LITERATURE, AND PHILOSOPHY
Fall 2023: Tues-Thurs, 11:35 - 12:55, Paterson Hall 201

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Office Hours: TBA
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Course description:

(From the Undergraduate Calendar):

An exploration of issues at the nexus of philosophy, children's literature, and childhood studies. Topics may include an examination of children's books and young adult literature through a philosophical lens, as well as a critical examination of the "philosophy with children" movement. Includes: Experiential Learning Activity

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Prerequisite(s): 0.5 credit in philosophy or second-year standing in a philosophy program, or permission of the department.

Lectures three hours a week.

For Fall 2023:

We often think about the standard philosophical text as being a treatise or a discourse; after all, in most philosophy classes at Carleton, you are asked to read philosophical monographs or articles. But philosophy doesn't stick to clearly defined boundaries! Philosophy can appear in almost any form, including children's literature - in fact, many children's books are deeply philosophical. And philosophy isn't only done in university classrooms or libraries! Philosophical questions are arguably at the heart of inquiry, and some of the best inquirers are children. In this class, then, we'll be considering philosophical topics both through the lens of children's books and also through the lens of children's capacities. We'll read a variety of children's books - from chapter books to picture books - to think about how they prompt philosophical questions. But also, we'll talk about the global movement called "philosophy with children," which takes seriously the capacity of children for engaging in philosophical inquiry and dialogue, and which lays out various methodologies for fostering this capacity. As part of this discussion, I will ask you to put into practice your understanding of children's capacities, children's literature, and philosophy, by creating and implementing a lesson plan for using a piece of children's literature to do philosophy with children.

Important information about this course:

This is an interactive course with high levels of engagement. Much of the course will involve learning through *doing* - in this course we approach philosophy not merely as a set of theoretical questions, but also as a kind of *activity*. The course also involves work with the community, and specifically, with children; this element of the course will require a significant commitment on your part. Your presence and participation in class will greatly aid in your success in this course.

Required text:

There is no single required text for this course.

We will be reading a variety of children's books or chapters from children's books. Some of these books or book chapters are available as electronic texts. These will be linked on the course Brightspace page, or through the library's ARES online reserves system, which is also available through a link on Brightspace. Some of these books (usually picture books) are available only as hard copies. In these cases, I will make sure that they can be accessed through the Carleton library. For any children's book that I assign as a reading for the course, I will explain on Brightspace how to best access that children's book.

Most of the children's books for this course can also be found through the Ottawa Public Library (OPL). You are not required to be a member of the OPL in order to take this course, but you might find it helpful. If you are not already a member of the OPL, you can find instructions for how to become a member through the Brightspace page for this course.

I will also ask you to read scholarly or popular articles, especially for our discussion of philosophy with children; these will all be available through links on the Brightspace page.

Experiential learning requirement – Vulnerable Sector Check (*fee and deadline*):

As per the course description, in this course I will ask you to not only design but *implement* a lesson plan for using a piece of children's literature to do philosophy with children. This will involve volunteering with children.

In order to volunteer with children, you will need to have a Police Records Check. For work with children, the records check that you will require is a Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC). You can find information on the Ottawa Police Services (OPS) website, here: <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/reports-and-requests/police-record-checks.aspx/>. You can apply for the Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check online, through the OPS website. **There is a fee for this application**; the OPS sometimes raises the fee, but at the time that this course outline was written, the fee was **69\$**.

Please note that as per the OPS website, you can only request a Records Check from OPS if you live in Ottawa. If you live outside of Ottawa, you will need to request this from your local police service. It is your responsibility to determine where and how to request a Police Records Check for this course.

You are required to obtain the VSC in order to complete the experiential learning element of this course. If you think that you will not be able to apply for a VSC, please email me or approach me in person as soon as possible, so that we can discuss possible solutions. **I will need evidence that you have applied for the VSC, or an email to let me know that you will *not* be able to apply for the VSC, by Friday, September 29, 2023.** See evaluation section, below.

Technology requirements:

This course is an in-person course. That said, a number of elements of the course will require use of technology, including readings and course assignments. I may also occasionally schedule Zoom class meetings or Zoom office hours, if needed. For these and other purposes, you will need access to a computer or some other device that allows you to reliably access the internet, with a camera and microphone for videoconferencing. If you anticipate having any problems with technology or internet access, please email me so that we can discuss possible solutions.

Brightspace:

This course will be supported by the Brightspace Learning Management System. It is important for you to regularly check the Brightspace page for the course, which is where you will find (among other things) the most up-to-date information regarding our schedule of readings and due dates for assignments, which are open for revision through the semester. You will also find almost all of the assigned readings for the course on Brightspace.

You are responsible for reading and responding appropriately to all information distributed through Brightspace. Information provided on Brightspace will be considered to have been provided to all registered students within 24 hours of posting.

cuPortfolio:

Also for this course, we will be using the cuPortfolio platform. A number of course assignments, including your final exam, will be completed on cuPortfolio; you will be able to submit cuPortfolio work through Brightspace, as the two are linked. Information about cuPortfolio will be provided in class and on the Brightspace page for the course, but you can also check out the cuPortfolio student help centre, here: <https://carleton.ca/cuportfoliosupport/help/>

Email:

You can email me using the email address at the top of this course outline, or through Brightspace. If you choose not to email me through Brightspace, then please be sure that your email is sent from your **official Carleton email address**. You should also check your Carleton email account regularly (alongside checking the Brightspace page), because when I send you emails, it will be to that email address. Please allow 24-48 hours for an email response; if I do not respond after 48 hours, please feel free to send me a gentle nudge.

Course policies for assignments (see next page for evaluation section):

Lateness penalties: Assignments will be penalized by one third of a grade per day for every day that they are late. For instance, a cuPortfolio page marked B+ on its merits will be reduced to a B on the first day that it is late, and to a C- on the fifth day. I cannot accept late final exams.

Extensions: Extensions for assignments *may* be granted if requested *at least 24 hours in advance* and *with a valid reason* (e.g., medical reason). For the final, you will need to obtain a deferral through the Registrar's Office.

Academic Integrity Policy: According to Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy, there are a number of activities that constitute violations of academic integrity, including plagiarism, collaborating on non-collaborative assignments, misrepresenting or falsifying your work, and more. For the purposes of this course, this includes the use of computer applications or tools, such as artificial intelligence tools (AI); use of such tools will automatically be considered to be violations of academic integrity. I reserve the right to ask you to submit evidence of your work, including e.g. rough notes, drafts, or an explanation of the steps taken in completing the assignment.

If you are at all unsure about what constitutes plagiarism or a violation of academic integrity, please feel free to contact me and we can discuss it. You can also consult Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy, which you can find here: <https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-2021.pdf>

Evaluation for PHIL 2320, Fall 2023:

This is a course in which we will be discussing children's books, both as a source of philosophical inspiration in their own right, but also as the impetus for philosophical dialogue with children. Much of the course will involve learning through *doing* – in this course we approach philosophy not merely as a set of theoretical questions, but also as a kind of *activity*. As such, there will be a significant number of activity-based assignments, many of which will build towards the experiential learning component of the course, and some of which will involve group work.

Here is a short breakdown of the course assignments, followed by a more detailed breakdown, which includes tentative due dates.

Short breakdown of course assignments:

1. **Getting started in the course: 3%** (2% + 1%)
2. **Book activities: 25%** ((2 x 2.5%) + (2 x 10%))
3. **Children's book lesson plan: 22%** (2% + 20%)
4. **Experiential learning activities: 30%** (15% + 10% + 5%)
5. **Final exam: 20%**

Note 1: Participation:

There is no specific participation grade for the course, but we will be working on almost all of the assignments in class, and a few of the assignments specifically include a graded in-class or attendance component. In general, you will find it easier to succeed if you attend class regularly.

Note 2: Some information about group work:

Sometimes I will ask you to form groups in class, e.g., for book activity weeks (see below); in these cases, there will be no set groups, and you can simply work with whoever is sitting beside you. But for the experiential learning component of this course, you will work in a set group of 4-5 students (depending on final enrollment numbers). If you would like to choose the members of your group, or some subset of the members of your group, you may do so; otherwise, I will assign you to a group.

In the case that you would like to choose some or all of the members of your group, you must email me to let me know. If you would like me to assign you to a group, I will ask you to complete a short survey on Brightspace to help me make this assignment. Groups will be assigned in the beginning of October, so you must email me or complete the survey by **Sunday, October 1, 2023**.

You will find more information about group work on the Brightspace page for the course. I will also discuss this in class.

Detailed breakdown of course assignments:

For each of the assignments listed below, further instructions will be given both in class and also on the Brightspace page for the course.

All dates listed below are tentative, that is, they are subject to change (with notice.) You can also find these dates listed on the Brightspace page for the course.

1. Getting started in the course (2% + 1%)

"About Me" (cuPortfolio) (2%): due Friday, September 15

At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to introduce yourself in a page that you create on cuPortfolio. This may include answering a few questions about yourself and your goals in the course.

Vulnerable sector check (1%): due Friday, September 29

As noted above, you will need to apply for the VSC in order to complete the requirements for this course. You will need to provide evidence of this application through Brightspace by Friday, September 29.

If you think you will be unable to apply for a VSC, please email me as soon as possible, and by September 29 at the latest, so that we can discuss possible solutions.

2. Book activities ((2 x 2.5%) + (2 x 10%))

We will have two in-class 'book activity' weeks, and you will be asked to create individual cuPortfolio 'book pages' during each of them.

In-class book activity weeks (group activity) (2 x 2.5%): the weeks of Sept 26-28 and Oct 17-19

On book activity weeks, I will bring some children's books to class. You will be divided into groups, and asked (with your group) to choose one of the books, and to identify some possible philosophical themes or questions that arise in or from these books. This will form the basis for individual cuPortfolio work.

In-class book activity weeks will be worth 2.5% of your final grade, for a total of 5%. If you are unable to attend class during book activity weeks (e.g., if you have a valid medical reason), please let me know at least 24 hours in advance, so that we can discuss alternate arrangements.

CuPortfolio book pages (individual work) (2 x 10%): due Fri, Sept 29 and Fri, Oct 20

During book activity weeks, you will be asked (as an individual) to create a cuPortfolio page for each of these books, in which you discuss some of the philosophical themes arising from the book. These pages will be due at the end of each book activity week. Each book page will be worth 10% of your final grade, for a total of 20%.

3. Children's book lesson plan (1 x 2% + 1 x 20%)

In class we will survey the 'philosophy with children' (PwC) movement. As we discuss the different forms and goals of doing PwC, I will ask you to complete a new book activity:

Choosing books (group activity) (2%): due Friday, October 20, but you can (and maybe should!) do this as soon as your group is formed

You will be asked (with your group) to choose two children's books. You can do this by choosing from a list that I will provide on Brightspace; books on the list will be available through the Carleton library. The list will be first-come first-serve by email – once a group emails me with their book choices, those books will no longer be available to other groups – so I suggest choosing your books sooner rather than later.

Alternatively, you can choose your books independently, e.g., by going to the children's section of the Ottawa Public Library and finding books that you think have philosophical themes or raise interesting philosophical questions.

Your group must email me with your two book choices by Friday, Oct 20, at the very latest.

Creating a lesson plan for PwC (individual work) (20%): due Sunday, Nov 5, 2023

You will each be asked (as individuals) to create a cuPortfolio page with a lesson plan for doing PwC using one of the two books that your group has chosen. There are two provisos:

- (i) not every member of your group can choose the same book – your group should choose at least two members to write on each book; and
- (ii) you may not, for your own cuPortfolio page, use either of the books that you wrote about for a prior book activity.

After November 5, you will have the opportunity to revise your lesson plan, if you so choose. In order to be graded, revised lesson plans must be submitted prior to your group's experiential learning activity.

4. Experiential Learning Activities (15% + 10% + 5%)

Implementing your lesson plans and reporting on your lessons (15%):

Part 1: implementing your lesson plans (group activity): Early to mid-November (between Monday, Nov 6 and Friday, Nov 24)

**** Important: Please reread the sections above on obtaining a Police Records Check, as you will require a VSC to complete this element of the course. ****

A list of after-school programs will be made available on Brightspace. You will be responsible for contacting one of these after-school programs to arrange at least two (2) visits, during which your group will implement two (2) of the group's lesson plans for PwC. In other words, you will visit the after-school program twice, to read books and lead philosophical discussions with a group of children.

During each visit, two to three members of the group will be leading the discussion, and the other members will be creating an anonymized transcript of the discussion. *It is very important that no real children's names appear in this transcript.* Whoever leads the first discussion should be in the group that transcribes the second, and vice versa.

If you anticipate that you will be unable to complete this element of the course, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can discuss alternate solutions.

Part 2: Reporting on your lessons on cuPortfolio (individual work): due Sunday, November 26

This is the part where you report back to me about how your visits went! You will be asked to create a cuPortfolio page to report on the PwC discussion that you led, using the anonymized transcript that the other members of your group created.

Class presentation (group activity) (10%): Thurs Nov 30, Tues Dec 5, Thurs Dec 7

In the three final classes of the semester, you and your group will give a presentation to the class to discuss the experiences that you had of doing PwC. You will be able to sign up for one of the presentation dates through Brightspace.

Attendance on presentation days (5%):

It is important that you be present not only when *you* give a presentation, but also when your classmates do so. I am assuming that you will be present for your own presentation; attendance on each of the other two presentation dates is worth 2.5% of your final grade, for a total of 5%.

If you are unable to attend presentation days (e.g., if you have a valid medical reason), please let me know at least 24 hours in advance, so that we can discuss alternate arrangements.

5. Final exam (20%)

The final exam will be a take-home exam. I will ask you to put together a cuPortfolio collection, which will include the work you did over the semester, but to which you will add a reflection piece, in which you reflect on children's literature and philosophy, taking into account the literature that you have read as well as the experiential work that you have done for the course. We will also be working on these reflection pieces together in class during November.

Topics and finalized instructions for the cuPortfolio collection will be available on Brightspace on the last day of classes for the semester, **Friday, Dec 8.**

Your final exam / cuPortfolio collection will be due at the end of final exam period (**Dec 22, 2023.**) This date is firm, not tentative; it is set by the university, and not by me, and so I have no ability to change it. If you require extra time, you will need to obtain a deferral through the Registrar's Office. Please feel free to let me know if this is the case, as I will be glad to support you through the deferral process, if such support is desired.