

School of Humanities

Department of English

Literature's Children

Dr Ika Willis

Teaching Block 1

Unit Code ENGL39015, 20 credits

Unit Description for unit catalogue: (*maximum 150 words*)

This unit is an introduction to the figure of the child in English literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century. How and for what purposes has the child been deployed in literature, both as a character and as an implied reader? How is the child (reader or character) constructed as different from the adult, and how does the advent of psychoanalytic models of subjectivity at the turn of the century affect the construction of childhood? How are child characters used to explore concepts such as innocence, nature, knowledge, goodness and evil? How are implied child readers positioned in relation to adults, and in relation to ideology and the reproduction of cultural knowledge? What narrative and literary techniques are used to achieve this positioning?

Extended Description: (*if applicable*)

Contact Hours and Mode of Teaching:

One 2 hour seminar per week.

Methods of Assessment:

1 x 2000 word essay (33.3%), 1 x 4000 word essay (66.7%).

Essential Reading –

Theoretical Texts:

Jacqueline Rose, *Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Literature*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*

Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*

Literary Texts (full reading list will be given prior to the start of the unit):

Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*

James Barrie, *Peter Pan and Wendy*

Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*

Further Information (*e.g. contact tutor/ blackboard sites etc*)