

HI4369 Childhood in Modern Global History (Jackson)

Assessment: long essay (100%)



What is childhood? Was it invented? How has the concept of childhood differed across diverse historical, geographical and socio-economic contexts? These are the questions that will preoccupy us in this module. Focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries, but with reference to earlier periods, and covering Ireland, Britain, Europe and the wider world – including colonial settings and China – we will explore how the experience and perception of childhood changed. We will examine the hypothesis that childhood as a time of innocence, development and play was not a natural category but had to be ‘invented’ and consider different periods and locations as possible candidates for its invention or adaptation. From child labour and children in war to the children of elites and youth culture, we will construct a nuanced picture of male and female childhood from primary and secondary sources. This module will appeal to those with an interest in social and global history and the history of ideas.