

NCLC 375 - 005: Explorations of Adoption
Fall 2014, Tuesdays 1:30pm – 4:10pm Robinson Hall B218

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related appointment with Prof. Slick

outside of scheduled office hours OR Ms.

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Office hours: By Appointment with

Course Description:

The concept of human adoption has a long and diverse history spanning numerous cultures and significant time periods. It has been brought to the forefront of media in recent years with various celebrities turning to this form of procreation to establish families. What is often not understood nor appreciated are its political, economic, cultural and social benefits and consequences. We will attempt to explore this complex topic through each of these lenses.

Questions that will guide our semester journey include:

- How is the practice of human adoption defined in different countries and what does this mean for those wishing to adopt from different countries?
- What does history tell us about how the practice of adoption has evolved over time with regard to politics, economics, race, gender and class?
- What role does international/transracial adoption have on one's self-identity, especially considering their culture?
- How does the practice of human adoption impact how one defines 'family'?
- What has been the role of social media in influencing adoption practices and the adoption community?

Learning objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of basic adoption terms including the "adoption triad";
- Gain a better understanding of adoption through exploration of its history, economics, psychological, sociological and cultural topics resulting from the different voices that are part of the adoption community;
- Make intellectual connections across texts, theoretical knowledge, and hands-on learning experiences (both within and outside of the course);
- Strengthen your working knowledge of the following NCC competencies: critical thinking, global understanding, communication and civic engagement

Required readings & texts

- Javier, R., Baden, A., Biafora, F., & Camacho-Gingerich, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of adoption: Implications for researchers, practitioners, and families*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Askeland, Lori. (2006). *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster*

Care. Miriam Foreman-Brunell, Series Editor.

- Recommended: Families by Law
- There will be additional assigned articles that will be made available through Blackboard. You are expected to have read assigned articles before class and to be prepared to discuss the readings in class. To ensure that readings have been completed on time and to prepare you for class discussion, you may be given brief pop quizzes related to a given week's topic. Additionally, you are expected to check your Masonlive accounts on a daily basis for any updates relevant to the course (i.e. changes in class activities or due dates).

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Participation and Attendance: We are a Learning Community and important responsibilities come with participation in this community. These responsibilities include completing readings and assignments on time, actively engaging materials, coming to class regularly and on time with enthusiasm to discuss course materials, and listening attentively to comments made in class. Please note the grading policy at the end of the syllabus regarding participation and attendance.

Given the importance of active and engaged participation, **regular and prompt attendance is expected! Unexcused absences will adversely affect your final grade.** An absence is excused when due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. To claim an excused absence, you must provide a signed letter by a person in a position to make an authoritative determination as to the validity of the cause of the absence within three calendar days of your return from that absence. In cases where you know you will be missing class, please let me and the undergraduate teaching assistant, Priscilla Morales know as soon as possible. You are responsible for all announcements, assignments, materials and date changes covered or made in class while you are absent.

Use of cell phones & laptops: Please limit your use of your cell phones to announced breaks during a class session or just prior to and immediately concluding it. You are free to bring a laptop to engage in course-related work. However, I reserve the right to ask you to put it away if I or the teaching assistant see you on FB, playing a game or otherwise not engaged in the class activities.

Commitment to Diversity and Classroom Climate: New Century College is an *intentionally* inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability. This class assumes that informed, well-supported opinions, thoughts, and ideas deserve respectful hearings from others. Diversity in analysis and expression is the key to a successful course. Demeaning, intolerant and/or disruptive behavior or responses at any time are inappropriate.

➔ **Late Work.** Papers and other assignments are to be turned in to the teaching assistant, Priscilla Morales, as hard copy at the beginning of class on the day due. All due dates are indicated on the weekly schedule. **Late work will be reduced one letter grade per day that it is late** (including Saturday & Sunday). No work will be accepted over one week late without a valid written medical excuse or notice of death in the family. Please do not plan to turn work in to your instructor's mailbox unless you have specific permission to do so. Unless otherwise stipulated, work should be submitted in class in hard copy format; emailed and faxed material is not acceptable.

Email and Inclement Weather Policy: In compliance with a University-wide initiative, NCC faculty and staff will correspond electronically with students only through their GMU assigned email accounts. No assignments will be accepted via email unless specifically requested. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements.

Academic Honesty and Collaboration: George Mason University has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental principles to follow at all times are: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and 3) if you are uncertain about citation rules or assignment guidelines, ask me for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this course, please let me know. The University provides a range of services to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, personal issues, among other concerns.

Using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism! To quote directly from any text, use the exact words (including punctuation) just as the words, phrases, and sentences appear in the original text. Additionally, you must follow proper citation rules to indicate that you are quoting directly from a text (e.g. quotation marks, quote indentation, source identification). If you want to paraphrase ideas from a source, that is, convey the author's ideas in your own words, you must still cite the source, using an established citation format.

Using papers, presentations, and other materials from one course as work for this course is not appropriate. I expect that submitted work has been prepared for this class only! An exception to this rule is made for materials included within course portfolios.

Student Learning Resources

Writing Resources: Writing is an important component of this learning community and represents one facet of effective communication. You should use the Writing Center to assist you with assignments. The Writing Center is located in Robinson Hall, Rm. A114; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC): The staff members of the DRC assist students with learning differences or any other conditions that may impact academic performance. DRC is located in SUB I, Rm. 222; (703) 993-2474; <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc>.

Social Action & Integrative Learning (SAIL): SAIL is a terrific place to start if you are interested in getting involved in campus and community activities. This center sponsors numerous programs and activities that will help you develop leadership skills and gain experience. This is also the place to research possible service-learning placement sites for your learning communities. SAIL is located in Enterprise Hall, Rm. 442; (703) 993-2900; <http://sail.gmu.edu>.

Counseling Services: Professional counselors provide individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues. Counseling Services are located in SUB I, Rm. 364; (703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>.

Learning Services Program: Offers academic skill-building workshops as well as a tutor referral service; (703) 993-2999) and <http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/>.

Student Technology Assistance and Resource Center (STAR): The STAR Center is available to help students with technology needs, such as video, multimedia, desktop publishing, and web skills. The STAR Center is located in Johnson Center, Rm. 229; (703) 993-8990; <http://media.gmu.edu>.

Division of Instructional and Technology Support Services (DoIT): If you have any difficulties with accessing the campus network or on-campus computers, please contact the help desk. DoIT is located in Innovations Hall, Rm.416; 703-993-3178; <http://www.doit.gmu.edu>.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

As in any course, some adjustments to the schedule may be made during the semester. It is the responsibility of students to come to class regularly and frequently monitor their Mason email AND Blackboard accounts in order to stay informed about possible changes in activities or assignments.

Date	Topics/Class Activity	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Aug. 26	Welcome and Introduction to the Course Overview of assignments: -Assign Adoption Research Project groups -Assign adoption interviews	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in class quiz (not graded) • index cards
Sept. 2	Prof. Slick's Adoption Story Language of Adoption History of Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Being Adopted – The Lifelong Search for Self</i> • Chapter 1 & 2 – Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care • <i>Timeline of Open Adoption History</i> • Part I – pp. 36 – 42, p. 55: Handbook of 	

		<i>Adoption</i>	
Sept. 9	Depiction of Adoption in Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media Presentation of “Search”, “Reunion” and Open Records 	
Sept. 16	Transracial Adoption of Black and Biracial Children	<i>Part III – pp. 133 – 145 – Handbook of Adoption</i>	
Sept. 23	Tentative - Guest panelists: adoptees (international and domestic)	none	
Sept. 30	Open Adoptions + foster system Guest Speakers: Fairfax County Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children & Youth chapter 	
Oct. 7	International adoptions	<i>Chapter 5 - Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care</i>	
Oct. 14	No class	No Class	
Oct. 21	International adoptions continued View: Somewhere Between	none	-deadline for students to get feedback from Prof. Slick on adoption interview questions
Oct. 28	International adoptions continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Guest Speaker: Susan Brionez, adoptive parent) OR Adoptive & Birth parents (Defining “family”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guest panelists: TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Real Parents in Adoption/ A Paradigm Shift Frank Ligtvoet</i> Exploring Birth Countries <i>Searching for Birth Parents</i> 	
Nov. 4	Group Project (rough draft of presentations) Politics & Business of Adoption View: The Journey Home: A Romanian Adoption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review test content 	<i>Chapter 3 - Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care</i>	Each group presents for no more than 10 minutes to get feedback from class -Rough draft of paper due (25%)
Nov. 11	Legal Issues in Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hague</i> 	Groups are given

	Group Project Time	Convention (International – Outline) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption Laws National Adoption Center 	feedback on their projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video Reaction & Analysis papers due
Nov. 18	Depiction of Adoption in Children’s Literature	Chapter 6 - Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care	Adoption Interview papers due
Nov. 25	Group Projects – formal presentations	None	Groups Present -final papers & presentation due (75%)
Dec. 2	LAST class session: In Class Exam final course evaluations	None	Final Exam (graded)

Grading Scale for this Learning Community	
93-100 A 90-92 A- 87-89 B+ 83-86 B 80-82 B-	77-79 C+ 73-76 C 70-72 C- 69-60 D 59-0 F
Descriptions of Graded Requirements	Points
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arrive more than 5 minutes late WITHOUT prior approval = 5 points deducted overall 2. Leave more than 5 minutes early WITHOUT prior approval = 5 points deducted overall 3. Absent without medical documentation = 10 points deducted overall 	
Paper #1: Video Reaction & Analysis During the semester, we will watch two videos that deal with adoption in different ways. Pick ONE video to write your paper. This paper will incorporate your reaction, reflection and analysis of the video in regard to the issues and research discussed in class.	200
Paper #2: Adoption Interview (see handout on Blackboard for instructions)	200
Final Exam (combination fill in the blank and short answer/essay)	300
Group Project	300 First draft = 75 Final draft =225
Total points	1000