AMS 311, Popular Culture and American Childhood (Instructor: Rebecca Onion, rebeccaonion@gmail.com)

**Assignment Sheet: Final Paper**

For this assignment, **due to me via email by 5 pm on Weds, May 9,** you’ll produce a 2000-word (about eight double-spaced pages) paper about a topic of your choice. Here’s what I’ll be looking for when I grade.

**Structure:**

* Introductory paragraph that avoids the “generality trap” we’ll discuss in class. A good technique for an intro paragraph for this kind of a paper is to tell the reader about a little piece of textual evidence you found that’s particularly interesting and that represents your argument well.
* Thesis paragraph that tells me up front what your argument is going to be, and that then provides a “roadmap” to the rest of the paper (“first, I will discuss x theme, then move into y theme, then finish by looking at z theme”). The Undergraduate Writing Center has a good handout about crafting a thesis statement here: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/node/68> We’ll be discussing thesis statements in class in a peer-review workshop before the paper is due.
* Any number of supporting paragraphs that look directly at the text of the primary sources that you’re examining, using that textual evidence in order to make your argument. Sometimes you will apply arguments from secondary/scholarly sources in order to prove your points about your textual evidence; this is where that will happen.
* A conclusion that ties up your evidence in a bow, reiterating your thesis and reminding me how the evidence that you discussed proves that thesis.

**Substance:**

* Choice of topic: I’ll be looking to see that your topic is the right size for this paper. The choice of topic and imposition of proper boundaries can do much to help you create a paper that is specific enough to fit within eight pages and allow for close reading and analysis.
* Sources: I’ll look for use of primary and secondary sources. I want to see evidence that you’ve engaged with the arguments of other scholars who have looked at your topic, theme, or historical period. This means your bibliography should include at least two—the more the merrier!—well-chosen scholarly sources.
* Analysis vs. opinion: I want you to look at your primary sources in terms of a class theme, to identify and draw out patterns within those sources, and to argue for their significance in historical and cultural terms (see: the ever-present handout on ways of analyzing sources). I care less about whether you think the sources are “good” or “bad” (for kids, society, adults, etc).

**Mechanics (The Usual):**

* Well-formed and complete footnotes in Chicago Style. A Works Cited page at the end of the document, also in Chicago Style.
* Well-embedded quotations that are unpacked and analyzed, and that do not stand alone.
* Spelling, grammar—you know the drill. Tip: If I find spelling errors that could have been caught by Spellcheck, that makes me think you didn’t care enough to clean your work up before submitting. This is not the mindset you want to provoke in somebody who’s evaluating your work! A Lesson for Life.