

Jason K. Swedene
Sabbatical Report
Sabbatical Leave: Spring 2014

I first want to express my appreciation to the sabbatical committee and to *Lake Superior State University* for granting me a sabbatical leave for the spring semester of 2014. The purposes for which my sabbatical was granted were threefold: 1) to write a philosophical dialogue on childhood, 2) to study in Italy, and 3) to develop a course on childhood and the humanities. Upon my sabbatical's conclusion and after teaching humanities sections since my return, I would also bring to light a fourth purpose for which my sabbatical leave contributed, which is), 4) to enhance my courses and enliven my philosophical, historical, and aesthetic approach to Ancient Rome, Hellenism, Early Christian Rome, Late Medieval Assisi, Renaissance Florence and Rome, Baroque Rome, and Neoclassical Rome.

1) To write a philosophical dialogue on childhood



I composed over 250 pages of a dialogue on my sabbatical. The dialogue form, -- think “script” or “conversation”--, has been one of the most influential modes of presentation to show the dynamism of philosophical conversation. The *Dramatis Personae*, or dramatic characters, express viewpoints, questions, conclusions, and reasons that model the real life application of a philosophical conversation. Current authors such as Peter Kreeft and Rebecca Newberger Goldstein have brought philosophy to a wider audience through recent dialogues, including the latter’s *Plato at the Googleplex* which imagines Plato returning to modern society.

My work seeks to build on this trend in philosophy in public life, yet instead of bringing the character Plato to the present (as Goldstein has done), my fictional characters suggest ideas and arguments from the history of philosophy as they attempt to clarify, if not solve, issues in modern parenting. I am thus able to integrate ideas without having to keep my characters in the mold of philosophical personages and systems of old.

The tentative title is *A Thinker's Guide to Raising Children: What Philosophers, Artists, and Historians Have To Say to Today's Parents*. (Admittedly, I need a less academic sounding title if I want to market the book to intelligent people from outside the academy, which I do.) The writing is finished and I am presently revising it a third time. This term (Fall 2014), I am preparing a camera-ready manuscript and seeking a non-academic publisher so as to reach a wider and different audience than my previous books. A sample of the *Thinker's Guide* may be found [here](http://www.lssu.edu/faculty/jswedene/documents/ThinkersGuideSample.pdf) (<http://www.lssu.edu/faculty/jswedene/documents/ThinkersGuideSample.pdf>).

2) To study in Italy,

Because of this sabbatical, I was able to travel to Italy to study and observe the various depictions of childhood in the religious and civic monuments in Rome, Assisi, Florence, and Herculaneum. Given that the eleven-month *American Academy of Rome* grant did not materialize and my sabbatical leave was only for a semester, I obviously could not spend as much time as I would have liked in Italy. Even so, I believe I have accomplished my goal of discovering, studying, and implementing new knowledge into my book, childhood course, and humanities courses.

3) To develop a course on childhood and the humanities

In Spring 2015, I will be teaching an Honors course on Childhood in the Humanities. The course is a direct outcome of having the time and travel to study and write on the subject.

1. Course Description: *Give course number; title; number of hours per week of lecture and/or recitation and laboratory; number of credits; and brief description with prerequisites and/or co-requisites. Use current catalog format.*

HONR	Enter Course Name Here	Credits
202	Childhood in the Humanities	3,0

2. Benefits and Reasons for this Course:

The Honors Program fosters an interdisciplinary approach to learning and perceiving ideas. That poets, artists, philosophers, musicians, historians, psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists continue to write volumes on children and childhood attests to the ubiquity of the topic. The study of childhood will, moreover, reveal trends in the disciplines (e.g., styles in art, schools of thought, problems of methodology, and the politics of childhood). Yet, for many students, childhood is more than a subject to be studied. It is a recent phenomena recalled (hopefully, one recalled with joy). Many students are heading towards parenthood, making this an opportune time to think about how the rich cultural repositories of Childhood (with a capital 'C') and how they can help themselves and their children to live more deliberately.

Tentative Course Outline

- I. What is a Child?
 - a. Swedene, *Introduction*
 - b. Ch. 3 H. Cunningham's *Children and Childhood (The development of a middle class ideology of Childhood)*.
 - c. David Archard, *Rights and Childhood*, Chs. 2 and 3.
 - d. John Wall, *Ethics in Light of Childhood*, Ch. 1
 - e. Gareth B. Matthews, Ch. 1, 2
 - f. Ch. 1, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, Shahar.

- II. Children in Society and State
 - a. History (Augustus on educating Claudius, 154-5; and Quintilian 'Advice to Fathers on Education', p. 286; from Lewis: *Eyewitness Rome*)
 - b. Plato and Aristotle, *Laws and Politics*
 - c. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, Ch. 10: Childhood in Affluent Societies, p. 114.
 - d. Technology (Swedene)
 - e. Archard, Chs. 10 and 11
 - f. Education
 1. Rousseau (from *Emile*)
 2. Locke
 3. Montaigne ("Of the Education of Children"
http://essays.quotidiana.org/montaigne/education_of_children/)
 4. Homeschooling
 5. Homework

6. How and Whether to Teach Religion (Sweden)
7. Philosophy in Education (Philosophy for 7-year-olds:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/education/6264378.stm>)
8. Montessori, Ch. 2 of Carol Garhart Mooney's *Theories of Childhood*

III. Moral Issues

a. Personhood, Rights, and Well-Being

i. The Moral Life of Babies (NYT):

1. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
2. Right and Wrong (Video:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRvVFW85lcU>)

ii. Rights

1. *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (United Nations)

(<https://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/child.asp>)

2. Gareth Matthews, Ch. 6

iii. Circumcision

iv. Lying to Children (Sweden)

v. Modeling Behavior (Sweden)

vi. Organized Sports (Sweden)

vii. Children and the Environment

1. Sweden, a) Environmental Impact, b) Which Diapers Should I Buy?

viii. Child Abuse and Human trafficking

1. Archard, Ch.14.
2. <http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/en/stories/March2014/sexual-exploitation-of-children-global-response-urged-to-increasingly-global-crime.html>

IV. Children in and apart from the Family

a. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, Childhood in Classical Civilizations, Ch. 3

b. Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*

c. Judith Rich Harris, 1995, *The Nurture Assumption*

(<http://faculty.weber.edu/eamsel/Classes/Child%203000/Lectures/3%20Childhood/SE%20development/JudithHarris.html>)

d. The Family in Plato's, *Republic*, Bks V and VI.

e. *Travel* (Sweden),

- f. *Media* (source to be determined)
 - g. Economics in the modern family
 - i. Cost of Children
 - ii. Children as Consumers ('Consuming Kids?')
- V. Children and Death
- a. When a Child Dies
 - i. Plutarch's letter to his wife
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Consolatio_ad_uxorem*.html
 - ii. Kubler-Ross, Ch.11: in *A child's perception of death in Children and Death*, p. 147, Papadatou and Papadatos, eds.
 - b. When a Parent Dies
 - i. *Beyond the Ridge*, Paul Goble (children's book)
 - ii. Kubler Ross, *On Children and Death*, Ch. 6
 - iii. "Agrippina Pleads for her life" (Jon E. Lewis, ed, *Eyewitness Rome*, p. 192-4.
 - iv. Ch. 7: *A child's perception of death in Children and Death*, p. 87, Papadatou and Papadatos, eds.
 - c. Death (Sweden)
- VI. Children in Art, Philosophy, Literature, and Music
- a. 40 portraits of children
 - b. Children and Music
 - i. "Tiger Mother"
 - <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/11/132833376/tiger-mothers-raising-children-the-chinese-way>
 - 1. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/05/08/tiger-moms-dont-raise-superior-kids-says-new-study/>
 - 2. <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704111504576059713528698754?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424052748704111504576059713528698754.html>
 - ii. Sweden "Music in the Home"
 - iii. Music: BBC "Educating Isaac Program"
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b041vg00>
 - 1. 18th century music education
 - iv. Plato and Aristotle on music
 - c. *Cat in the Hat*, *Lentil*, *Little Prince*, *Goodnight Moon* (and 2013 poem at <http://poets.org/poetsorg/poem/goodnight-moon>)

- 4) To enhance my courses and enliven my philosophical, historical, and aesthetic approach to Ancient Rome, Hellenism, Early Christian Rome, Late Medieval Assisi, Renaissance Florence and Rome, Baroque Rome, and Neoclassical Rome.

While on my travels, I made short videos of course material (such as the *Medici-Ricardi Palace*, the *Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus*, *San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane*, the *Scavi in Herculaneum*, etc.). I've begun to use them and I will continue to provide access to them on Blackboard to provide context as we discuss how modern life in Italy is affecting the past's antiquities and how the past fits into the present. Because the audio quality needs improvement, audio overdubs to the videos are necessary.

In the near future, I will work with LSSU's International Studies Director to bring students to Europe for supplemental course experiences and credit-bearing study opportunities.



Jason K. Swedene with the Raphael's *School of Athens* at the Vatican Museums (April 2014)