

The Poynter Center

for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions *Newsletter*

Indiana University Bloomington

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The Ethics and Politics of Childhood

What, if anything, is special about childhood and children? Are children “blank slates” on which adults write the script, or do children have special capacities for insight that we lose as adults? Are they especially pernicious, or are they innocent of corruption? What limits, if any, are there on parental authority? Do children have special duties toward their parents? If so, how do those duties connect with our ideas about the moral basis for the family? Are children like other vulnerable populations that require special protections? In an age when alternatives to biological parenting are increasingly available, what is the basis for an adult’s claim to a child? What is the proper role of the state in relation to children and families? These are several of the questions the Poynter Center Fellows will be studying in 2004-05.

The Fellows will be studying such topics as (a) using children in scientific research, advertising or entertainment (b) childhood development and self-determination; (c) children and the law; (d) the idea of children’s rights; (e) the basis and limits of parental authority in shaping children’s lives; (f) children’s welfare in medical care, employment, family life, and adoption; (g) children, education, and the politics of virtue; (h) familial, social, and institutional responsibilities to children who are “normal,” “special,” “gifted,” or “challenged.”

Participants will meet for discussion ten times over the academic year in a seminar directed by Richard Miller, director of the Poynter Center. Two new Poynter Center

staff members, Byron Bangert, Research Associate, and Melissa Seymour, Research Assistant, will join the fellows in the seminar. The Poynter Center will host two guest lecturers who will speak on this year’s theme. Fellows will also produce a publishable article or chapter that draws on their seminar discussions and research.



The 2004-05 Poynter Fellows
Front row: Robert Kunzman, Sandra Shapshay, Aviva Orenstein, Melissa Seymour, Michael Grossberg
Back row: Samuel Odom, Byron Bangert, Richard Miller, Jonathan Plucker

Brief Biographies of the Fellows

Michael Grossberg is Professor of History & Law at Indiana University and Editor of the *American Historical Review*. His research focuses on the relationship between law and society in American history, particularly the intersection of law and the family.

Robert Kunzman is Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. His research focuses on moral and civic education, and he teaches courses in secondary education foundations and methods, as well as graduate courses in curriculum studies.

Samuel L. Odom is Otting Professor of Special Education. He coordinates the Special Education program and is also head of the doctoral program in Special Education. His scholarly interests are in research methodology and evidence-based practice in special education, social relationships of children with disabilities, inclusion of children with disabilities in early education settings, effective treatments for children with autism, programs that prepare preschool children for success in the public schools, and international approaches to early intervention.

Aviva Orenstein's scholarship concerns the intersection of evidence law and American culture. She is currently writing a piece for lawyers on how to interview children. She teaches civil procedure, evidence, legal ethics, and children and the law.

Jonathan Plucker is Associate Professor of Educational Psychology and Cognitive Science, where he currently directs the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (formerly the Indiana Education Policy Center). His research interests include educational policy, creativity and intelligence, and giftedness and talent development.

Sandra Shapshay is Lecturer and Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Philosophy, where she teaches ethics and bioethics. Her research interests include the relations between art and morality in Kant and Schopenhauer, as well as human reproductive cloning from an ethical-aesthetic standpoint and the issue of justice in the allocation of healthcare resources.

See the web site for more information about each participant:
<http://poynter.indiana.edu/fellows.shtml>

Religion and the Presidential Election of 2004

Religious preference of the voters could have a strong impact on the presidential election this fall, according to Professor Daniel Conkle of the School of Law in Bloomington. Conkle, the Robert H. McKinney Professor of Law, spoke at the Poynter Center on Friday, October 1. The presentation was offered in cooperation with the IU Alumni Association and the Law School's Alumni Weekend.



Professor Daniel Conkle during his presentation October 1.

Professor Conkle noted three types of issues related to religious politics and voting. The first is religion-specific, including the relationship between church and state, such as the words "under God" in the pledge of allegiance and government funding for faith-based initiatives in social services. The second is morality that is based on religious values, including abortion, the definition of marriage and the family, stem cell research, and issues of war, peace, and civil and human rights. The third area concerns the religious identity of the candidate as a part of his character. In this election we have President George Bush, who has been quite open about his evangelical protestant faith, and Senator John Kerry, who is a liberal Roman Catholic.

Professor Conkle noted the existing religious gap, in which people who are conservative in their faith tend to support Republicans (with the exception of African-American Protestants and Jews, who tend to be Democratic). He suggested that the Democrats have two possible responses, to invoke secularism or to meet the challenge head on and identify one's own religious beliefs.

Healthcare Ethics Seminars

The Poynter Center continues its Healthcare Ethics Seminar series with Byron Bangert coordinating. Thus far this fall Richard B. Miller led a discussion on "The Ethics of Human Enhancement," and Sandra Shapshay, from the Philosophy Department, led a discussion on "The Ethics of Cloning."



David Smith, Phil Stafford, Troy Sadler, Sandra Shapshay, Judy Granbois, and Richard Miller discuss the ethics of cloning.

Moral Issues in Medical Philanthropy

The Poynter Center is undertaking a study to explore moral issues and motivations in medical philanthropy, thanks to a grant from the IU Center on Philanthropy. Richard Miller and Byron Bangert will lead the study, which will explore questions of altruism, social justice, and professional commitment in the world of health care. Their project will be a form of moral ethnography, in which they will interview premedical students, medical

students and physicians about their motivations for volunteering for medical philanthropy work here and abroad; about the religious, personal and professional meanings they attach to their work; and the moral tensions they encounter.

Results will be disseminated through publication, cases and commentary, presentation at professional meetings, and a workshop.

Coming this Spring

March 3, James Childress from University of Virginia will present the Matthew Vandivier Sims Memorial Lecture.

March 7, Gareth Matthews from the Philosophy Department at the University of Massachusetts will present a lecture on the Ethics and Politics of Childhood.

April 7, Rob Reich of the Political Science Department at Stanford will present the second lecture in the series.

New Staff

The Poynter Center welcomed three new staff this fall. **Byron Bangert**, Research Associate, completed his Ph.D. in Religious Studies this summer. Byron, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has taught religious ethics and Western religious traditions at IU. He is coordinating the Medical Ethics Seminars and will be doing research on the Moral Issues and Medical Philanthropy project this year.

Melissa Seymour, Research Assistant, is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Philosophy. She will coach the Ethics Bowl team and is spearheading a new initiative to build a digital case repository in practical ethics.

James Bourke, Research Assistant, is a senior in Philosophy, Political Science, and has an individualized major in Nonviolence in Theory and Practice. James will be researching various projects and is currently

working on the ethics of war, intervention and occupation.

Poynter Center Newsletter

This newsletter is published twice a year by the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions at Indiana University and mailed free of charge. We welcome additions to our mailing list.

Glenda Murray, Editor

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