

Spring 2-18-1999

## Re-Inventing American Childhood: How did the nineteenth century heart of the home become the twentieth century child of the state?

Judith Sealander  
*Bowling Green State University, jseala@bgsu.edu*

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The Institute for the Study of Culture and Society (ICS) presents  
**Re-Inventing American Childhood:**

How did the nineteenth century heart of the home become the twentieth century child of the state?

**A talk by Judith Sealander**

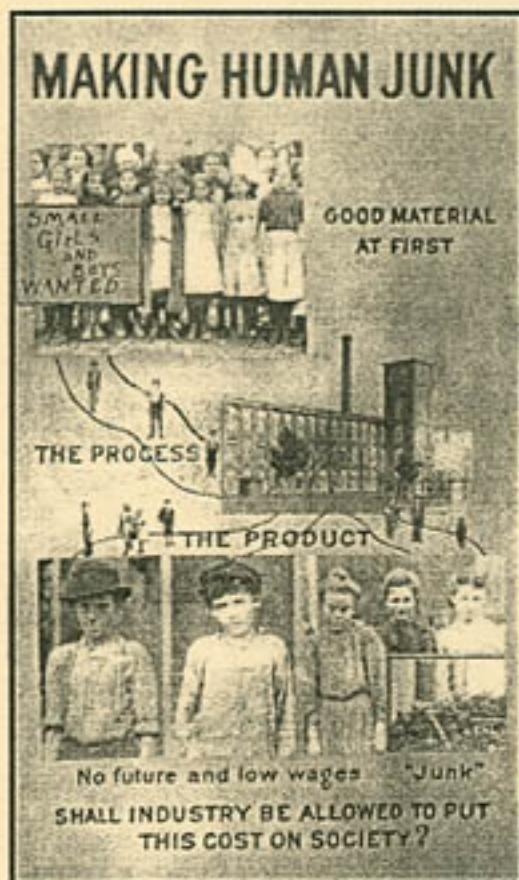
**History Department and ICS Scholar in Residence**

**Campus Room, University Union**

**Thursday, February 18, 2:30 PM**

Among the topics raised will be:

- the curious history of child labor legislation
- the unfinished twentieth century debate over compulsory education
- the invention of "tracked," "special" and "preschool" education
- mandatory medical treatment for children
- the failed legacy of juvenile justice
- periodic twentieth century "child abuse crises"
- state aid to poor children



Professor Sealander will outline the major subject of her current book-in-progress: state efforts to regulate children's work, education, health, and welfare. She demonstrates how a byzantine welter of laws and policies transformed the attitudes about children that Americans were supposed to support. Asking "What have been the consequences of a twentieth century public reinvention of childhood," she suggests that by end of the twentieth century, coming of age had become a public ritual. It was and is one frequently in conflict with an earlier nineteenth century rhetoric that glorified families, increased the responsibilities of mothers, and sentimentalized children as the heart of the home.

Judith Sealander is the author of four books, most recently the prize winning *Public Wealth and Private Life: Foundation Philanthropy and the Re-Shaping of American Social Policy, From the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Johns Hopkins, 1997). In addition, she has coauthored or contributed to eleven other scholarly books, edited several microfilm series, and written documentary film scripts. Currently she is consulting on the PBS series, "The American Experience," editing a major volume on the history of American public health, and working on a new book that examines 20th century American regulation of the experience of childhood.



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