



Edward Hicks, *A Peaceable Kingdom*

## Children and Nature

HONOR 2810-04

Tuesday and Thursday 12:25-1:45

GC 1770

This course examines the development of our attitudes towards both children and nature – as precious resources to be protected and, simultaneously, as raw material to be tamed to benefit others. How have the child and nature been defined, on their own and in relation to each other, in various cultural contexts? How does the child function as a bridge between the “natural” and the “social”? How have these concepts been used to uphold a sense of the human as imbricated within but also separate from the natural world? How do gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability affect how the child and the child’s relation to nature are constructed and employed? And how can more nuanced and inclusive notions of the child and nature help build more equitable and sustainable futures? The link between children and nature is nowhere more evident than in children’s literature. Children’s literature assumes sympathy between children and animals and, at the same time, teaches children that “growing up” means leaving behind certain aspects of their nature. Hardly fixed, however, this literary engagement also reflects the cultural values and intellectual traditions in which these books were written. This course uses children’s literature as a lens through which we explore the protean link between children and nature as it morphs in response to multiple discourses: classical philosophy, Christianity, Enlightenment rationality, Romanticism, Darwinism, Marxism, imperialism, postcolonialism, and modern environmentalism.

Readings will include: *Aesop’s Fables*, William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Books*, Charles Eastman’s *Indian Boyhood*, Johann David Wyss’s *The Swiss Family Robinson*, Dr. Seuss’s *The Lorax*, Pam Muñoz Ryan’s *The Dreamer*, Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu’s *Zabrah the Windseeker*, and Sara Pennypacker and Yoko Tanaka’s *Sparrow Girl*