How do different societies shape the ways that children come to understand, speak, and act in their worlds? How do the ways that parents and caregivers interact with and socialize their children reflect broader patterns of social standing and cultural ethics in a particular society? How does this caregiving affect children’s gender identities, as well as their patterns of engagement with other individuals and communities in a diverse society? And how are patterns of childcare and child development changing around the world today, in the face of modern education, communications, economies, and polities?

In this course, we seek to answer these questions by exploring care-giving and child development in different societies around the world. Our explorations look across the child’s life course, from infancy to adolescence, and in informal settings as well as formal institutions like schools. Our investigation explores cross-cultural dimensions of childhood and and childcare, while at the same time developing a cultural and psychological- anthropological framework for understanding how and why childhood and childcare vary. In pursuing this aim, we also look at the ways in which different cultures, religious traditions, and educational orders shape how children learn an identity, and how and why patterns of child care and development are changing in so many parts of the world today.