

Their Past, Their Memory?
A one-day interdisciplinary workshop hosted at King's College, London

Part of the AHRC-funded Teaching and Learning War Research Network to explore young people's engagement with and receptivity to the cultural memory messages of the two world wars from an international comparative perspective.

We welcome abstract submissions from academic researchers and educational practitioners in schools, museums, non-profit organisations, archives and heritage organisations.

Date: Friday 15th September 2017

Call for papers:

At the centenary of WW1 in the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand young people find themselves front and centre of both state-sponsored and community-level commemorations. As the two world wars fade from living memory, young people across the Commonwealth have been singled out as those who will be carrying the memory of the war forward. Early indications suggest similar emphasis will be placed on young people in the 80th and 90th anniversaries of WW2.

It is at this juncture, as the commemorative focus in Britain and the Commonwealth shifts from WW1 to WW2, that new questions arise about 1) the ways these cataclysmic events are taught in the 21st century, 2) what cultural memory messages feature in education, 3) how young people respond to and interpret these messages and 4) the relationship between education and commemoration. While study of memory and war remembrance has intensified in recent years, the way young people engage with the cultural messages about these seminal historical events is largely unexplored. Educational sites where memory of the two world wars are communicated and received are multifarious including (amongst many examples) curriculum content, text books, field trips, museum exhibitions and youth panels, theatre (performance and education packs), re-enactment, and creative writing. Interrogating the practices of teaching and learning about war remembrance has the potential to illuminate how memories of war are shaped.

As Roediger and Wertsch identify, education is one of the 'core disciplines for a new field of memory studies' as 'many of the almost unconscious attitudes that students have about the past' are traceable to elements of 'the educational process'. The two world wars – as crucial moments of crisis where the 'British world' came together as a larger community of common interest – remain significant features of the curriculum, both formal and informal, in Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. At the same time, they raise important questions about the teaching of the history of the British Empire, an area of heated contemporary debate across the Commonwealth. What is being

remembered via teaching and learning activities, why, and with what consequences for young people? How as researchers and educators do we measure student receptivity and ensure an authentic portrayal of their voice and perceptions? To what extent are these issues in the teaching and remembrance of the two world wars relevant beyond the British world, particularly in former non-white colonies such as India, Jamaica and Kenya? Furthermore, how do educators in Britain and internationally negotiate the distinctions between different white, non-white and indigenous experiences of war in their educational practice and offer inclusive teaching? What are the challenges of teaching and commemorating war in ways that engage young people of diverse backgrounds?

The workshop is about theory and practice, researchers and educators. We hope to hear

from researchers exploring these topics and questions from a theoretical and practical perspective, and who draw on empirical examples from both within and beyond Britain.

Equally, we wish to hear from educators at all levels and across different kinds of institutions (schools, museums, non-profit organisations, archives and heritage organisations) regarding how they work at the nexus of remembrance and education of the two world wars. While not exhaustive contributions may address the following topics in relation to the two world wars (including the Holocaust and the British Empire):

- Current practices of remembrance and education inside and outside the classroom
- Education as a site of memory
- Heritage, education and commemoration
- Purposes of remembering and educating
- Inclusions and exclusions in curriculum and content
- Inclusive teaching and remembrance for young people from a diversity of backgrounds
- Knowledge, politics and power in ‘remembrance education’
- Thanotourism/dark tourism
- Youth engagement, attitudes and reception
- Case studies from beyond Britain and the Commonwealth (particularly India, Jamaica, and Kenya)
- Methodological challenges and innovations in the co-production of memory studies research with young people

The event will be structured around short presentations of no more than 15 minutes ensuring maximum time for group discussion.

General queries and abstracts of no more than 200 words should be sent to Catriona Pennell (C.L.Pennell@exeter.ac.uk) by 9 June 2017.

Please include your name, organisation/institution and contact email in the abstract.

While the workshop is free to attend for all, the AHRC is also providing fifteen travel bursaries of up to £100pp for those travelling from outside the Greater London area – please indicate on your abstract/in your email whether you would like to be considered for the bursary. Priority will be given to PGRs, ECRs, and representatives of non-academic institutions/organisations.