

**EuMePo**

JEAN MONNET NETWORK

GERMANY · HUNGARY  
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# REMEMBERING PAST INJUSTICE, ENVISIONING THE FUTURE.

Explorations into debates on and pedagogical approaches to memory politics in a trans-Atlantic perspective

**CANADA, AUSTRIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, HUNGARY, AND POLAND**

COURSE &  
FIELD SCHOOL  
*in*  
MEMORY POLITICS  
2023

MULTILINGUAL  
DIGITAL BROCHURE  
*for*  
HIGH SCHOOLS, MUSEUMS  
& UNIVERSITIES

DEBATES  
*with* EXPERTS  
INTERVIEWS  
WEBINARS





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## INTRODUCTION

Historical narratives are a driving force in how contemporary polities define their collective identity and visions for the political community. Over the past years, references to Fascism, National Socialism, and Communism have taken centre stage in mobilizing history for contemporary political struggles (most notably in Russia's war in Ukraine or in the growing popularity of authoritarian nationalism). The following questions have been the focus of UVic's Jean Monnet Network *European Memory Politics: Populism, Nationalism, and the Challenges to a European Memory Culture* (2019-2023, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Canada projects housed at the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria.

*How are the 'Age of Extremes' (Hobsbawm) and its atrocities remembered and politically mobilized in the 21st Century? In what way will the transformation in commemorating this past alter the anti-fascist commitment and the memory of the victims of war and genocide on which Western democracies have been based since 1945?*

The projects have pursued these questions with the help of an interview series with experts, numerous webinars, an expert database, a sequence of high-profile publications and the development of new pedagogical approaches in the broader field of memory politics. For more see our EUCAnet.org website: <https://www.eucanet.org/projects/memory-politics/>

One critical initiative to promote innovative experiential learning environments was the course "Remembering the Past Injustice – Envisioning the Future: European History and Memory Politics Field School 2023" led by Dr. Oliver Schmidtke and Janine Wulz at the University of Victoria in May-June 2023. It was designed around the three-week Study Tour in Memory Politics in Europe. The Study Tour was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and the generous support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Canada's project *Towards a Deepening East-West Division of Europe*. In addition, the Study Tour received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and two grants from the University of Victoria (*Nimrod* Hungarian Mobility Award and the Experiential Learning Fund Grant).

# COURSE & FIELD SCHOOL *in* MEMORY POLITICS 2023

# 1



The field school was one of the most engaging, fun experiences I've had. As a history student, I felt very fortunate to get an opportunity to immerse myself in sites of memory that I spent several years studying in class. I learned a great deal both about memory politics in different parts of Europe and how collective learning with a group can be very effective for retaining knowledge. From Vienna to Trieste, I had a wonderful time and feel I am a better scholar after the trip.

*Elena Senecal*

I am incredibly grateful that I was able to go on this study tour, I learned so much in so many ways, and it was an incredible experience that I personally would not change anything about.

*Maia Vasco*

This study tour was everything I hoped it would be. I loved the tour and the opportunity it gave me to learn about the histories of many different countries firsthand. Being able to see the differences in how each country approaches and remembers such a dark part of history is truly fascinating.

*Kalea Palmer*

Each country and each experience allowed me to learn about the Holocaust and helped me to reflect upon my own previous understanding and knowledge of the topics. I was able to compare and contrast between the European countries and Canada and improvements that could be made when learning about the genocides.

*Rowan Salverda*

One of the biggest insights I gained from this tour was the importance of challenging myself to identify my own biases, and engage with learning even when it may be contrary to my own understanding of events.

*Emma Newton*

This trip opened my eyes to a whole new area of Holocaust studies, and despite the hopelessness I sometimes felt of being only one person and not knowing what to do, Atso make the world a better place, even if it means only impacting one person at a time.

*August Kriste-Yee*



The course was designed based on the participation in the **European Memory Politics Study Tour**. Students explored how modern history and in particular the memory of the Holocaust is commemorated and politically utilized in European countries, including *Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, and Italy*. The study tour was three weeks long and provided an exceptional experiential learning opportunity for 18 students from UVic who visited sites of memory, such as former concentration and death camps, museums, and memorials, engaged with politicians, scholars, activists as well as communities who are stakeholders in memorial politics. In addition, strategies for memorializing the Holocaust and genocides in the future stood at the center of attention. Participation in academic and policy events in Vienna, an academic conference and a youth panel in Budapest allowed the students to gain insights in the newest academic approaches to the complex topics of Holocaust education.

During the study tour, students were asked to write daily in a reflective journal and participate in activities designed to instigate individual and collective reflections. These included for example the task to take a stone from a place in Canada that was important to the student and leave it on a grave or memorial site honouring a Jewish tradition of commemoration. After the study tour, students engaged in reflective assignments and the creation of public outreach resources such as podcasts, short movies or an art piece.

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One thing that I do know for certain is that this experience is something that I will treasure for the rest of my life and I wouldn't have traded it even if I would had known going into it the sadness, stress, trauma, and heartbreak that would have ensued. But please make no mistake, there was far more joy, happiness, laughter, and smiles throughout the trip as well; after all you can't cherish the happy memories without the ones that brought sadness and pain. ... through all these memories I do feel like a better person and that was something I only hoped I would become going into the field school.

*Vanessa Wheaton*

Having the opportunity to spend a month touring Europe while learning about memory politics was an experience that has left a lasting impact on how I view the world and approach all aspects of my education. Something that particularly fascinated me as I travelled across the continent was the various methods through which information was presented. I noticed that every piece of information I read whether it be in a museum or on a discreet roadside plaque had its own rhetoric.

*Emili Duff*

## MAY 29TH-JUNE 23RD

### CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE OF VISITED SITES AND ATTENDED EVENTS

**University of Victoria:** In class sessions: discussions of the history of the Holocaust, memory politics in Canada, memorial culture and politics in Austria, Poland, Hungary and Italy, specific memorials and contested memory.

**Vienna:** City Walk with Bernhard Weidinger (Juden- and Heldenplatz, deserters memorial, sites of contested memory such as the Karl Lueger memorial); guided tour and meeting Andreas Kranebitter, director of the Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance (DÖW); Round Table on Holocaust Education and Memory Politics with high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Education and the Federal Chancellery; EUCAnet Round Table on Holocaust Distortion at the Jewish Museum in Vienna in cooperation with the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies and the Ministry of Education (speakers included Jochen Böhler, Helga Embacher, Éva Kovács, Ljiljana Radonić and Matt James).

**Oświęcim:** Visiting Museum and Memorial Auschwitz-Birkenau in a 2-day intensive guided tour; meeting with Holocaust survivor Zdzisława Włodarczyk; visiting the synagogue in Oświęcim and reflective meetings.

**Kraków:** Walking tour Jewish Krakow (Kazimierz) and the Jewish Galicia Museum.

**Vienna:** Visiting the Euthanasia Memorial at the Spiegelgrund and Otto Wagner Church; meeting with activists at the Slovenian Student Union; Guided tour at the University of Vienna with Herbert Posch.





**Budapest:** Student workshop on memory politics with students from the *Eötvös Loránd University* (ELTE); Jean Monnet Network Conference “Memory Politics in Europe - Towards a Deepening East-West Divide; Konrad-Adenauer Foundation Canada KAS Panel I”; Memory politics in a regional perspective and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Canada Youth Panel with the Zachor Foundation for Social Remembrance; I-Walk city tour; guided tour at the House of Terror; Guided Walking Tour by Ildiko Barna on Hungarian Memory Politics in the Field including sites as the monument of National Martyrs, Memorial of National Unity, Liberty Square.

**Klagenfurt/Eisenkappel:** Guided tour at the resistance museum Persmanhof with Janine Wulz; discussion on memorial politics in the Alpe-Adria region; hike to places of resistance; guided tour at the former Mauthausen Subcamp Loibl by Janine Wulz.

**Trieste:** City tour on memorial politics with Francesca Pitacco; visiting the former concentration camp Risiera die San Sabba; guided tour at the Foibe die Bassovizza with Boris Strukelj.

Opposite page / **Left:** In-class seminar session, Centre for Global Studies at UVic, May 29th 2023 **Right:** City walk with Bernhard Weidinger, Vienna/ Austria, June 3rd 2023

This page / **Left:** Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim/Poland, June 7th 2023 **Middle:** Roundtable on Holocaust Education and Memory Politics, Ministry of Education, Vienna/Austria, June 4th 2023 **Right top:** Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim/Poland, June 6th 2023 **Right bottom:** Guided Tour at the University of Vienna with Herbert Posh, in front of the Siegfried Head, June 11th 2023









## INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

### of the European Memory Politics Study Tour

The overall goal of the study tour was to create an extraordinary learning experience that allows students not only to experience sites of memory and engage in memory politics discourses but also reflect and bring their learning in conversation with topics relevant to their personal, academic, and political lives. Through visiting memorial sites, researching memorial landscapes, and engaging with community organizations, students were introduced to differing ways of memorialization in European countries and how these are transformed over time not least in response to changing political priorities and discourses. Moreover, learners studied how different groups affected by the Holocaust are remembered and how their experiences are represented in memorial sites. A major goal of the tour was enabling a transnational discourse about memory politics among young scholars and, activists, practitioners, and established academics, about memory politics in European countries and Canada, and how we can learn from Holocaust memorialization for the ways in which genocidal practices towards Indigenous peoples are commemorated in Canada and vice versa.

## PUTTING THE PUZZLE TOGETHER

### *The many perspectives on memory politics*

The study tour was designed to touch on different aspects on memory politics and draw attention to the complex realities associated with a single memorial site. The idea of this memory tour was to show the many interests, actors, conflicts, and uses around memory of the Holocaust and genocides today. It is not only countries that have distinct forms of memory politics; this is also true for regions, borderlands, communities, and institutions. Their memory politics are embedded in global and transnational discourses around memory, that, e.g., take place at the institutions of the UN or the European Union as well as in newspapers and social media. Many questions are asked in these debates: Who is involved in memory politics? How are different countries dealing with a shared traumatic past and their own wrongdoings? How is memory (not) preserved and represented? How do we deal with conflicting memories? And: what is an appropriate scholarly way to discuss these difficult questions?

## MAJOR TOPICS OF THE STUDY TOUR

### **Who are the actors of memory politics?**

How the past is remembered and used in today's society is shaped by individuals and organizations and institutions with different interests that are tied to the present and not the past. During the study tour, students encountered different actors on the stage of memory politics: representatives of museums, directors and leaders as well as museum guides, volunteers, and civil servants working in Jewish museums and documentary archives. They discussed with the representatives their respective agendas, their role in public discourse as well as their passion and motivation. During the meetings with politicians and representatives of political institutions, such as the Austrian Ministry of Education, the study tour participants were introduced to some of the ideas that drive educational initiatives in this field, the process of creating new policies, and how policies as The Strategy against Antisemitism are implemented and monitored. Furthermore, the group was able to meet 'history activists' (Gutman & Wüstenberg, 2021) and volunteers from youth organizations, minority associations and museums, who are organizing grassroots events and protests to challenge the ways of how the past is remembered. In addition, numerous days were reserved to meet and discuss memory politics with academics who shared their research and insights with the students.

### **How is the past represented in different countries?**

The study tour was focused on learning about the history, forms of memorialization and politicization of the past in four countries. In Austria, as a perpetrator country, students learned about the reluctance to acknowledge the country's involvement in Nazi-crimes and the activism and memorial culture that aims at accepting responsibility as a country. In this context, study tour participants found out about the rise of the extreme right-wing party FPÖ and now its representatives use history and ideologies of hate in their politics. In Poland, during the visit of the Auschwitz memorial the group learned about current debates on understanding the Holocaust and the politicized controversies regarding Polish collaborators during occupation by Nazi Germany. Visiting the former Jewish quarter in Krakow allowed them to learn about the prosperous Jewish life that was wiped out by the Holocaust and how, in a place of mass tourism, it is remembered today. Visiting Budapest allowed the group to engage with scholars of memory politics during a conference and analyze the transition of the memorial landscape in the city over the past years, and how the right-wing regime of Victor Orban uses the past, including the the first world war, the Holocaust, and the Hungarian Communist regime, for nurturing Hungarian nationalism today. In Italy, students learned not only about the memory politics of the 2022 elected Prime Minister Georgia Meloni and her positive comments towards the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, but also about the politization and negotiation of remembering Fascism, Italianization, resistance, and National Socialism in the border region around the city of Trieste during the 20th century.

### **What can we learn from survivors and how can we preserve their memory?**

The study tour was one of the last few opportunities to engage with survivor testimony in person. During our stay in Oswiecim, the city where the Auschwitz memorial is located, students were able to meet with Zdzisława Włodarczyk, a survivor who shared her story in a moving encounter. This event emphasized that memorializing the past is also about remembering the life and death of humans; it is about doing justice to the memory of suffering and to the victim of genocides. An important input towards centering the experiences and voices of survivors was nurtured by collaborating with an innovative project at UVIC (The Narrative Art & Visual Storytelling project) on telling the stories of Holocaust survivors through graphic novels.

### **How to engage scholars with memory politics?**

For many students, the study tour was the first opportunity to participate in an academic conference, meet international experts and scholars and discuss their research with them. The Budapest conference on memory politics brought together academics from different countries and disciplines, contextualizing the experiential learning with in-depth analysis and discussion. Together with other conference participants, they visited local memorials and museums, discussed the politics surrounding them and shared interpretations of the changing memory landscape. The conference was also a unique opportunity for students to see “what is out there”, as they learned about new research fields, burning questions and were invited to think about their prospects as researchers in academia. In this sense, the study tour provided a real professional development experience.

### **How do societies deal with conflicting memories?**

People can experience the same event very differently. Memory politics often use specific memories of an event to support specific arguments, myths, and ideas, while other memories are marginalized or neglected. The study tour visited sites of conflicting memories in the borderlands of Austria and Slovenia as well as in the Borderlands of Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia. Meeting with activists and educators in these regions, we learned about how the past is used in politics for defining nations and borders, not only in terms of citizenship but also in cultural commemoration of the past as the central use of language politics as a way of defining a nation, but also othering and excluding minorities in past and present politics.

## PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING DURING THE STUDY TOUR

The *European Memory Politics Study Tour* was developed within the frameworks of experiential learning, place-based learning, and project-based learning. These frameworks support the idea of learning through activities, engaging with places and developing (research) projects led by students.

**Experiential learning:** Learning through experience is an ideal framework for a study tour, as it differs from other learning approaches by centering the active engagement of learners and reflection of experienced stimulations. Learners reflect, think and act through (conscious or unconscious) internalization of experiences (Beard & Wilson, 2001). One major component of this learning approach is the importance of reflection. During the study tour, reflective sessions were facilitated on most days to allow students to process their experiences, discuss open questions and analyze the learning. Reflection sessions included innovative and student-centered methodologies, arts-based approaches and meditation.

**Place-based learning:** The study tour offered many opportunities of place-based learning, where students would visit sites where history took place, memorials were built, and conflicted memories crystalize. This approach gave an opportunity for a unique learning experience, differing from reading about a place or seeing pictures. It allows for seeing a place in context of its environment, experience how others engage or not engage with the site and use resources on site of museums, archives or memorials as resources for answering historical and political questions with a particular emphasis on the relevance of the sites for today (Blair, 2016; Gregory, 2000)

**Project-based learning:** A major part of experiential learning is the transfer of learning to students' own lives and environments. The framework of project-based learning aims for students to become active learners and co-developers of their learning experience. During the trip, students engaged in public outreach within regular blogposts and started to develop outreach and public history projects. Their projects include podcasts, films, brochures and teaching materials, aiming to bring their experiences back to the Canadian memory landscape and engaging with communities in Canada.

### **What comes after the study tour? Individual and collective learning, new adventures, and more questions to ask.**

The study tour did not only bring students to European countries to learn about European memory politics, it also related this experience to reflections on struggles with Canada's history of genocide and its memorialization. The impact of this learning experience on students' future personal and professional lives can be profound: Students decide to become teachers, to share their knowledge with the next generation, students work on academic projects on memory politics in Canada and/or Europe, and students



plan to apply for a Masters program to deepen their research. However, there is also a notable effect outside of academic work in the broader public: a new understanding of listening to the voices of survivors and other affected by a traumatic past, a new understanding of the importance of places and spaces to learn, reflect and process, and the power of working together on changing the future.

While this study tour addressed many issues about the past and present, there are even more questions to ask for the future. At a time of growing hate-crimes, antisemitism, and racism, it is more important than ever to find engaging ways to discuss with one another and learn together across deepening social and political divides.

### **BLOG Contributions - event summaries and student reflections**

[Study tour blogs](#): During the Study Tour on Memory Politics in Europe, faculty and students produced over 30 blog entries with reflections on their experiential learning experience. It was an integral part of the study tour's educational mandate to encourage the participants to think deeply about the sites of commemoration, people and debates that the group encountered while being on the three-week journey. This initiative provided an avenue for contemplation and engagement with the - at times - challenging and emotionally moving experiences during the study tour. In this respect, many of these blogs are a creative mix of academically informed knowledge and deeply personal deliberations. From a pedagogical perspective, these blogs – primarily authored by the student participants – display a form of engaged learning and reflection that goes far beyond what students normally encounter in a classroom setting.

[Study Tour in European Memory Politics: An extraordinary learning experience](#) by Beate Schmidtke // [The Adventure Begins](#) by Janine Wulz // [Stickiness of Memory](#) by Lisa Chalykoff // [Graffiti as an example of public memory politics](#) by Maia Vascol // [In the traditional centre of Jewish life in Vienna](#) by Oliver Schmidtke // [How to deal with contested historical memories](#) by Beate Schmidtke // [Holocaust Distortion: Contested Memory in Europe](#) by Matt James // [Exchange on Holocaust education and prevention of anti-Semitism](#) by Beate Schmidtke // [Overwhelmed in Auschwitz](#) by Vanessa Wheaton // [Tidal wave of emotions in Auschwitz – Birkenau](#) by Ellie Hiotakis and Simrat Ota // [Holocaust memory across Europe](#) by Alicia Ward // [Processing Auschwitz through Photographs](#) by Kästle Van Der Meer // [Reflecting on Evidence of Life](#) by Maia Vascol // [From a Jewish Paradise to Nazi Concentration Camps](#) by Jacob Moreno and Emily Duff // [From Munitions Factory to Constructed Memory- The case of Schindler's Factory Museum in Krakow](#) by Alicia Ward // [Slovenian Student Activists](#) by Elena Senecal and Rowan Salverda // [Vienna: Stumble upon memory](#) by Ana Paula Santana Bertho // [Siegfried's Kopf Memorial at the](#)

[University of Vienna](#) by Megan Klein and Anika Luteijn // [Engaging Generation Z in Topics of Collective Memory & History: Thoughts from the 2023 European Memory Politics Conference](#) by Kästle Van Der Meer // [Reliving History Through an IWalk: My Experience at a Memorial on the Danube River](#) by Kästle Van Der Meer // [Thoughts of an Inspired Student](#) by Alicia Ward // [Surviving Terror: From the Holocaust Memorial Center to the House of Terror](#) by Alicia Ward // [Intergenerational trauma presentation and the visit to the House of Terror](#) by Sarah Robinson and August Kirste-Yee // [Selective Memory: Német Megszállás Áldozatainak and Misrepresentations of the Past in Modern Hungary](#) by Kalea Palmer and Emma Newton // [Learning about the Fascist Past: Hungary's current approaches](#) by Alissa Schmidtke // [Budapest Conference: Memory Politics in Comparative Perspective](#) by Matt James // [Summaries of the Budapest June Conference](#) by Fazila Mat // [Some Aesthetic Aspects of Holocaust Memorialization](#) by Lisa Chalykoff // [Memory on the Border – Loibl Tunnel](#) by Alicia Ward

Overall, I was surprised and thrilled to realize what a different learning environment a study tour provides as compared to a classroom at UVic. The learning experience is simply more engaged, stimulating and – in a positive sense – challenging. Going to sites of commemoration helps to bring alive a history that my generation never experienced or for which there are no eyewitnesses to rely on.

*Alissa Schmidtke*

I sincerely enjoyed this tour as I was immersed directly into the ongoing academic dialogue surrounding memory politics. Having the experience of being able to physically attend and view specific European sites of memory allowed me to reflect and react to the content in a different and much more direct, emotional way, as opposed to just learning about these sites of memory through a textbook or academic journal.

*Ellie Hiotaktis*

**This page / Left:** Guided Tour at the University of Vienna with Herbert Posh, in front of the Siegfried Head, June 11th 2023

**Opposite page / Top:** World War Two Deserters Memorial, X-shaped monument in the heart of Vienna reads "all alone", June 5th 2023 **Middle:** Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstands Tour and Meeting with Experts, June 6th 2023 **Bottom:** The Memorial "The Shoes on the Danube Bank" in Vienna, consists of sixty pairs of iron shoes and commemorates the thousands of Jews who were murdered in the winter of 1944-45 by members of the Arrow Cross Party. Students participated in a self-guided IWalk put together by the Zachor Holocaust Remembrance Foundation and USC Shoah, Budapest/Hungary, June 14th 2023.



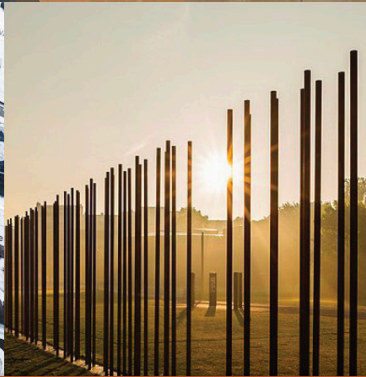






# MULTILINGUAL DIGITAL BROCHURE *for* HIGH SCHOOLS, MUSEUMS & UNIVERSITIES

# 2



## Using the Past to Define the Present



### An Introduction to Memory Politics in Canada & Europe

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**THE DIGITAL BOOKLET:****USING THE PAST TO DEFINE THE PRESENT:  
AN INTRODUCTION TO MEMORY POLITICS  
IN CANADA & EUROPE**

This booklet was a team production of young students and faculty. It introduces the theme of ‘memory politics’ and aims at explaining why the commemoration of history matters, offering thought-provoking examples and ideas for students at high schools and universities. It explores historical narratives from North America and Europe, places where these narratives have recently taken on significant meaning in public debates. The booklet includes many illustrations, links to other sources and stimulates discussions among students based on the many brainstorming questions we included in the booklet. It includes also a 10 minutes introductory video with young students from the University of Victoria. The publication’s main goal is to provide a tool for students, teachers, museum, and commemoration sites in order to raise awareness of how remembering the past is a complex task, and how it can be used for political purposes in the news, in political speeches, or on social media. The booklet is available in *English, French, German; and Polish*.

**English link to:** <https://anyflip.com/nqbw/gzly/>

**French link to:** <https://anyflip.com/nqbw/gaun/>

**German link to:** <https://anyflip.com/nqbw/jubp/>

**Polish link to:** <https://anyflip.com/nqbw/ttql/>

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“In this age of democratic backsliding, it is essential to learn to think critically about the narratives of the past which are often exploited by anti-democratic political forces. At the same time, it is essential to listen to voices that demand justice and recognition. This booklet is an effective tool in the hands of educators and students to start learning critically about memory politics. It clearly introduces the most important concepts related to memory politics, raises important questions about these concepts, and includes case studies to “flesh out” these concepts. Therefore, it will help to strengthen democratic cultures in the places where it is used.”

*Dovilė Budrytė, Georgia Gwinnett College, USA*

“This is a highly informative and accessible booklet that contextualizes the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada within the larger field of memory politics. The booklet is innovative in its comparisons between Canada and European countries which have dealt with violence, war, and genocide. The booklet is engaging, and references Survivors, Indigenous theorists, key events in the history of the Indian Residential Schools system, as well as signposting important issues related to reconciliation. I appreciate how the experiences of racialized peoples such as Black and Japanese Canadians are also included.”

*David B. MacDonald, Guelph University, Canada*

"This booklet is an excellent tool for students to understand the impacts that past events have in our time. The analysis of how history is intentionally used in the political arena to promote certain ideas and objectives should be part of the curricula in high school and early years of university. The booklet goes to great lengths to raise awareness about two interrelated processes: first, the need to give voice to persons and groups who have suffered and, in many cases, continue to suffer the effects of colonization and the presence of racism; and second, that it is through listening and engaging with these voices that we can change the narratives that are giving rise to populist nationalist movements that promote hate speech against minorities, ethnic and cultural outsiders, like immigrants and refugees."

*Carles Fernandez Torne, Ramon Llull University, Spain*

"This is the single best publication I have found that succinctly encapsulates what memory politics is—and more importantly—why it matters today across such a variety of geopolitical contexts. I highly recommend it to educators who are looking for an effective way to introduce their students to this critical concept in an informative and non-biased manner."

*George Soroka, Harvard University, USA*

"The educational office of the Hohenschönhausen Memorial in Berlin, which includes our educational staff as well as three memorial teachers supplied by the state of Berlin, agrees unanimously that the brochure provides an excellent overview and international comparison. For a publication to achieve both is quite rare. An additional benefit is that it includes references to contemporary issues, which makes it quite useful for working with pupils and students. We consider the brochure to be a valuable tool for civic education."

*Helge Heidemeyer, Vorstand der Gedenkstätte, Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, Germany*

"The booklet "Using the Past to Define the Present" is a wonderful resource for teachers, students and the general public interested in how history shapes both our present and our expectations for the future. While academia has been experiencing a memory boom for the last few decades – and these issues have increasingly been shaping our social, cultural and political debates – this booklet offers an accessible insight into these issues."

*Peter J. Verovšek, History and Theory of European Integration, University of Groningen, The Netherlands*

**CANADA**

Canada is considered a young country with a relatively recent past, but the history of the land's Indigenous peoples and Nations recount stories, knowledges, and connections to the land that have existed since time immemorial. Despite these rich and complex histories of Indigenous Peoples, Canada's national narrative has systematically excluded Indigenous cultures, identities, and languages since Confederation in 1867.

Embedded in Canada's current liberal political culture is a deep history of exclusion and horrific injustice. Land considered public in Canada is still referred to as the so-called crown land. Indeed, the very fact that these lands are referred to as crown land indicates the displacement of Indigenous governance systems and imposition of foreign (British and French) systems. As land is of pivotal importance to Indigenous people, to this day it is still the single most important source of conflict that results from the forceful displacement from their ancestral land on which they depend for their livelihood. Even under existing Canadian law, those Nations may have title and rights claims to those lands. Moreover, Canada has a legal commitment to respect these rights through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), of 2007, and Bill C-15, of 2021.

**Reconciliation** is defined as: "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour..."

"...we must restore what must be restored, repair what must be repaired, and return what must be returned."

Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015.

Yet, we are only at the beginning of a challenging and painful process of confronting Canada's colonial past. Critical contemporary Indigenous scholarship and

5. Canadian Confederation 1867.

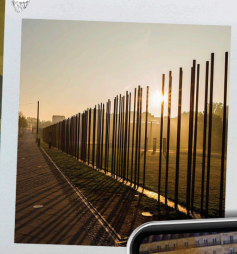


**What makes memory political?**

Memory becomes political when distinct historical narratives are used to shape current political realities.

This happens all the time!

In this respect, understanding memory politics is an opportunity to think critically about why history matters and for what reasons. Perhaps most importantly, the more you know, the more you will be able to see the relationships between power, memory, and even violence directed at certain groups in the past and present. Becoming aware of these patterns offers an opportunity to question negative past practices that promote violence, hatred and other destructive forces.



2. Berlin Wall Memorial, Berlin, Germany.



3. Commemoration against terrorist attacks at République place, Paris, France.

**GERMANY**

Germany has a long history of grappling with a horrific legacy; specifically, the legacy of the **Third Reich (1933-1945) and the Holocaust**. This painful process - called "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (addressing or coming to terms with the past) in Germany - has provided a moral and political compass for post-war generations.

The memory of the Nazi crimes has shaped modern Germany, its politics and social values. After avoiding or suppressing the memory of the Nazi regime in the post-war period, the commitment to 'never again' has gradually become the foundation of modern Germany. The strength of this commitment over time, however, has waxed and waned. And, the memory of the Third Reich and the Holocaust took on a decisively different political meaning in both German states from 1949 to German unification in 1990. While this memory gradually gained central importance for the Western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the Communist German Democratic Republic (GDR) - with its claim to be the 'anti-fascist state' - framed its political identity primarily based on class struggles and the achievements of the working class. In this narrative the Holocaust did not play a central role.



**What is a residential school?**  
 so-called residential schools are seen by many Indigenous people as prisons, death sentences or  
 labour facilities. They were designed and run through a partnership between the Canadian federal  
 government and the Catholic, United, Anglican and Presbyterian churches. These facilities operated for over  
 years with the primary intent of forcibly assimilating Indigenous children into mainstream Canadian  
 society. Young children – some as young as the age of three – were forcibly removed from their families  
 and placed into these institutions – often hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away from their  
 families. Once inside the institutions, Indigenous people were systematically stripped of their traditions,  
 languages, cultures, and values. Students were subjected to severe punishment, including starvation and extreme levels of physical and  
 sexual abuse. Loneliness was a constant. Many children died while attending these schools, but even  
 those who survived were often traumatized and died in the late 1990s.

Expert groups, such as  
 the Committee of the Cana-  
 dian Historical Association (C  
 the magnitude and origi-  
 nal injustices as "gen-  
 eral support of the Truth an  
 d Reconciliation Commis-  
 sion of Canada's Aboriginal  
 Injustices" of First Natio-  
 nal Peoples. This re-  
 port is the historical acc-  
 ount of 500 eye-witnesses  
 from 2007 and 2015.

In many ins-  
 tances, and their  
 contested, actors  
 often political ide-  
 all the differ-  
 Matter Mo-  
 and their a-  
 to colonial  
 a different  
 about nat-  
 re-inter-  
 power. In  
 fascinating  
 and for w-

"So why is it important to  
 understand the history of  
 genocide in Canada? Because  
 it is not history. Today's racist  
 government laws, policies and  
 actions have proven to be  
 just as deadly for Indigenous  
 peoples as the genocidal acts  
 of the past."  
 Pamela Palamater, Mi'kmaq lawyer.

matter to you?  
 Why are some forms of collective memory politically contested?  
 by different peoples and groups?  
 Can you think of examples of what Pamela Palamater refers to as ongoing "genocidal acts"?

illustrate how memory, in  
 particular, the memory of the  
 Holocaust, shapes the political  
 culture of Germany and its ongoing  
 political challenges, consider the  
 following quote by the former  
 German Chancellor Angela Merkel:

"This site obliges us to keep the memory  
 alive. We must remember the crimes that  
 were committed here and name them  
 clearly... I feel deep shame given the  
 barbaric crimes that were committed here  
 by Germans... Today we are experiencing a  
 rising racism, rising intolerance, and a  
 wave of hate crime... We are experiencing  
 an attack on the fundamental values of  
 democracy and a dangerous revisionism  
 history which is used for the purpose of  
 vilifying against certain groups."

such as the Auschwitz-Birkenau  
 Holocaust memorial, 2019.

# FRANCE



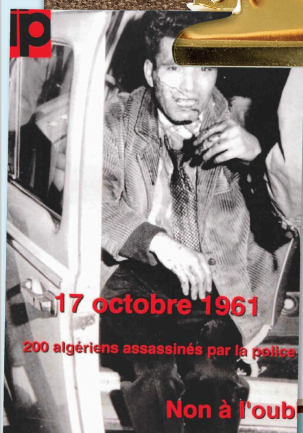
France is no exception regarding the significance of memory politics. Yet, in contrast to Germany, history is most often presented and understood as a source of pride and inspiration. The national political culture is aspirational, based on a delicate attempt to simultaneously glorify the grandeur of Kings and Emperors and the ideals of the Revolution and the Republic. Pulled in different directions, the French nation has never completely agreed on what a free, democratic, and egalitarian society should look like. These aspirations, represented by the national motto and the motto of the French Revolution - *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, and fraternity) - are still contested in contemporary France. Indeed, despite moments of heroism and triumph, France continues to struggle with its controversial past.

France was split in half by the Nazis, divided between the North and the South, which was directly annexed by the Third Reich, while the South, known as Vichy France, was ruled by and collaborated with the Nazis. After the war, General de Gaulle revived the myth that the entire France was resistant and the country to hide the role of the Pétain administration in the deportation of millions of Jews during centuries-old history of anti-Semitism).

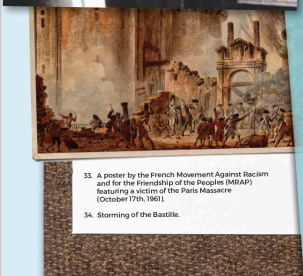
version of the open and inclusive  
 fundamental rights has  
 recent decades. For instance, in an  
 diverse France, immigrant groups and  
 that the great promises of the French  
 to them in the same way as white  
 people. Despite granting independence to  
 were under its colonial administration  
 territory of France is 17% overseas,  
 12 million people live who are not  
 national novel.<sup>28</sup>



32. Example of Vichy propaganda, from 1942.



This situation is further complicated by the fact that the French government has long avoided acknowledging dramatic events of its colonial past. One example is the Paris massacre of October 17, 1961, when 200 peaceful Algerian protesters were shot, beaten to death, and drowned by Paris police. The massacre has not been recognized for decades by state authorities. And although President Emmanuel Macron recently condemned the government did not offer an apology. Such episodes fuel debates on identity and France's post-colonial future.



33. A poster by the French Movement Against Racism and for the Friendship of the Peoples (MMAP) featuring a victim of the Paris Massacre (October 17th, 1961).  
 34. Storming of the Bastille.

Think about it  
 Can people have 'hyphenated' brains?  
 What do you think of when you hear the words 'French'?

## Understanding Memory Politics

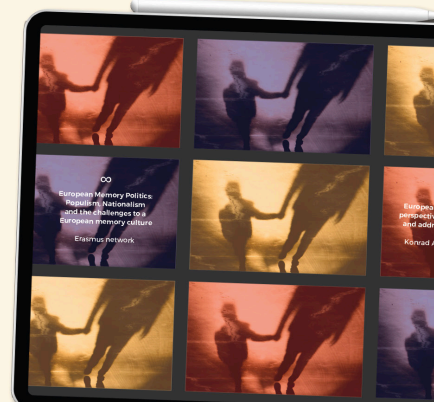
### Why History Matters

Memory Politics describes how (past) events and arguments are remembered and how this memory is used in politics to promote particular goals and objectives.

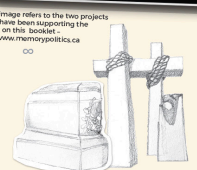
Societies are continually wrestling with how to remember the past. Some movements – such as efforts to promote understanding of the effects of colonization or presence of racism – often focus on giving voice to persons or groups that have not previously been included in conversations of memory.

Other movements – such as the rise of populist nationalist movements – often draw strength from maintaining certain narratives that have often excluded certain groups or ideas from participating. The engagement with history and the approach taken often shapes how these groups interpret or interact with present day matters such as statues, commemorative sites or even how history textbooks are written.

In this booklet, we focus on the political use of collective memory. Fostering your knowledge of memory politics enables you to gain a better understanding of what informs current political debates and challenges to democracy. Historical revisionism is one such example of memory politics in action. For instance, the resurgence of populist-nationalist parties is deeply couched in different reactions to national mythologies and historical traumas.



1. This image refers to the two projects that have been supporting the work on this booklet - see www.memorypolitics.ca



Collective memory passes through generations and coalesces in objectives, sites, monuments, artifacts and media and kinship. These memories are shaped by many factors such as culture, past experiences, education or family heritage. In this respect, memory is not fixed, but relative and continuously reinterpreted.

Questions to broa-  
 What are ways of remembering and addressing past injustices?  
 How does memory politics shape current politics and discussions within society?

# POLAND

Poland's national memory is critically shaped by a deep sense of suffering and victimhood. In its modern history, Poland was repeatedly divided up by major European powers and even disappeared from the map of Europe for over a century (see image 28). Most dramatically, Poland was violently occupied by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Most of the crimes of the Holocaust took place on Polish territory: three million Polish Jews were murdered by the Nazis. The Polish government never collaborated with the German authorities, but individual Poles turned Jews over to Germans. Many of the related traumas have not been worked through to this day.

Poles were treated by the Nazis as people of a lower category, destined to slave labor for the Third Reich. They suffered also under Soviet occupation, when between 309,000 and 330,000 Polish citizens were deported to other parts of the Soviet Union in 1940-41 alone. Further deportations followed after 1944 and even after 1945. Perhaps most infamously, the Soviet Union perpetrated a massacre of over 20,000 Polish officers and intelligentsia in the Katyn Forest in 1940. The memory of suffering and hardship associated with this foreign occupation still plays a central role in how Polish society defines its current national identity.



A critical turning point in Poland's history was the pro-democracy civil

The head of Polish Solidarity, Lech Wałęsa, said he wanted to turn the EU into the Fourth Reich. Solidarity is a Polish newspaper and Justice Party. Countries like Poland are in the prospect of a collapse on the basis of the...  
 Jarosław Kaczyński  
 Deputy prime minister

28. 30th anniversary of the founding of Solidarity



DEBATES  
*with* EXPERTS

INTERVIEW  
WEBINARS

3

Panel 2023  
MEMORY  
POLITICS

https://rc2s2.elte.hu/en/eumepo-conference-budapest-2023/

University of ELTE  
BUDAPEST

June 14<sup>th</sup> 2023 10:00 am CET  
Registration/zoom/link via info@euca.net

# Memory Politics in a Regional Perspective Towards a new East-West Divide?

 KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG  
Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

 University of Victoria | Centre for Global Studies

 EUCA net EUROPEAN COLLEGE NETWORK

**PANELISTS:**

 Dr. Piotr Oleksy (University of Poznan)  
 Dr. Kate Korycki (Western University)  
 Dr. Oliver Schmidke (University of Victoria)

**Moderator:**  
Dr. Beata Halicka (University of Poznan)

<https://rc2s2.elte.hu/en/eumepo-conference-budapest-2023/>



**CURRENT DEBATES WITH SCHOLARS****WEBINARS AND INTERVIEWS**

The **webinars** and **interviews** are an integral part of collecting expert voices on current issues related to the contested field of memory politics. They are short and are meant for a wider audience. All of the video material can be found on EUCAnet.org YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@EUCAnet>

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**WEBINARS:****EUROPEAN MEMORY POLITICS: POPULISM, NATIONALISM AND THE CHALLENGES TO A EUROPEAN MEMORY CULTURE.**

Throughout the duration of the projects (2019-2023) ten webinars bring together experts and scholars from different fields and regions, dealing with the ways in which the 20th century's past is (re)interpreted, commemorated, and narrativized in contemporary political life.

**24 MARCH 2021****[Contested Histories: Commemorating and Learning from Past Injustices](#)**

This webinar explored the role of experts in promoting critical historical literacy in the 21st Century; the means of engagement through which communities make memory available and meaningful to the public and the ways to address attempts to suppress or appropriate the memory of the past driven by particular political interests.

**28 APRIL 2021****[Contesting National Memory: Reinterpreting the Past in Poland and Hungary](#)**

This webinar addressed the issue of the linkage between the public commemoration of the past and the contested re-imagination of national identity in post-Communist states.

**11 MAY 2021****[European Memory from a Franco-German Perspective: a Memory of War or a Memory of Peace?](#)**

This webinar, comprised of two roundtables, on the one side explored the complex links between memory, identity, history and politics in Europe. On the other side it focused on the memory of peace and on the tri-national space of the Upper Rhine.

**21 JUNE 2021**

**[Collective memory and populism in Central Europe](#)**

This webinar with Polish experts addressed the rise of populism in Poland (and Central Europe) and its links to a resurgence of nationalist historic narratives.

**23 JUNE 2021**

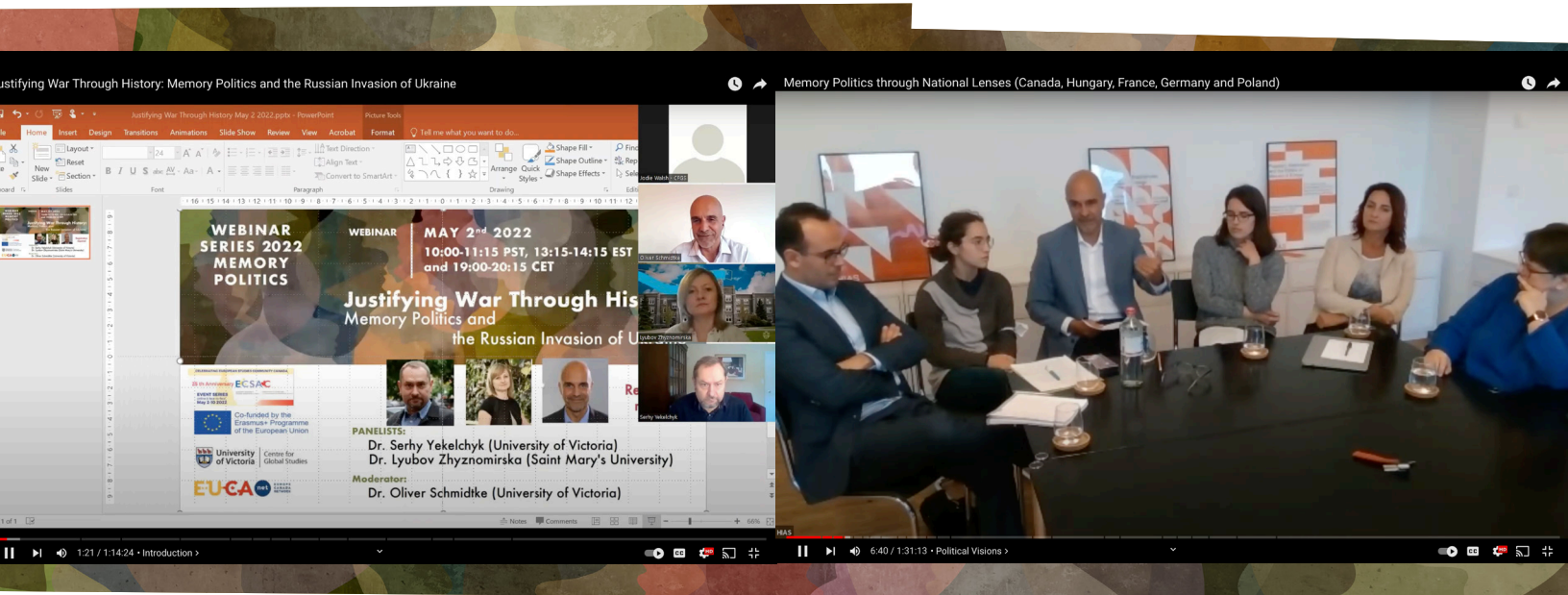
**[Contesting National Memory in Canada: The Role of the Right](#)**

This webinar explored issues raised by right-wing memory activism in Canada today and the new round of interest being shown by far-right groups in the politics of community memory and historical interpretation in this country.

**OCTOBER 2021**

**[Re-nationalizing the commemoration of the past? Memory Politics through National Lenses](#)**

This webinar explored how the 20th century's traumatic past is (re)interpreted and commemorated through national lenses. It also looked into the challenges posed to Europe's democratic culture and project of integration by populists' appeals to 'the people'.



**2 MAY 2022**

**[Justifying war through history: Memory politics and the Russian invasion of Ukraine](#)**

This panel discussed the role of memory politics and particular historical narratives in the current conflict in Ukraine.

**14 DECEMBER 2022**

**[Launch of the digital booklet on Memory Politics](#)**

In the first part of this online roundtable, experts and co-authors of the digital booklet “[Using the Past to Define the Present: An Introduction to Memory Politics in Canada & Europe](#)” explored the meaning of memory politics in public debates and the ways in which this issue can be taught to students. In the discussion that followed, experts at the Centre for Global Studies (University of Victoria) explored the importance of new ways of teaching about the meaning of historical narratives in Europe’s and Canada’s current political realities.

**12 JANUARY 2023**

**[Beyond Anti-fascism?](#)**

**[The rise of Giorgia Meloni and the transformation of national memory in Italy](#)**

The webinar addressed the transformation of Italian politics and society in the aftermath of the electoral success of Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d’Italia), a party with neo-fascist roots, led by the Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni. The panelists tackled the meaning of this political development for a critical re-evaluation of the country’s 20th century past and its authoritarian legacy of fascism and the *Resistenza*.

Beyond Anti-fascism? The rise of Giorgia Meloni and the transformation of national memory in Italy

Dr Amy King  
University of Bristol

WEBINAR SERIES 2023 MEMORY POLITICS

WEBINAR January 12<sup>th</sup> 2023  
9:00 am PST, 18:00 CET

**Beyond Anti-fascism?**  
The rise of Giorgia Meloni & the transformation of national memory in Italy

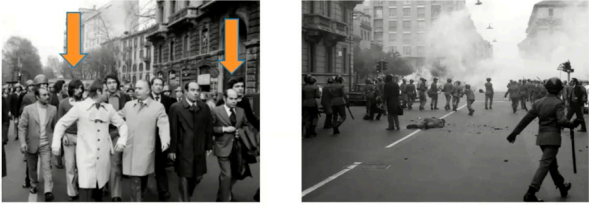
Co-funded by the European Programme of the European Union

University of Victoria Centre for Global Studies

EUGA

PANELISTS:  
Dr. Giulia Albanese (University of Padua)  
Dr. Amy King (University of Bristol)

Moderator:  
Dr. Oliver Schmidtke (University of Victoria)



Milan's 'giovedì nero', 12 April 1973, (and the 'March on Milan')

Settings

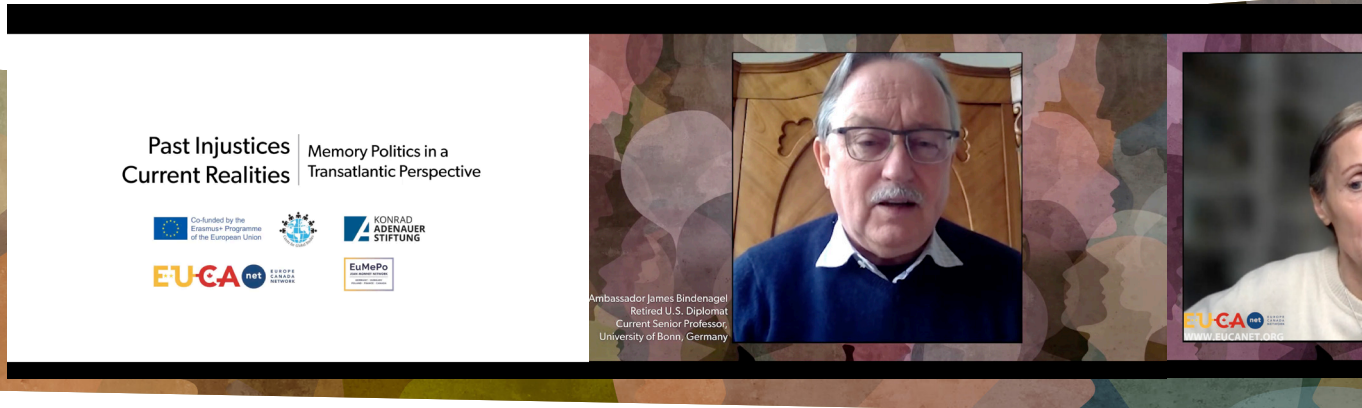
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**14 JUNE 2023**

**[Memory Politics in a Regional Perspective: Towards a new East-West Divide?](#)**

Focusing mainly on the cases of Poland and Germany, the panelists addressed the topic of whether Europe is headed towards a new East-West divide, the possible causes of current trends and how to interpret them.



## EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Selection of **expert video** series: “Past Injustices, Current Realities”. These video interviews revolve around the topic of memory politics and the ways to address traumatic pasts of the 20th century.

### [James Bindenagel, former US ambassador in Germany and professor \(Bonn University\)](#)

In this interview, Ambassador Bindenagel discusses the memory politics of the 20th century, a period that he describes as a “century of conflict.” He raises the central question of how we, as a society, have been able to respond to and commemorate genocides around the world. For Bindenagel, reconciliation is significant because it shapes the way individuals remember the past. In this respect, he stresses the importance museums and memorials as well as of day-to-day activities, such as facilitating interfaith dialogues or reconfiguring a country’s education system.

### [Dr. Bernd Scherer, author and philosopher \(House of World Cultures - Berlin\)](#)

In this interview, Dr. Scherer emphasizes the importance of understanding Germany’s colonial past alongside its history of the Holocaust. Scherer notes that the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party’s attempt to “re-nationalize Europe” includes trying to provide counter-narratives to challenge the long-standing commemorative narrative.

### [Dr. Brigitte Kather, academic and pedagogue \(German Resistance Memorial Center\)](#)

In this interview, Dr. Kather (German Resistance Memorial Center) explains how the Holocaust remains the central discussion point of controversial contemporary debates, but also how the existence of a resistance movement against Nazism is a critical subject. Speaking more broadly on the role of education, she also addresses the need for shared stories and human examples from witness generations.





### [Dr. Geoffrey Bird \(Royal Roads University\)](#)

In this video Dr. Bird discusses the importance of taking note of issues and events, both in contemporary times and in the past. For him, commemoration will always contain an element of controversy. According to Bird, in response to the risk of “history being used as a weapon, to weaponize a certain perspective” we need to find a common ground across cultures and generations.

### [Dr. Peter Verovšek \(University of Sheffield\)](#)

In this interview, Dr. Verovšek discusses how memory and history have had a resurgence in modern European politics. According to the expert, the two major factors for this are the end of the Cold War and the expansion of the European Union in 2004. Verovšek also stresses that open discussions and debates are necessary in order to bring ideologies together, in particular regarding collective understandings on what the past means.

### [Dr. Peo Hansen \(Linköping University, Sweden\)](#)

In this interview, Dr. Hansen discusses how memory politics in the EU “looks old-fashioned” as it does not fully represent the democracy through which it is shaped. He states that “collective memory around the EU politics is extremely selective”. With regards to the Swedish context, he notes that, despite some recent positive developments, migration continues to play a central role shaping narratives around memory politics.

### [Dr. Astrid Erll \(Goethe-University Frankfurt\)](#)

In this interview, Dr. Erll addresses the meaning of memory and the process through which memory is simultaneously shaped through our social cultures and individual nuances. She argues that memory exists in a spectrum that highlights “the interrelations of past, present, and future in intersocial contexts.”

### [Dr. Jenny Wüstenberg \(Nottingham Trent University\)](#)

In this interview, Dr. Wüstenberg’s addresses the inter-generational transformation of memory culture in Germany and new approaches have been generated also by grassroots initiatives. In this context, Wüstenberg highlights the significance of locally based attempts to better understand history and to provide an interpretative framework for addressing past injustices. Conversely, she depicts how – under ideological auspices – the memory of the Third Reich and the Holocaust is currently being re-interpreted by the far right in Germany.



Why is there a renewed interest in the history of the 20th century as a tool for politics?

Jean Monnet Network European Memory Politics (EuMePo):  
Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, the Konrad Adenauer  
Foundation in Canada and the Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria  
www.EUCAnet.org



## Addressing the Past - Shaping the Future: Memory Politics in Europe and Canada

Conference, University of Victoria, 21-23.10.2022



### EXPERT VOICES ON MEMORY POLITICS

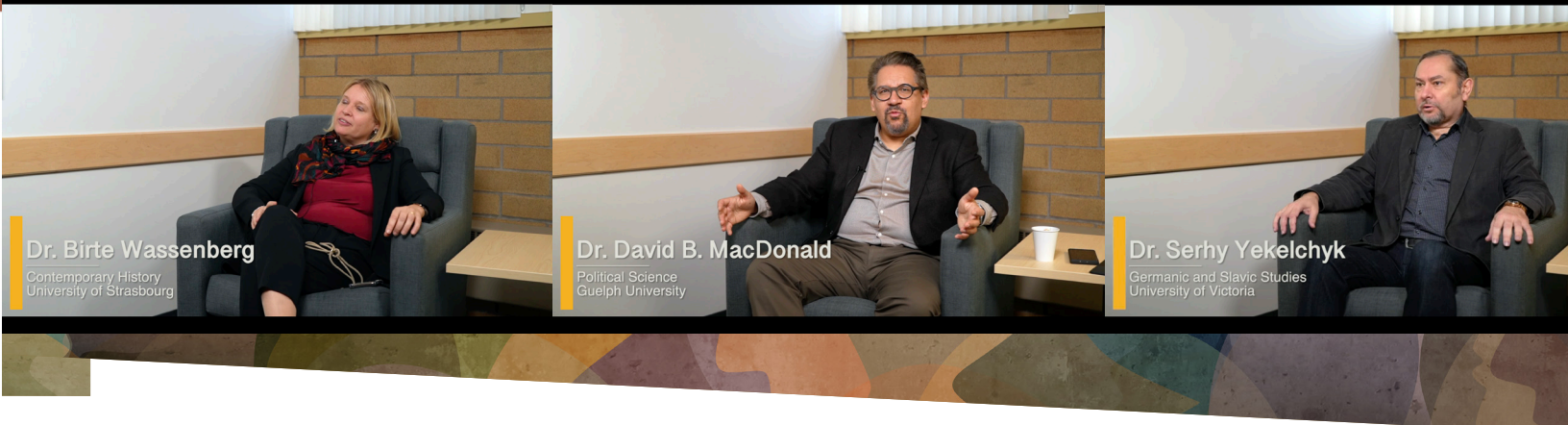
During the conference [“Addressing the Past - Shaping the Future” \(21-23 October 2022\)](#), twenty interviews were conducted with scholars from different fields of expertise to explore the question: “How is memory politics connected with issues of democracy and social inclusion?”. The interviews are part of the project “European and North American Perspectives on Commemorating and Addressing Past Injustices”, co-funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Canada and the Jean Monnet Network EuMePo, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union.

#### [Memory Politics - Democracy and Social Inclusion](#) [Dr. Birte Wassenberg \(University of Strasbourg\)](#)

Dr. Wassenberg explores how memory politics can have positive and negative implications for democracy and social inclusion. How memory politics is practiced depends on who is memorizing and what specifically is remembered. If memory is positively linked to democracy, it is specifically used to remember difficult periods of the past. The general population is engaged in discussions with the government to explore, interpret, and deal with the past. In a democratic arena, debate about the past is embraced to find paths towards reconciliation. On the other hand, a negative link in memory politics is when authoritarian states and extremist political parties use memory politics to re-nationalize discourse.

#### [Memory Politics and Activist Memory](#) [Dr. Dovilė Budrytė \(Georgia Gwinnett College\)](#)

Dr. Dovilė Budrytė discusses the concept of ‘activist memory’ under the umbrella of memory politics. She identifies activist memory as education about past trauma which is beneficial for supporting and promoting human rights. Focusing on the case of Lithuania, Dr. Budrytė stresses that focusing on our own community’s suffering is in fact exclusive and narrow. There is a need to understand trauma beyond the borders of one’s own community.

**Dr. Birte Wassenberg**Contemporary History  
University of Strasbourg**Dr. David B. MacDonald**Political Science  
Guelph University**Dr. Serhy Yekelchyk**Germanic and Slavic Studies  
University of Victoria

### [Memory Politics in Liberal and Illiberal Democracies](#)

#### [Dr. George Soroka \(Harvard University\)](#)

Dr. George Soroka explains how memory politics manifests itself in different ways in liberal democracies. While memory should be pluralistic and be discussed in a civilized fashion, all too often, memory is used for illiberal projects, such as promoting populist ideals in society. Of particular interest for Dr. Soroka is the rise of memory laws and how ‘prescriptive’ memory laws are used as a means of competing in the political process against opponents on the ideological spectrum. In contrast, ‘proscriptive’ memory laws are usually used by the political left to avoid the rise of societal taboos as they relate to a nation’s past.

### [Ukraine and Memory Politics](#)

#### [Dr. Serhy Yekelchyk \(University of Victoria\)](#)

Dr. Serhy Yekelchyk notes how democratic states that respect human rights tend to remember differently than states that are ruled by right wing populist parties and authoritarian dictators. In the current context of the Ukrainian war, while Putin wants to present it as a war about history (World War II), it is in fact a war about memory. What divides groups on both sides of the front is the attitude to the Soviet past and how current societies are creating their own lives in a post-community period.

### [Memory Politics and the Internment of Japanese Canadians](#)

#### [Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross \(University of Victoria\)](#)

In this interview, Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross explains how history is present within processes of social and political self-understanding. Dr. Stanger-Ross’s work focuses on the internment of Japanese Canadians in the 1940s. As it relates to memory, this history of oppression has never quite made it into the consciousness of Canadians. Through observing processes of self-understanding, he argues that we can discourage similar forms of ‘slippage’ in future moments of crisis.



### [Memory Politics in the Context of Canada's Multiculturalism](#)

#### [Dr. David MacDonald \(Guelph University\)](#)

Dr. David MacDonald posits that different settler states use memory to promote specific kinds of status quo. Using 'official' memory to preserve a status quo can however lead to structural violence, where certain memories compete with others and silence is created amongst certain groups. In this sense, Dr. MacDonald notes that the 'white' face of Canada is in fact engineered. Indigenous Peoples and Black communities in Canada have been finding spaces to share their narratives /memory, which reveals the false narrative that has been branded as Canada's 'official' mark.

### [Memory Politics - Social and Political Memory](#)

#### [Dr. Adele Perry \(University of Manitoba\)](#)

Dr. Adele Perry splits memory into two components. On the one hand, it is 'social' memory, where the past reflects social power and authority. There is an intimate and powerful connection between social exclusion and marginalization, power, and social memory. On the other hand, memory is highly 'political'. Memory politics calls into question institutions and how democracy is reflected in formal, less formal, and informal spheres.

### [Memory Politics and Democracy](#)

#### [Dr. Peter J. Verovšek \(Groningen University\)](#)

Dr. Verovšek argues that memory shapes how we fill the abstract idea of democracy with content. On the one hand, Western Europeans perceive that democracy emerges out of the crimes of the Holocaust and fascism. On the other hand, post-communist Europeans view democracy as the ability to make your own decisions. During communism, rights violations did exist, but the common experience of the people was loss of popular sovereignty. Dr. Verovšek also provides insight into the 'memory boom' and how memory is strategically used during economic hardship.

### [Memory Politics in Poland](#)

#### [Dr. Beata Halicka \(Adam Mickiewicz University\)](#)

Dr. Beata Halicka explores the unique way memory politics unfolds in Europe, particularly in Poland. From the post-war period onwards, two dominant ways of memorizing have existed. On the one hand, memory created in dialogue, on the other hand antagonistic memory, which plays with the dichotomy between those 'who belong to us' and those 'who do not belong'. Nevertheless, as a source of hope, Halicka stresses that organizing at the local level allows societies (on both sides of history) to collectively engage in meaningful and open dialogue on the history of central Europe.

**Memory Politics, History and the Threat to Democracy****Dr. John Lutz (University of Victoria)**

In this interview, Dr. Lutz defines memory politics as a special kind of politics because it has an emotional hold on people. The politics of memory works both for the left and the right, although it is more dangerous and ominous on the right. Either way it has little actual reference to history, and, in this sense, there is a threat to democratic space from both sides. A third threat to democracy comes from the ‘disappearing middle’, namely this space in the middle where people can meet and have discussions about the past and its meaning.

**Memory Politics and Democracy****Dr. Oliver Schmidtke (University of Victoria)**

In this interview, Dr. Schmidtke notes that memory politics and democracy are conceptually linked in three ways. First, in order for societies to move towards democracy and to overcome the trauma associated with authoritarian rule they need to provide a voice to the victims of those regimes. Secondly, memory provides a new political narrative for a political community, a way to describe the values and practices endorsed by the community and the past is an essential element to do this. Thirdly, memory politics and democracy are directly linked through storytelling that can be accomplished by opening a space to a multiplicity of actors.

**Memory Politics and Accountability - Dr. Matt James (University of Victoria)**

In this interview, Dr. James underlines the critical importance that accountability has for democracy. According to Dr. James, there can be no accountability - as the foundational element of democracy - without memory. In this perspective, memory politics points to the need of democracies to engage in long-term collective learning experiences with respect to the community’s shared history and in particular past injustices.

**Memory Politics and Canada’s Colonial System****Dr. Ry Moran (University of Victoria)**

In this interview, Dr. Ry addresses how memory politics is intimately connected to issues of power and the ability to reproduce structures of social exclusion and violence as they are manifest in Canada’s colonial system. Traditionally, the rights of Indigenous peoples have been silenced as they seemed incompatible with Canada’s historical narrative of a white settler society. As a result of long political struggles, Indigenous voices and the truth about the treatment of Indigenous peoples have entered more fully into the mainstream of Canadian society. According to Ry, the foundation of this process of reconciliation is the openness towards an often uncomfortable truth and towards examining the colonial foundations of a country such as Canada.

### Memory Politics as a Public Activity

Dr. Kristin Semmens (University of Victoria)

In this interview, Dr. Semmens defines memory politics as the public activity carried out by different groups who are promoting specific and often very divergent interpretations of the collective past. She explains that the collision of history and politics in memory politics takes place in the public sphere and because many of these issues are core elements of our identities they are prone to heated debates. Therefore, the politics of memory is tightly connected to issues of democracy and social inclusion and this connection can be variously shaped, depending on where memory politics are playing out.

### How to hold and preserve memory

Dr. Helge Heidemeyer (Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial)

In this interview, Dr. Heidemeyer explains that addressing a dictatorial past helps us learn what democracy is. Every 'remembering' then reveals how a state dictatorship is fundamentally different from democracy in terms of its fundamental understanding of leadership and legitimacy. It is therefore important to teach history in a critical manner, where we can understand that different ways of dealing with history are possible.

### The use of memory politics in Europe and in Canada

Dr. Piotr Oleksy (Adam Mickiewicz)

In this video, Dr. Oleksy compares the use of memory politics in Europe and in Canada. According to Oleksy, in recent years, talking about history and memory in Europe has become a problem for democracy, since it is connected to the problem of the 'dignity of the majority' and it is driven by resentment. By comparison, in Canada memory culture is driven by the idea of reconciliation and this broadens democracy's reach. Nevertheless, for Oleksy, memory politics presents a risk in that populist politicians will always try to exploit the feeling that the 'majority's dignity' is in danger to achieve their own political goals.

### Memory Politics in Hungary

Dr. Ildikó Barna (Eötvös Loránd University)

Dr. Barna describes how memory politics can serve democracy and democratic values, - if it is a shared memory. This is not the case in Hungary. There is no 'national minimum', which could agree on certain key points in society. Dr. Barna explains how Orbán's conservative government strategically uses memory politics to gain power by recreating the right conservative identity. 'Civil circles' have served the purpose of creating a movement of emotions to build a common conservative identity in the country.



### Memory Politics in the Context of Right-wing Narratives

Dr. Edwin Hodges (University of Victoria)

In this interview, Dr. Hodge explains that memory is a bedrock upon which we build our narratives of democracy and social inclusion. These are all rooted in memory as deeply held convictions about how our understanding of history informs our sense of self in the present. Dr. Hodge also notes that in the context of right-wing narratives, the concept of ‘counter-memory’ provides right-wing groups with an epistemological, historical, and emotional foundation to conduct activism in the present. These groups create a new kind of counter memory to reinterpret social history. Finally, he explores the ways in which spaces for dialogue can be created between polarized groups.

### Memory Politics in Canada

Dr. Helga Hallgrímsdóttir (University of Victoria)

In this interview, Dr. Hallgrímsdóttir notes that memory politics brings the notion of history to an emotional and individual level, relating it to both democracy and social inclusion. In this sense, Dr. Hallgrímsdóttir explains that emotional narratives are an incredibly powerful political tool, often used in ways that trigger exclusion or justify discrimination. On the other hand - adds Dr. Hallgrímsdóttir - memory politics around reconciliation in Canada represents a positive way in which the politics of memory can in fact support a different way of thinking about democracy in Canada. According to Dr. Hallgrímsdóttir, what is important to remember is that memory politics underlines that there is not one way of remembering and that what we remember is rooted in context, in structure, in power, in inequality as well as in identity and in how we remember it.









Opposite Page/ **Top:** Participants of the Study Tour in Memory Politics, University of Vienna/Austria **Middle:** Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, guided tour with Agnieszka Wojtowicz, Oświęcim/Poland June 8th 2023 **Bottom:** Ljubelj Concentration Camp Slovenia, June 20th 2023

This Page/ **Top:** Guided tour at the Foibe di Bassovizza with Boris Strukelj, Trieste/Italy, June 20th 2023 **Middle:** Students at the exhibition “The Yad Vashem Book of Names of Holocaust Victims” at the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau. This book is 8m wide and 2m tall and documents ca 4.8 millions of names, places of birth and death of the victims of the Holocaust. Oświęcim/Poland, June 8th, 2023 **Bottom:** Zdzisława Włodarczyk, Holocaust survivor, speaking to students at the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer, Oświęcim/Poland, June 7th 2023





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# REMEMBERING PAST INJUSTICE, ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

Explorations into debates on and pedagogical approaches  
to memory politics in a trans-Atlantic perspective

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