Persecution, Complicity and Justice

Recent events

We run a series of internal seminars and workshops as well as wider academic and public events with the aim of increasing understanding of collective violence. Recent and forthcoming events associated with the Persecution, Complicity and Justice group include, for example:

July 2014  Two-day conference Disturbing Pasts: Reverberations of the Second World War in Europe after 1945
This conference, whose speakers included Susanne Knittel (Utrecht University), Caitríona Leahy (Trinity College Dublin), Julian Petley (Brunel University London), and writer and novelist Lisa Appignanesi, resulted in an edited volume: Stephanie Bird, Mary Fulbrook, Julia Wagner and Christiane Wienand, Reverberations of Nazi Violence in Germany and Beyond. Disturbing Pasts (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

Feb 2016  Collective Violence Workshop
This internal workshop discussed a range of theoretical and disciplinary approaches to the study of collective violence. Attended by around 40 scholars from within UCL, it included presentations from Stephanie Bird, Mignon Nixon, Tejendra Pherali, Michael Stewart, and Sherrill Stroschein.

June 2016  The Impact of WWII on European Society and Culture
The genocidal Second World War in Europe is notable for the distinction – made in radically varying ways – between what was perceived as ‘legitimate’ violence, and what went ‘beyond’ the kinds of violence that might be expected during wartime. This international and interdisciplinary conference, with speakers including Nicholas Stargardt (University of Oxford), Tatjana Tönsmeyer (University of Wuppertal), and Jan Grabowski (University of Ottawa), addressed questions of individual responsibility within collective violence.

Sep 2016  Perpetrators of Genocide and Mass Violence: Comparative Perspectives from Sierra Leone and Nazi Germany
In this Conflict, Confrontation and Justice research seminar, Kieran Mitton (King’s College London) and Franziska Anna Karpinski (Loughborough University) considered perpetrators of mass violence in different geographical, historical, and political contexts from multiple disciplinary perspectives in the context of Sierra Leone’s civil war and the Holocaust. Offering a global, comparative view of perpetrators' motivations and behaviours, and the role played by emotions and values, the papers raised challenging questions of guilt and responsibility, race, ethnicity and gender, and the legacies of mass violence.
Oct 2016  *Perpetration, Complicity, and Collaboration in Nazi-dominated Europe*

The workshop explored wider aspects of perpetration, complicity and collaboration from interdisciplinary perspectives, including history, education, film and literary studies, and psychoanalysis. Papers by speakers such as Andy Pearce (IoE Centre for Holocaust Education), James Bulgin (Imperial War Museum), and Sue Vice (University of Sheffield), discussed concepts, practices and different forms of representation and self-representation. The workshop also displayed doctoral research in a poster presentation. It received funding from the Octagon Small Grants Fund.

May 2017  *Book launch Jewish Families in Europe 1939 - Present: History, Representation, and Memory*

Joanna Michlic was in conversation with Nicholas Stargardt (Magdalen College, University of Oxford). Joanna Michlic wrote this book to invite scholars from a variety of fields to engage in conversations about child survivors’ post-war memories and the coping mechanisms of Jewish families and youth during the Holocaust, the possibilities, limitations and dynamics of the reconstruction of the post-Holocaust Jewish family, and the impossibility of the recovery of childhood in the aftermath of the genocide. The book demonstrates the importance of children and youth’s voices in the reconstruction of the social history of the Holocaust.

June 2017  UCL Festival of Culture event *German Responses to Violence*

Wars and mass violence have played a fundamental part in modern German history. We discuss reactions to the violence by soldiers and civilians, the political and cultural protest movements that such violence helped engender, and the ways in which comedy played an important part in responses to violence. The session is presented by Stephanie Bird, Mererid Puw Davies and Mark Hewitson. Stephanie is interested in representations of the Second World War and the Holocaust that incorporate comedy, Mererid has written extensively on anti-authoritarian protest movements and Mark researches the relationship between military conflicts and violent acts.

July 2017  One-day workshop *Interpreting Perpetrators*

This one-day workshop, funded by the Octagon Small Grants Fund, will explore a variety of interpretative and methodological frameworks that inform our research on perpetration and complicity. We will discuss the strengths and shortcomings of the – historical, literary, sociological, psychological or any other – approaches that we apply, consider possible and competing alternatives, and the potential impact on our arguments and findings.