CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMITE INTERNATIONAL DES SCIENCES HISTORIQUES

Ethical Dimension of Teaching History in Polarized Societies

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
29 Aug 2026, 09:00 - 11:30	House 1 T1004
THEME	CONFERENCE
B - Teaching History and Public History	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

In recent years, scholars have highlighted the potential of the ethical dimension to enrich and advance history education (Ammert et al., 2022; Gibson et al., 2022; Miles & Keynes, 2025). This dimension entails evaluating the rightness or wrongness of past actions, confronting the enduring legacies of injustice, and acknowledging obligations to victims, heroes, and others whose experiences shape the present (Milligan et al., 2018).

Although debate continues regarding its place in history education, research within the traditions of historical thinking (Gibson, 2018) and historical consciousness (Edling et al., 2022) shows that ethical historical judgments are inseparable from classroom practice. Building on insights that such judgments mediate the ways political and ideological positions shape history education (Weintraub & Gibson, 2025), this panel will explore the role of the ethical dimension in times of growing social polarization (Stoddard & Hess, 2024).

The panel will pursue two lines of inquiry. Theoretically, it will examine the aims of the ethical dimension in history education during turbulent social contexts and its place within the educational process. Empirically, it will analyze how the ethical dimension is expressed across curricula, teacher education, textbooks, and adolescents' perspectives. Together, the contributions will consider how the ethical dimension can strengthen models of historical thinking and historical consciousness, equip teachers to navigate sensitive issues in divided classrooms, and help students develop civic and democratic competencies.

Participants

Convenor

- Joanna Wojdon (University of Wroc?aw)

Chair

- Roy Weintraub (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Panelists

- Sebastian Barsch (University of Cologne)
- Sylvain Doussot (Nantes University)
- Nadine Fink (University of Teacher Education of the Canton of Vaud)
- Hanna-Liis Kaarlõp (Tallinn University)
- Tiiu Kreegipuu (Tallinn University)
- Masayuki Sato (University of Yamanashi)
- Wouter Smets (Erasmus University, Rotterdam)
- Nimrod Tal (Kibbutzim College of Education, Tel Aviv)
- Julia Thyroff (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW), School of Education)
- Jonas Schobinger (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW), School of Education)
- Dominic Studer (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW))
- Vera Sperisen (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW))
- Eleni Apostolidou (University of Ioannina)

- Piotr Podemski (University of Warsaw)

Papers

The ethics of teaching disability history

Sebastian Barsch (University of Cologne)

Ethical historical judgment about past and present events: investigating values in the classroom

Sylvain Doussot (Nantes University), Nadine Fink (University of Teacher Education of the Canton of Vaud)

Keeping Classrooms Open: History Education, Polarization, and Democracy as a Process of Becoming

Hanna-Liis Kaarlõp (Tallinn University), Tiiu Kreegipuu (Tallinn University)

Ethical Possibilities of History Education in East Asia

Masayuki Sato (University of Yamanashi)

History teachers' engagement with controversial issues

Wouter Smets (Erasmus University, Rotterdam)

War and change: War and human agency in Israeli history textbooks

Nimrod Tal (Kibbutzim College of Education, Tel Aviv)

Teaching the "Yugoslav wars" in a post-migrant society: How teachers in Switzerland deal with controversial issues in the classroom.

Julia Thyroff (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW), School of Education), Jonas Schobinger (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW), School of Education), Dominic Studer (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW)), Vera Sperisen (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW))

Moral and Cognitive Dimensions in History Teaching

Eleni Apostolidou (University of Ioannina)

A Nation of Saviors, Martyrs, or Villains? Polish Attitudes toward the Holocaust in School History

Piotr Podemski (University of Warsaw)

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