

**“History and Its Discontents: Theory and Practice, Stories from the Classroom”**  
**Annual Conference**  
**International Society for History Didactics**  
**October 10-12, 2024**  
**Rhode Island College**  
**Call for Papers**

The Council of Europe’s call for a “Europe Without Borders” and an integrated global system that celebrated the human spirit has been challenged by the growing global network of strong state politics. What binds these diverse nationalist movements together are exceptionalist narratives of the state that are based on grievance with liberal order. Who belongs to the polity? Relying on well-worn methods including the supposed cultural foundations of the nation those who don’t fit are cast aside and often identified as “Enemies of the People.” This is not a new phenomenon. During the interwar years of the twentieth century the Hungarian poet József Atilla likened the growing authoritarian movements in Europe to a metastasizing cancer in his poem “Welcome to Thomas Mann.” His analogy certainly embraced the global system then as it does now. Like earlier nationalist movements the story of the state is based on myth and calls upon symbols of the past to legitimize their claims.

Challenging these exceptionalist myths has become increasingly difficult. For example, in the United States, the States of Florida and Texas have enacted legislation that delimits what can be taught in the classroom regarding the history of racism, slavery, the civil war, and the demand for civil rights. Books have begun disappearing from library shelves. These tactics and ones like them are found not only in the United States but internationally and are only recent examples of a much larger problem that has presented itself many times in the past and poses a very real problem for our profession at both the theoretical and practical level. For it is in classrooms where state and community meet, and the interpretation of history and public symbols are discussed and often reconciled. Bifurcated politics found in the United States, Europe, and much of the global system have weaponized history education thus limiting these important discussions. The current politicization of history and its practice occludes the many debates our profession has had over the years as to what should be included in curriculum and how it should be taught and assessed.

This conference will be organized around three principal themes:

- 1.) **History Education on Trial...Again? “Consensus, Controversy and Unresolved Questions”** offers a chance to investigate the history of history didactics and the debates about the goals and curricula of history education in the past and present. How have these conversations and debates among history teachers and their guild organizations played out over time on the political stage and in the classroom?
- 2.) **Across the Great Divide** focuses on how History Didactics and Education can be utilized to promote a more inclusive curriculum and pedagogy. How do we engage students in the classroom and maintain the allegiance of the community at large?

**3.) Academic Freedom and History Education** provides the opportunity to examine the challenges facing history teachers and their ability to foster independent historical thinking critical to the promotion of democratic history education and the promotion of civil society both within and outside the classroom.

**Among some of the questions we might consider:** What can we learn from previous debates over history curriculum, practice, and assessment? How do history teachers at the collegiate and secondary level deal with state mandates that delimit or propose to eliminate the teaching of history? How has this problem been dealt with in the past? What are some of the lessons we can learn from classroom practice both currently and over time? How are the politics of memory woven into national narratives? What are the critical ingredients for a history curriculum designed to prepare the young for national/global citizenship? In what ways can globalized narratives of the state be reconciled with national narratives? What do historical narratives in their many guises reveal about the concept of modernity?

We welcome papers that address one of the broad themes and some of these fundamental questions or related ones in the context of historical methodology, classroom practice, curriculum, assessment, reflection, and theory.

**Abstract proposals not exceeding 1500 characters (including spaces) should be sent by**

**16 February 2024**

**Via email to the organizer Professor Karl Benziger [Kbenziger@ric.edu](mailto:Kbenziger@ric.edu)**

Please indicate ISHD Conference 2024 and your abstract title in the Subject Line of your email. Be sure to include your name, title, institution, address, and email contact information in your abstract. The results of the peer reviewed process will be announced on 15 March 2024.

Conference fee:

50 Euros (approximately 53 dollars) for ISHD members, RIC faculty and NEHA members, 70 Euros (approximately 74 dollars) for all other participants.

Details about possible accommodation, preconference school visit, and other activities will follow.