

Narratives of Memory, Migration, and Xenophobia in the European Union and Canada

This graduate-level interdisciplinary field school **Narratives of Memory, Migration, and Xenophobia in the European Union and Canada** was created by a team of four professors at the University of Victoria: Dániel Péter Biró (Music), Helga Hallgrímsdóttir (Sociology), Charlotte Schallié, and Helga Thorson (Germanic Studies). The **field school** was co-led by Charlotte Schallié and Dániel Péter Biró and took place between July 16- 27 (Hungary, Germany, France), and August 16-26, 2017 (Canada). The final research activity was an **interdisciplinary symposium** held at the University of Victoria (August 24 and 25). It brought together field school students, scholars and artists from Canada and Europe, to participate in an intercultural dialogue about how narratives of the past – or the politics of memory - can influence current political choices and policy decisions, and how we can talk more effectively about the past – as scholars, teachers, and citizens – in ways to foster more inclusive readings of the present. A **book publication** (co-edited by Helga Hallgrímsdóttir and Helga Thorson; forthcoming with University of Victoria e-Publishing Services in 2019) features contributions by participating students and scholars investigating layers of memory in Europe and Canada while exploring field school participants' physical and emotional interactions with memorial sites.

Using the Canadian experience with multiculturalism, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report as comparative touch points, our team designed a curriculum that included musicians, scholars and students from the University of Victoria, the University of Toronto, Aix-Marseille Université (France), Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary), and the University of Osnabrück (Germany). Throughout three weeks, a core group of eleven graduate students—complemented by a research assistant and a student filmmaker—from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (Germanic and Slavic Studies, Law, Music, Sociology), examined narratives of the past as they shape current political decision-making processes in the face of rising nationalism and xenophobic discourse in Europe and North America.

We opted to visit four Memory Sites in which narratives of the past intersect with present-day nationalistic discourses: Keleti Railway Station (Budapest, Hungary), Ravensbrück Memorial (Fürstenberg/Havel, Germany), Site-Mémorial du Camp des Milles (Aix-en-Provence, France), and the Museum for Human Rights (Winnipeg, Canada). In each location, we explored the interlayering of cultural narratives of the past and memorialization onto current public policy challenges pertaining to the migration crisis and the resurgence of nationalist politics. The individual course requirements included both reading lists and listening assignments that tasked the students to personally explore colliding and intersecting narratives between historical injustices, memory politics, and present-day human rights concerns.

Given that our collaboration with musical scholars and musicians was an integral part of our curriculum design, the UVic research team commissioned three original pieces of new music to be performed in three locations: the Central European University in Budapest, Ravensbrück Memorial in Fürstenberg/Havel, and Site-Mémorial du Camp des Milles nearby Aix-en-Provence. Through these performances, we raised the question of how music can address human rights concerns and contribute to a critical engagement with social justice. Our three composers were Andrea Szigetvári, Zaid Jabri, and Dániel Péter Biró; all of them wrote pieces for site-specific performances that situate the Syrian refugee crisis within a larger historical as well sociopolitical framework. Hungarian composer Andrea Szigetvári wrote a piece, "Marhakaralábé Kantáta" ("Beef Kohlrabi Cantata"), based on a 2015 field recording from Keleti Railway Station in Budapest. A second musical performance—"30 Articles for Viola and Electronics" by Syrian-born composer Zaid Jabri—took place at the site of the former Ravensbrück Konzentrationslager. The third piece by Dániel Péter Biró, "Gvul" (גבול; "Border") was performed at Camp des Milles, a former internment camp which now serves both as a memorial site, and as the UNESCO headquarters for the Chair of Education for Citizenship, Human Sciences and Shared Memories.

Funding for this project was provided by a Jean Monnet/Erasmus+ Project Grant and a SSHRC Connection Grant (principal investigator: Helga Hallgrímsdóttir), and by the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne and Canada Council for the Arts (principal applicant: Dániel Péter Biró).

Media coverage: <https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2017+new-european-field-school-delves-into-urgent-global-issues+ring>

Narratives of Memory, Migration, and Xenophobia. A brief Overview (video feature by Chorong Kim):
<https://vimeo.com/231050726>

Dr. Helga Hallgrímsdóttir speaks about the Narratives of Memory, Migration, and Xenophobia project:
<https://www.uvic.ca/interdisciplinary/europe/eu-grants/narratives-project/index.php>

Student performance: <https://vimeo.com/231050726>