

Work for Upper Sixth Pupils Reading History at University

History and Conspiracy Theories

During the next 4 weeks I want you to explore the value of conspiracy theories to historians. Are they just bad history to be ignored by academic historians? Is it the public duty of historians to debunk conspiracy theories? Do conspiracy theories provide historians with a valuable insight into the societies that created them? I hope that by engaging with these questions, you will also be engaging with 'history' more broadly: the purpose and value of history and the role historians should play in society.

Week One: Task One

I should like you to view the following material on the nature of history. As you are looking at these lectures and podcasts, I want you to have these questions in mind:

- Why study history?
- What is the role of the historian?
- What is the difference between A-level history and university level/academic history?

You should complete this by the end of the first week.

Geoffrey Parker: Why we must study history – 7 mins

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivBCrHJUksM>

Khan Academy – thinking like an Historian

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vldMgO-tfyE>

How do Historians do History ? (version 2)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtcLU8WZftE>

What is historical thinking ?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSJLmVnrxrPg>

2 part 10 minutes on Transition from A Level to University History – by Leeds University – Rafe Hallett

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JlY62R5arI&list=PL7497BC5A0008BECB&index=66>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rffeawxPpQ&list=PL7497BC5A0008BECB&index=67>

Developing at University – 2 parts – Rafe Hallett – Leeds University

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpyl4PcSATQ&list=PL7497BC5A0008BECB&index=152>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsDChYlckDQ&list=PL7497BC5A0008BECB&index=153>

LSE lecture/podcast – Lesson from the Past – how to learn and not learn from the past - Professor Michael Cox, Professor Matthew Jones, Professor Anita Prazmowska, Professor David Stevenson

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player?category=public+lectures+and+events>

In Our Time podcast – the relevance of History in the 20th Century

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p005458g>

Weeks 2- 4: History and Conspiracy Theories

During these three weeks I want you to engage with the following statement:

‘Conspiracy theories hold little value to historians and should not be engaged with.’

To help you think about this you could use the following sources of information:

Richard Evans lecture on Conspiracy Theories

<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/conspiracy-theories-a-threat-to-democracy>

Timothy Garton-Ash lecture on Free Speech and History

<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/free-speech-and-the-study-of-history>

van Prooijen and Douglas, ‘Conspiracy theories as part of history’.

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1750698017701615>

In addition, you will need to research in detail a conspiracy theory (9/11, JFK etc). To help you do this, Mrs Wong has placed on i-Fawkes a range of resources to use. This is the link:

<https://ifawkes.fireflycloud.net/library/remote-learning/history>

I should like you to complete the following pieces of writing:

1. What is a conspiracy theory? (Key characteristics, how does it differ from 'bad history' etc). 250 words
2. Outline the argument of a conspiracy theory you have chosen. 250 words
3. Critique, using your own historical knowledge, the conspiracy theory above. 500 words
4. What can the example you have chosen tell us about the society/culture/politics etc. in which it was spawned and propagated? 500 words
5. By way of conclusion, directly address the statement: '*Conspiracy theories hold little value to historians and should not be engaged with.*' 250 words

You can either write 5 separate pieces for the above or one long essay of c.1750 words.

This would be a typical length of essay (and the necessary amount of research) you would undertake doing a degree in history.