You are invited to a presentation for the Cultural Enquiry Research Group (CERG), School of Education and Arts.

Representing Political Oppression: The Stasi Prison as an Edifice of Cultural Memory in Modern Berlin

Presenter: Associate Professor Jacqueline Wilson
School of Education and Arts
Federation University Australia

Date: Monday 2\textsuperscript{nd} May 2016 at 6.00pm with the seminar commencing at 6:15pm until 6:45pm, followed by questions.
Venue: Room F200, F Building, Mt Helen Campus

DRINKS AND NIBBLES WILL BE PROVIDED

RSVP: Thursday 28\textsuperscript{th} April 2016
Demelza Hall, Federation University Australia. Email d.hall@federation.edu.au
Seminar Synopsis:
Anecdotes and interpretive exhibits at prison tourist sites often focus on especially notorious “celebrity” prisoners, spectacular escape attempts, punishment and execution methods, and are routinely couched in tones aimed at *entertaining* the visitor. In almost all respects, such modes of representation are inverted at the Stasi Prison in suburban Berlin. This paper analyses that representation and discusses the Stasi Prison’s role as a public history site.

The Stasi was the East German secret police organization. An exemplary organ of totalitarian rule, for over forty years it controlled East German society with implacably ruthless efficiency. The political prison complex it created in a drab Berlin suburb was designed explicitly to break its inmates psychologically, through rituals and practices of at times ingenious cruelty.

The routine scrutiny, psychological torture and extreme conditions in which prisoners lived are presented in a way that gives a voice to the prison population. Contested narratives are recounted without the comedic “keystone cops routines” so often featuring at prison tourist sites. The Stasi Prison is presented with a quiet, unforced gravitas that allows the visitor to assimilate the unutterably awful treatment meted out to people whose only crime, in essence, was to think forbidden thoughts. The paper will examine the ways in which this is achieved, and discuss the possible implications for interpretation of other, more “conventional” prison sites.

Jacqueline Wilson is an Associate Professor at Federation University in the Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History in the School of Education and Arts. Jacqui’s current research focuses on heritage sites of incarceration and institutionalization and their role in the emergence of Australian and international welfare and justice systems. She has published extensively in the field of Prison Heritage sites and is the lead editor for the “Palgrave Handbook of Prison Tourism” (2016). Her most recent work concerns public history, incarceration and affect and emotions. Jacqui is a former ward of the State of Victoria and an activist and advocate for Care Leavers in Australia. This underpins much of her research which is concerned with historical justice, national memory and experiences of State care, incarceration and welfare systems of the 20th century.