

## Transcript of Podcast: Perspectives – Critical History in Schools

### Episode 1 – Part 1

Amelie:

Hello, friends of history, my name is Amelie and Judith. And welcome to the discussion of critical history World War 2 and the Civil War and how it is taught in schools. Thanks to the transatlantic project “Monuments and Memory”, a cooperation between the University of Würzburg and the Flagler College in Florida, we have the wonderful opportunity to welcome McKenna and Kaitlyn, our two project partners.

Kaitlyn:

Hello, thank you.

McKenna:

Yeah, thank you so much for inviting us.

Judith:

Of course. Maybe just introduce yourself shortly and then we can right start right into the questions.

McKenna:

I'll go first. So, I just graduated from Flagler College with a degree in philosophy religion and throughout school I was homeschooled all through elementary, middle, and high school and then university.

Kaitlyn:

So, I also graduated from Flagler college with a major in history and a minor in public history. And I actually, grew up in Maryland, which is about 13 hours away from Florida.

Judith:

Great, thanks. So, that we, now we know kind of what education you kind of got or where you got it. Let's dive into the questions for today. And first, we kind of wanna know about how you were taught or when you were taught about the Civil War? Can you maybe tell us when you were taught about it in school?

Kaitlyn:

I can start. I believe I started being taught this in like 4th grade. I would say it's around the time [?] late elementary school and they kinda focused on more so [1:58 – 2:00?] and the battles during this time they don't unlike how it was slavery [2:04 – 2:07?] that's pointed that topic. And more on so like these were the battles, it was the North versus the South, and then kind of like the aftermath of the war, like how the South was destroyed and you know we did come back together but like at what cost was that. Yeah.

McKenna:

Yeah, that I think it was around that same time for me as well like I was in, you know, homeschool Co-op groups where we've met and we've learned together but I think it was around kind of late elementary school. I have very similar experience like just, you know, very much focused on like President Lincoln, kind of what was going on during that and just kind of like what were the main kind of major things in our house. It didn't get too political in early elementary school I think that's gotten later high schools when it got a little bit more political, and we studied a bit more in depth that's what was really going on.

Judith:

So, you were taught about it like several times, like it came up again and again?

McKenna:

Yea, yeah. Yeah, I would say like in American history class in elementary school and then I got another full year American history in high school, so that's when we went more in depth into it.

Kaitlyn:

Yeah, I agree. I feel like every time like from elementary to middle and high school you had at least one American history class, and you read you would kind of talk about the same thing that you had been talking about in all of them, the more depth each time. So, like the racial implications of the Civil War or you know talk about maybe specific people during the Civil War that, you know, you couldn't really talk about in elementary school.

Judith:

So, it kind of built up on itself. Could you, do you remember if like the Civil War was approached in a kind of critical way somehow or what like teaching methods the teacher used? Did you just do like a like the teacher just tell you some information or did you do maybe discussions or group work or watched films or did field trips, can you remember stuff like that and tell us about it?

McKenna:

Yeah, I think it was mostly just kind of lecture, we had a textbook and usually we have some kind of videos that talked about, you know, maybe a little bit would go in depth into like a person or a soldier kind of go more. But there wasn't, I don't remember there personally being a ton of like discussion, at least in the way that I was taught. Like it wasn't kind of open for a lot of, there was questions but not so much as a like Socratic class, where you're all kind of discussing and talking about it.

Kaitlyn:

Yeah, I ... we talked a lot about like presidents and focused more on like him because there was a lot of like you know he was this ... like brought the country back together, was like discussions on you know why the South left or hard questions like that you don't really talk about that at least until you get to like college. When I was in my college classes, we definitely would discuss that, but not in school.

Amelie:

Interesting, would you saying that it like inflict you in your thinking about this topic? That it was just like teaching you the facts, not like discussing things. Would you say it had an influence?

McKenna:

Definitely, we were, you know, we were taught more, I think, a lot of perspective at least from like the South was kind of like neglected and pushed aside I think we just didn't really address like it was kind of just the bad guys, good guys you know and as far as we were taught to kind of favor the North and what was going on there. And so, I think as far as political sides would think that's kind of where it definitely leaned at least from my experience.

Kaitlyn:

Yeah, I was gonna say I didn't know if it would be different for you because I went to school in the North and so, yeah, like it looks like the good guys versus bad guys. You don't really see as like oh like the South like has problems and like they were going through that and like completely destroyed them you don't really talk about that. And it's just like we the North helped save the like we brought the country back together that kind of narrative.

McKenna:

Yeah, I think that was taught in the South as well but it's not made to, you know, we were part of that or whatever it's like that we're removed from that kind of part of history is kind of how it's talked about we're removed from it like it wasn't our fault, you know, but it's just kind of the way it worked out and for many years ago so.

Judith:

Yeah, it kind of reminds me a little of the, how we get taught about World War 2, it is not our fault, that sounded a little similar. Like you just said to what we approached with the topic of the World War 2, so quite interesting to hear, that when we talk about like historical events that were quite yeah critical and not really most the best part of our history that's a few things are like approached a little similar or like yeah, it's interesting to see that.

Amelie:

Did you have encounters like in discussions um it already, so were there any surprising and unsurprising interactions or maybe you thought about some with some ideas which didn't work which didn't ... which didn't, how can I say it like it, would it resonate with you?

Kaitlyn:

I feel like as a history major, I kind of wouldn't knowing that what I was taught in Civil War wasn't always the truth. I like had an interest in it even before like school so like I would watch like movies on it and stuff, so I didn't feel like I had as big of a culture, or not culture shock, but as big of a shock to what I was being taught in college versus school. But I can see like especially on where you go to school in America like if you went somewhere where it is very like what they tell you is very like sugarcoated, yeah, that would be a huge change to what you're taught in college, like they it's very much more I would say more accurate more true like they don't sugarcoat anything they're not trying to like push an agenda to like oh it's the bad guys versus the good guys like, it's more nuanced than that and that's in any part of history. But yeah, I personally didn't have as big of like an impact on that part, but I can see how people in my classes were like it was like very eye-opening learning about these things that we ...

McKenna:

Yeah, I would say I was gonna be one of those that was a little more like shocked I guess because I hadn't studied it nearly as much so I'm not a history major. So, I would say it was a little bit more about like I said was worse not tricky middle, high school was more you know good guys bad guys the more in depth. Whereas college it was more like OK here are the facts, here's what has happened, here's what you know came from both sides, we had to study more like what happened with the women and all the different things. So, I would little bit more but I think it made me understand it a lot better. And I think if I had gotten that kind of teasing obviously when I was younger, I wouldn't have been able to really process it or understand like I would have at uni.

Kaitlyn:

I also feel because in America we kind of pushed the Civil Wars being so long ago, like oh we are not affected by this anymore like this happened so long ago and then like when you like when I realized oh, it wasn't actually that long ago like I want to say 4 generations removed from this, like this did not happen that long ago and we're still seeing ... repercussion but we're still seeing ... [10:20 – 10:23] we're still seeing the ripple effect ... [10:25 – End]

## Episode 1 – Part 2

Judith:

Um so you guys talked about like a little about what you felt like in the class or like what you learned and stuff. So, in general what was your general personal take away in regarding how do you think was the mood in the class or general like feeling you had while it was taught while you were learning about this topic? Yeah, in general just was, what was your experience in school talking about this topic?

McKenna:

It's interesting because, you know, we said in the last part that maybe we went more in depth into more details when we were in college, but I would say the mood was perhaps even more somber when I was younger than it was when I was older, which is interesting. But I think that's also because if you're once you're learning about it maybe for the first time, as a kid it's a little bit more, the mood in general is more somber, wow, this is something that happened. Whereas once I got to college it was something I had heard about a bunch and kind of knew a bunch of things about it already, so it was more like this is something that's normally talked about we're learning more details and maybe some of these are a bit harder to address and talk about but for the most part like, you know Kaitlyn said in the last part, we talked about it as a force so far removed from it, so there's less emotion I feel like once we got up to higher levels because it had been talked about already so much and um we talked about this if we are very far removed from it, at least that was my personal experience.

Judith:

Yeah, that makes sense.

Kaitlyn:

Yeah, I would definitely agree with that. I think being, I would say like more [1:39] you're in elementary school but also it being like America versus America, like there's no winning, you know, no winning and just knowing like, you know, that we thought that it's not like America came out victorious in the end like you hear about, it is like oh like yes, the North won but also the South is now back and really happy about it. Yeah, it was just a lot of mixed emotions with the Civil War I feel like.

Judith:

And with that like kind of feeling or like what you talked about, do you feel like it's like done well how it's being taught in school or how it's been taught to you, or would you say there could be some improvements or additions to it? But also, to maybe talk about stuff like that you liked, maybe.

Kaitlyn:

I feel like the way that I was taught it was done well for the grade that I was in. My only fear is right now there's a lot of controversy around how to teach this topic and I don't know if this is how it's still being taught right now in schools because I know like they're banning books right now in Florida or [2:54] they have critical race theory discussions. So, I would say the way I was taught [was good], I don't know if this is how it's still taught right now.

McKenna:

Yeah it's in very small position I know there's a lot going on with ... [3:08 – 3:11] and the way I was like I got a solid kind of grasp foundation of a lot of things but it does worry me with kind of the politics side of things that history could be changed in the way that it's taught is being changed and so I think the goal needs to be in providing kind of a whole complete, you know, kind of address as to what both sides were going for and what were kind of feelings for people on both sides. I think we need the whole story to really understand. So, thinking that's what's being taught I think is most important going forward.

Judith:

And what do you think about that because I think the aftermath of the Civil War is also quite big part of it itself. When you said like it wasn't that long ago especially like when you look about like a time of 1960s or something like that it still was like the segregation was still topic number one. Would you say like this part, like the aftermath, it was taught as well, well as well?

Kaitlyn:

I think I was taught for me at least but maybe it was more focused on in different grades. So, they would be like oh now we're gonna talk about like the 1960 we're going to talk about Martin Luther King Jr., but it was effective because of the Civil War, but you're not taught about that in that same grade if that makes sense. And I can feel this a lot more like on the people fighting like I'm like and like the times when we had slavery we talked about Harriet Tubman, these people who are like you know fighting for their lives and it's something like Martin Luther King Jr. instead of focusing on like the perpetrators we focus more ... [5:00 – 5:04].

McKenna:

Yeah so, we address it more as to like, you know, the Civil War, yes, was needed and it was you know it pushed our country and, you know, in a better direction but it didn't end everything you know. It didn't end everything and see that going across the 1960s in the ways that you know it was still affecting us so.

Judith:

Yeah, thank you. I think we can call it a wrap, I would say. Unless you wanna add something with what comes to your mind right now but if not, I think we can stop here and maybe Amelie wants to say final words.

Amelie:

Yeah so, I guess I asked one of thing it was a really interesting discussion today, especially your Florida import or like your American expert. So, uh in the next episode we switch perspectives and Judith and I we are only talking about our own experiences in Germany so it's going to be a little bit more different but nevertheless thank you for your participation and yeah.

McKenna:

Thank you.

## Episode 2 – Part 1

Amelie:

Hello, friends of history my name is Amelie and Judith, and welcome back to the discussion of critical history the World War 2 and the Civil War and how it is taught in schools. Last episode we had wonderful guests from the US and their personal experiences towards the Civil War and today we're staying in Germany and we're going to talk about our own experiences in a German school system regarding the history of World War 2.

Judith:

So that you can um see where we went to school or we wanna talk about little about our school backgrounds maybe you want to start, Amelie.

Amelie:

Yeah, thank you. So, after primary school I went to the secondary school like for eight years which is where you can get your high yeah, your high school diploma, like the Abitur, and it was all like state regulated schools and after that I went to university and now, I'm studying primary school education and I'm in my 6th semester and my main subject is English and yeah.

Judith:

Yeah, for me it's quite similar for, except for the part that I went to school another "Bundesland", aka state. But it was actually quite similar and now I'm also studying to become an elementary school teacher but I'm already in my 8th semester, so I'm almost finished but yeah so, we both went to public schools and yes so. But the curriculum is most of all in Germany quite similar so there shouldn't be that much of a difference in what we were taught or when, that is quite similar all over Germany, yes. So then now you can sort ourselves into what we were experiencing during school times. Now let's dive into the topic and we kind of start like in in the last episode with the question when we had the topic the World War 2 in history class, when it was yeah taught to us.

Amelie:

Yeah so, as far as I can remember in 6th grade we started with history class, so this was like the first time when we encountered like history as a subject and I'm pretty sure that we started with the Romans and even before, but like World War 2 was where it came like in 8th grade so we, I'm pretty sure that we did a whole school year so a whole school year was dedicated to World War 2. And it was even so the topics are aware and much deeper than World War 1 even though that Germany played a big part in it but like World War 2 was I think the longest topic I've ever...

Judith:

Yeah yes, for us as well. Yeah same.

Amelie:

I think we did it two times, so like 8th grade was the first time we did it like it was like mainly the main facts and how it all started and learning all the dates and so on and then in, I think, in 11th grade we were encountering it a little bit more critical and there was a little bit more discussion in class and with our teacher it was not only fact based as before. So how was, how was it in your experience?

Judith:

Yeah it was quite similar um especially like for us it was in 9th grade um mainly discussed or taught about and maybe it wasn't just wasn't the whole school year but probably half of the school year was just topic the topic World War 2, World War 1 wasn't that of big of a topic as World War 2, I just guess maybe because it's the latest war we were we intended kinda, and had maybe the much bigger impact and much bigger aftermath. So, in 9th grade we [dug] into it quite deeply I would say. And yeah, and we also really like yeah. But later I had in 12th grade in my last high school year, I um we again touched the topic but

focused on the direct aftermath of it. So, we talked about like the “Nürnberger Prozess” and how everyone was kinda asked how much of a maybe “Nazi” they were or how it was like processed and what difficulties came afterwards and stuff like that. So, but mainly it was the topic of 9th grade before that it's sometimes with like little topics because like it surrounds, you know, everyday life you kind of are confronted with the topic, so the teachers sometimes talk about those little things but don't go deep into the topic expert exactly but yeah it's sometimes that touched a little in beforehand. Even in elementary school it is sometimes talked about a little but not in such a depth, yes.

Amelie:

Yeah, I think such critical talk like war like in private school, like children have question especially like with the war in the Ukraine like the war came up again, so I think it gives like the opportunity to teacher for teachers or they must talk about it like in a sensitive way to like to explain to the children but because like mostly they have like questions and this is like if children have like they approach the theme like the ...

Judith:

... for example, their grandparents talked about it, for example or the sirens come when this, back in the day “Fliegeralarm”, when there were airplanes coming or like planes warplanes and there's the siren going off and it's still it's like a test run for this siren every other month. And the children notice that and wanna know what it is and why it is there, and it all goes back also to the time of WWII, so the teachers will approach this topic a little but like we said not very in depth because like it's a sensitive topic and ...

Amelie:

... it made hard to explain like simply. It's like just so complex ...

Judith:

Exactly. Um regarding that maybe how did your teachers approach this topic? Was there a critical approach to it? yeah What did they, how did they teach it? Where there methods or yeah?

Amelie:

So, I would definitely say that most of the time we use schoolbooks, so we were working through a schoolbook and reading the texts, doing the exercises and shows like working through the war as it was shown or explicitly shown in the textbook.

Judith:

It kind of followed a timeline, right?

Amelie:

Most of the time. But I remember that we watched a lot of films for educational reasons for example “Schindlers Liste” and we also looked at [anti-] Jewish propaganda films and we discussed them regarding the Holocaust and everything that concerns this topic. But I think that we all that we got so like when we were, I don't know, we already know, knew like some things about the WWII, the more we discussed the topics and critically discussed them so like groups or even like in the plenum with our teacher.

Judith:

Yeah, I also would say it was not like the typical class method, or taught, teaching method that you do have for some other topics. It was more like open discussion or more group work I would say. Like you said watching films on YouTube some like short films or like documentaries and stuff like that or look at speeches from Hitler or I don't know what else. But we also yeah ...

Amelie:

... yeah, go for it please ...

Judith:

We also sometimes got recommended actual like movies to watch in our free time concerning this topic and they're quite actually quite good movies concerning that and ...

Amelie:

... yeah, maybe if you have any recommendations feel free to share them.

Judith:

My favorite one that's the only one I just can think about and know the name on top of my head, it's "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas", I really loved this one, you can dive into it, I don't wanna talk too much about it, because it kinda goes into a wrong direction now. But yeah they're really good films nowadays and, yeah, I really like that the teachers, yeah, go out, it's all like different methods and media ...

Amelie:

... yeah, I would definitely say that we have like different perspectives so we also approached the World War Two in German [class] and geography [class] so we had like a multifactor um side on it, so I think this was pretty I would say for myself that this was really helpful to understand the topic from different perspectives. There, did you also do some field trips or like anything in this, in this direction?

Judith:

We personally didn't, because there wasn't anything really there in our, close to our area that maybe would have been interesting to visit. Um yeah so, we didn't do any field trips, but we definitely watched movies or films, better said, for where they've shown, for example, Auschwitz, yeah, and but I heard of many people who live closer to concentration camps or stuff like that, who did do field trips to, and went there, yes. But like we personally didn't because there wasn't anything close enough, where we could go, yes.

Amelie:

... I think like field trips and having an active interaction with history is so helpful or this, I think, I would say that this is what it's like engraved in your mind if you like actually visit, for example concentration camps or any historical or critical historical place and if you have education about it, for example in a tour or anything like that. It's like I would say this is like if I was a teacher, I would do that because ...

Judith:

... it has such an impact on the students ...

Amelie:

... yeah, exactly, exactly.

Judith:

I think it makes a lot of a difference uh, when you really confronted with this topic and and see how the people lived. Or if you maybe do a field trip to Amsterdam you also could visit, for example, the "Anne Frank House" and I think it also it has a uhm because like it's, you quite, you are so close to it then, um to the topic, it's getting more realistic and because like: yeah films sometimes did too, I would say, we really watched many films, like they sometimes were more like for like documentary and sometimes they were more for movie like, but they were all like sometimes they get under your skin I would say and yeah so like it sometimes really gets, you get why they are doing this, and why they want to show us this and that we really understand the circumstances of a war and what happened there and yeah I kind of yeah. So that was I would say all the approach on top of like the normal stuff you do, like the like learning about the facts and stuff like that. But I just remembered what we also did like regarding this doing discussions, we also looked at many propaganda posters and political cartoons actually, we really discussed many political cartoons, not just from Germany, also from England and stuff like that, so those are also quite common I would say to look at.



Amelie:

I think they're in every textbook in every school textbook yeah.

### Episode 2 – Part 2

Judith:

So now we're talking when we talked about the methods and media we our teachers used in history class back then, I would say they still do that like that still, and how would you say like what's kind of your personal take away from that that, did you like those methods or how those methods like or the way they taught us about World War 2, how was like the mood during class when we talked about this topic, how was the mood during discussions about it and like yeah. In general, what was your experience doing all those critical thinking and critical discussion yeah, because like we also really had like it was really critical thinking I would say and yeah, I think that sets the mood, so how would did you take that in?

Amelie:

So, I think it's fair to say that the World War Two is a heavy topic and it is not ...

Judith:

... especially for us ...

Amelie:

Yeah, and that is easy to talk about. So, as far as I can remember I would say that there always was like a pressing mood, not a depressing, but like a pressing mood. like it was like a heavy feeling and inside me because I think it was always this idea that, I mean, yes, we weren't in the war and we weren't experiencing it firsthand and we are not responsible for it, but we are responsible for that it is not happening again ...

Judith:

...exactly yeah ...

Amelie:

... and yeah, it's like it put a little bit of pressure on me or I don't know if like any other students experience it like that. But in general, I would say it is like so important that we learn so critically about it and that we needed to put ourselves into in this position to think about it and to critical think about it, so that we can form our own opinions on it on this topic so yeah.

Judith:

Yeah, and that we, we'll act that we are getting cautious about it that we really understand what was done there like that like to really get the death of like the kind of destruction [destruction] that or like the like. Because like we don't, we never explore like we never experienced something like that it's like so heavy stuff like it's you really can't imagine what happened there like this mass of like mass murdering. I think like even now I can't comprehend, yeah, really comprehend what happened there, like we know and we see and always when you see those pictures of for example concentration camps, all those clothes or shoes you they just lying there on piles of piles of shoes, you know those are shoes from so many people who died or not died, were killed and um. So, the mood like you said it was it's kind of depressing a little I would say but I like those discussions, I like that often a really deep discussion came out of it and they were really interesting as well and really like, yeah, I don't know they made our minds are cautious about it and be aware that this happened and that it's something that like this like you said should never ever happen again and it could happen to any country to any people like yeah, so I think it's like you said, it's not about saying, yeah, you were it's your fault and we do have to do better you know, it's just to be aware that stuff like this can happen actually like they did and it's not such a long time ago and yeah. So I would say like it was really I good had a good experience with the class and I also

think it was good that it wasn't done too early because it is a really hard topic and it is a can be disturbing I would say, yeah, some people some people yeah some people are more like ... don't are not maybe I don't know how to say but for me it was fine to watch certain films um about it or to see stuff like that I would, but I think some people in school really struggled sometimes with watching stuff like that.

Amelie:

Yeah, I was saying that I was struggling and I remembered that I couldn't watch like, as we watched "Schindler's Liste" I couldn't watch all the scenes because I was like so horrified of them and but in the end I well now I can say that thank you not thankful, but like it was it was good in the way that it was taught in school. And I think like it is or it is like very helpful that we did it two times and, we can say like that's that we that we because like, yeah, the second time, the second time like we were older so we had we developed a little bit more well like more we have developed at the end of it, and it was not like just teaching the facts but like teaching consciousness.

Judith:

Yes, yeah, and it also like what I just remembered I think it was also like a really respectful um yeah and mood and like they really touched topic respectfully and when I came to mind like we talked we talked about like methods before and we actually had people from Poland or Polish people talk about their experience some like I don't know if they were really experienced it themselves but they maybe were like children so they maybe like our grandparents they're telling about this but they really those were people who whose parents or maybe died in the Holocaust or and stuff like that and so they really um like took out everything they could, to make us be aware that this happened, that it affected so many lives, and, yeah, that we should always be respectful concerning or approaching it. Yeah, I would say yeah. So, now we've kind of we talked really positively or in general positively about like that we liked the way it was or the, how classes were done, yeah, it was, it wasn't the positive topic, but we thought it was we talked positively about that in a way that we think it was, it, it's the right way how it's done. But could you maybe still like I don't know, is there still something that should be improved or edited to the way it is taught in Germany? Even though we think it's like really good as it is right now.

Amelie:

So, I would say that the subject history is a little bit dusty in general. It's, I don't mean ... yeah.

Judith:

It doesn't change that much, right, it like stays the same like for several years.

Amelie:

Yeah, so maybe, I am not, I am not an expert in history or even like in history teaching but maybe like, modernize it a little don't know. Like, I think I know like one kind of interactive documentation interactive project from the "ZDF" regarding the topic, the topic of Anne Frank, and I think incorporating like interactive digital and projects into a classroom can be very beneficial because like it is a more nowadays approach to like, or like it's more like and nowadays approach to and then students' life. Because like there are in the digital world so history can be a digital or can be in a digital word world as well.

Judith:

Yeah, I feel that. It the kind of reminds me of the thing I went on I can't recall which TV program it was with the, with the Scholl siblings, yeah, Sophie Scholl, there was like they did like this kinda like this, I don't know, was it like a, like that Sophie Scholl was like a a student who fought against the Nazi regime and they made it if it was like that she was living in a world um with like the digitalization like today and was doing like if when she would lived today or like not today but if back then was already digitalization invented like it was today, she made like Instagram stories their own stories and like about what she's doing and stuff like that so she was and there was like this side, where always like those stories came up

and she kind of informs about what she's doing and stuff like that. So, it was kind of like a reenacting of the makings of the Scholl siblings. And I think stuff like that it's coming but it's slowly coming, and it didn't reach the schools that much yet.

Amelie:

I mean, like it it mostly depends on the teacher because like he is the person that can decide how I want to or how he wants to do his lessons. Like, it kind of depends on him or her, how he or she likes to or likes to, likes teaching history to the students. So I maybe have like one, there's like one thing came to my mind which I want to, would like to, like to talk about so I think it would be important to always draw the line to the present days as well, because like we have a rise in um nationalism and all the different, I don't know how to say it, but I like all the things that are in like in the state of Sachsen-Anhalt and like the former DDR and why there are certain streams of nationalism and so on and always to draw like the line from history how it was there and now we can maybe see some similar patterns today as well and maybe like talking about why history sometimes repeats itself, so why does certain patterns never vanish and always come back. But it's definitely it's like not easy to talk about it because like, yeah.

Judith:

You have to be careful, how you approach it and how you deal with it, I would say and choose like yeah we have in those topics, what you were suggesting, you have to be, you have to choose your words carefully I would say and to not offend anyone and because like, especially nowadays I would say, the parents always like the children tell their parents about what they learn in school, I especially about when it's concerning topics like the World War 2, I would say. Yeah.

Amelie:

And then you have the phone call one hour later.

Judith:

Yes, exactly so. But I really like what you said, because like the only thing I would say they draw the line to today is where in regarding remembering back that yeah. That's also really good and I like that they're doing it but that's the only thing they're drawing lines to today and don't look really at what is happening today nowadays. I understand that you don't need to do that in like middle school or like 9th grade, I think they can't really because like children at these this age probably don't really follow the news that much yet and really don't concern themselves with those topics yet too much, I didn't, and I think that's OK because they don't really hardly don't understand what's going on yet and I think that's fine. But I think like, when you get to 11<sup>th</sup>, 12th class or nowadays it's, they we already have 13th class again so they around 17, 18 years old, I think at that age it is possible, I would say. And I think as a teacher you probably as well are and also more open with your students and can like discuss with them what they maybe also want to talk about, you can like ask maybe also them, what is your interest in this topic do you have any questions like you don't really have to because like until 9th grade probably you have to organize your class so thoroughly and beforehand but I think at the later point you really can implement the students more freely. And I think and then at those ages it is possible, I would say, to do this, the suggestion you had. And for me, I don't really know, like I really also like that it's that there are many like the students don't just read text and listen to the teachers and the students are doing much work on their own and group work, partner work and I don't know but I think they could have, could have done even more like that stuff like that, maybe like you said with like doing they live in a digital, I hate this word, and like in a digital world so you could, you should, like you said, move also the history class into the digital world and maybe let the students do videos or make the or ... to put themselves into the shoes of those people living back then, maybe, for example, stuff like that, that they really can comprehend and really understand what it was like and or trying to at least, you probably will never be able to, but trying to at least and doing stuff like that that you really can see what it was like and yeah I think stuff like that I would like to see more often. And maybe you don't but and maybe in the higher

classes if students are even more interested in the topic, also learn more about like the war affairs maybe as well and what happened in Japan and what happened in the Atlantic and stuff like that because like I wouldn't say that we really touched stuff like that.

Amelie:

Not really. It's like very German-centered perspective ...

Judith:

... and what makes sense, but yeah ...

Amelie:

... yeah, I I'm really happy what you said with your last idea on approaching history class yeah. Maybe we'll see something like that in, I don't know, in the next years and I would say it's a wrap for this episode, isn't it.

Judith:

Exactly regarding the improvements and visions and we will talk about that a little more deeply with our special guests in the next episode, with Katja Ruete. She will tell us a little more about how you can approach this topic in history class and maybe how you can do it differently and what you could add or approve in nowadays history class. So, let's let, we will see us next episode bye.

Amelie:

Bye bye.

### Episode 3 – Part 1

Amelie:

Hello. friends of history, my name is Amelie and Judith and welcome to the discussion of critical history, World War 2 and the Civil War and how it is taught in schools. Last episode we had a look at our own education regarding the World War Two and we discussed how we experienced the school's approach to this topic. Nevertheless, our attending in school is quite far away and change is never relentless especially in the age of digitalization. These arise the question whether there is or can be new approaches to teaching critical history World War 2 in a modern way. To answer our inquiry, we invited Katja Ruete, but before I say too much I would ask you Katja to quickly introduce yourself and give us an insight into your connection with the teaching of history.

Katja:

Hello, I'm Katja and I work at the modernist department of the University of Würzburg currently, but I'm about to go to teacher training in next year and yeah, so my majors I studied to be a teacher here at Würzburg in English and history.

Judith:

Thank you so much for the small introduction. And now we kind of want to dive into the interview with you and ask you some questions about how you approach like history class and teaching. And at the beginning we want to ask you: How do you perceive the traditional way kind of teaching right now?

Katja:

What is the traditional way of teaching?

Judith:

Yeah, or more like what it's like, how it's done right now and the like the way it's like, because like, how like last episode Amelie and I figured out that kind of the teachers across Germany kinda do it the same way a little and yeah, maybe you also notice like this when you went to school and you had the same experience that how your teacher did it and or how you noticed teacher teaching history nowadays. And how do you like this approach or what do you think of it?

Katja:

Are we talking history class in general or critical goods?

Judith:

Critical events.

Katja:

OK so critical events only, alright. So, well the traditional approach I'd say is just like images on the blackboard and you ...

Judith:

... yeah exactly.

Katja:

... yeah, that's OK. Well, I mean it's a very economical way of teaching, right. It gives students left [lots] of input in a relatively small amount of time, which is necessary, and which is good because otherwise you can't get through the curriculum. yeah, But I mean, what we need in my opinion to teach this history better are real experiences. So, I mean, I think all around Germany everyone has probably had one class trip to a concentration camp but that has probably been it with the practical and maybe a museum.

Amelie:

Yeah, but for example I have never been to a concentration camp, because like mostly it was like too far away. So, this is like something that I wished to experience because I mean like we encountered this topic and we saw it in pictures but never like a real life experience. But like I know there's a lot of like especially schools that are very are very close to concentration camps like Auschwitz because its nearer to them or some other.

Katja:

Yeah ... I mean you're probably the exception, yeah.

Judith:

Me neither, actually. I didn't go to anyone as well like ...

Katja:

OK so ... my point is the more practical thing, things with a real eyes meeting experience, things, not just concentration camps, this is also about something I think we need to talk about what about time witnesses, yeah.

Judith:

So, do you kind of have like practical steps you would say like that history teachers can could implement in their teaching and yeah or do you have any concrete ideas, how to make like, do this change or what you said like have like more of those um direct confrontations?

Katja:

Well, there are many online resources that I think are not used as much as they can. Or talking about World War 2 for example I think we've probably all watched a movie in school about that, but there's a lot of movies and there's a lot of documentaries about it. So which ones would you pick. I think there's many ways to not just watch one movie and tell your students this is the one we we're watching because I mean why not watch a movie. There are ways to do that. But the ... that every every group watches a single movie and then presented it to the class, this would be a way of ... or two different movies but you're not wasting all your time in class. But as I said there's lots of online resources for example with witnesses who've experienced that faith and but talked about this and I mean obviously they cannot always come into your class and talk in person to your students, but they have been reported many of them have been recorded and there are resources for that.

Judith:

Ok. So, would you say that because like often it's said that history is taught so it's not repeated. Would you kind of agree with this "slogan" or yeah this is done like that, or do you like how that schools, the approach of teachers goes alongside this slogan you could say?

Katja:

Well, I disagree with that phrase. First of all, this is a very theoretical question: Can history be repeated? And no, it can't, history can never be fully repeated, it's just, it's not possible. The circumstances at that specific time were so different it cannot be fully repeated. However, there are patterns that seem familiar to us and also what's interesting about this phrase is that it's it has a very very very negative quotation [connotation]. So, if something is, if something good is historically familiar to us we don't use that phrase, as an interesting side note. And my second point is basically that history is taught so it's not repeated is not and should never be the sole purpose of history class. because history as a science does not follow a political agenda, so in German schools we obviously teach according to the what is called the democratic consensus, so we cannot say, we don't want to say, that dictatorship is good, obviously not. But so yes, we kind of do follow a little political agenda but not by saying here's your, here's the political agenda. So, why else is history taught? Basically, learning about history is learning about otherness and about otherness that we from our specific standpoint today that we understand or that

we not understand and then we have to, like we have to ask why, why did we not understand the historical otherness and sometimes that's because it's morally unacceptable. And this is how we get to: it cannot repeat itself; we don't want that. Yeah.

Judith:

So, you're saying like that it shouldn't, it should more be like not positive like, but seeing it it's history and it can repeat itself but still we should be aware what happened and know what can happen to be like in circumstances situations.

Katja:

So, we need to be aware of what happened 1 million percent. But another very important question that what like what happened like. OK so, with regard to what were done with the Holocaust, obviously we don't want that to happen again, so we need to learn my opinion more about what happened before and why did it happen, because we can never see a historical event as just the isolated event, that is not possible. So, where did it come from? Historical paths are never one-way streets. So, what were the other streets, that could have been taken? that is a very important question. And then, why did history take this specific route? And secondly, I think what sometimes happens and everyone keeps saying no we don't want that but it still happens, we can't blame people for what has historically happened so we cannot blame students for what their ancestors did and it's not their responsibility. Their responsibility is for those patterns that can happen and that can repeat, they have to they have to know those patterns for them to not repeat again. So, focus obviously on the event but more on what happened before and what can happen in the future.

Judith:

Ok, thank you.

### Episode 3 – Part 1

Judith:

Thank you so for your insights about like history class and being taught today and how you would say how maybe be improved or done better or a different way you would say. We saw that you did like a project called WEGiS-Project and where you also talk about how history class could be taught and what ways and methods could be used and maybe you can just talk about it a little and tell us what exactly it's about and what its goal is and yeah just maybe talk about it a little a little.

Katja:

So, our WEGiS-Project it's short for the German phrase, I am translating it to English right now, paths out of the ivory towers. So, basically what we do is we try to convey history on social media and yeah so maybe just a little background why we do that: so we noticed before we started the project we noticed that history there's lots of history on social media but it's always just it's facts and it's mostly facts, people want facts, but this is not how historic works. So, in the in the discipline of history, yes we have obvious facts, we have dates and we have we have obvious facts about would happen, but most of what happens in history as a discipline and in university is not it's not a fact, we discussed things and we interpret sources and that's what we do. And history and social media does not really have that aspect of we have there's different points of view. So yeah, this is what we're trying to do: history but with different points of view, no fact.

Amelie:

Wow, this is so interesting. So, a new approach to history there.

Judith:

Yeah, because like we also, last episode Amelie and I talked about the how World War 2 was taught in German schools and that we also watched a lot of videos and stuff like we did some stuff like online I would say or how, but not really. And then we thought about this project with the uhm with this like when the Scholl siblings were living like with technology and this story making and like that, we really like those new approaches coming but they're coming kind of slowly and so we were really fond of this project you do. And maybe do you have some specific ideas or approaches you could maybe do this in class approaching World War 2 topics?

Katja:

Approaches to World War 2, well so what I want to see more in history classes are different kinds of media. So, I mean yes history as a discipline is very much based on texts but especially for like the modern times there are other historical sources there is songs, there is pictures, there's videos, there's so much more, so and I think those are the things that we need to focus on more.

Judith:

Thank you. So, maybe to round up, do you have maybe some recommendations for teachers or anyone who is interested in history or teaching or learning it, maybe some books or some, what you could read to yeah broaden your horizon kind of and how you could approach topics like that. Do you have some recommendations?

Katja:

I don't have books in particular but I recommend going to like the websites or of museums or historical science because they usually have recommendations, like they recommend books that you can read about the topic and sometimes they even have materials to teach.

Judith:

Sounds really good, thank you so much for your insights and um all this the project WEGiS-Project really sounds quite interesting, and I hope that future teachers go look back on this and maybe try out new ways in doing it and that also the students can learn in a different way and maybe use their daily devices, they anywhere use, to do so. So, thank you so much.

Katja:

Thank you for you interview.

Amelie:

Ok and now from our side I would say a big thank you to all the listeners, who listened to our informative podcasts regarding teaching approaches to critical history, the World War 2 and the Civil War. And in our room, you can find further information on this topic and we hope this episode yeah gave you a new idea at looking at history education.