



# MICHAEL CROMER MEMORIAL LECTURE

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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## Historical Consciousness and the Australian History Wars

by CSHC Visiting Scholar

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**UBC, Faculty of Education, Scarfe 310  
Tuesday, 17 March 2015, 4:15-5:30 pm**

Australian history has become increasingly contested in recent decades, with heated public debates over national commemorations, history curricula and museum exhibits. The question is, do these so-called 'history wars' resonate beyond the limited public sphere in which they play out? What do 'ordinary people' think of their history in light of these politicised debates over the past? By way of answer, this paper draws on a qualitative research project that asked participants to reflect on how they locate their own historical sensibilities in the context of wider public and academic debates over the past. By proposing a method of 'oral historiography' to gauge contemporary historical consciousness in Australia, it brings a critical new perspective to these ongoing debates. It offers ordinary people a chance to contribute to national discussions about Australian history and it challenges some of the more simplistic and troubling assumptions of the history wars in Australia and internationally.

Anna Clark is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in Public History at the University of Technology Sydney. She has written three books: *The History Wars* (with Stuart Macintyre), *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australia*, and *History's Children: History Wars in the Classroom*, which interviewed 250 history teachers, students and curriculum officials from around Australia and Canada to explore history teaching in school. Her current project, *Every Now and Then: Navigating History in Australia*, uses interviews with 100 people from around the country to consider their thoughts on history alongside public and political discussions about the past. Reflecting her love of fish and fishing, she has also recently been commissioned to write a history of fishing in Australia, which will be published in 2016.

This seminar is supported by the Michael Cromer Memorial Fund, which was established after his death on November 7, 2005, in order to promote projects which would have excited him, had he been here to organize and contribute to them himself.