

VCE HISTORY CONFERENCE



FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY

NOVOTEL HOTEL, PRESTON



2026



SESSION DESCRIPTIONS AND PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

HTAV members receive a discount!

Catch the earlybird rate!

1 VCE UNIT

G GENERAL

C CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

T TEACHING IDEAS



BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE

9.00 AM **Registration**

9.50 AM **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners / Welcome and Housekeeping**

10.10 AM **VCAA Advisory Session: 2026 VCAA Update**

Ashley Keith Pratt, Curriculum Manager (Humanities), VCAA

Ashley will reflect on the first three years of implementation of the VCE History Study Design 2022 and outline what the VCAA has prepared for 2026.

Ashley Keith Pratt is the Curriculum Manager for Humanities at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. He has a long history as a classroom teacher and school leader, having previously been a Head of Humanities, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Deputy Principal in schools across Victoria. He is also completing his doctoral studies in History curriculum analysis and evaluation at the University of Melbourne and was a previous President of HTAV.

10.30 AM **SESSION 1:** Please choose one workshop from this session.

Making Sense of the Examination Reports plus Best Practices in Exam Preparation

3 4

The VCAA has advised Chief Assessors that they will no longer be able to deliver sessions/events such as 'Examination Reports' or 'Meet the Assessors' as they have done for many years.

To ensure History teachers have access to these rich conversations, HTAV have invited highly experienced VCE History teachers to bring their insights, expertise, triumphs and past pitfalls to unpack the demands of examination preparation.

Drawing on published Examination Reports and other sources available on the VCAA website, the presenters will share their expertise on things like:

- What did the last *available* VCAA Examination Report for History highlight for your subject?
- What are some of the features of a high-scoring response to different question types?
- What are some of the most common mistakes students make?
- What are some of the main difficulties teachers should be aware of?

From their own experiences, the presenters will also cover some or all of the following:

- What to do if students are running out of time?
- How to best use/refer to sources?
- What strategies can be helpful in boosting students' confidence walking into an exam?
- What do their highest performing students tend to do when preparing for exams?
- How do you go about teaching students to improve their essay writing?
- What traps have you noticed students fall into when completing SACs and practice exam questions?
How do you help them to overcome these by exam day?

Preparing all of your students for the exam can be rewarding and challenging. This workshop will provide teachers with the opportunity to build more understanding and confidence while strengthening connections with your VCE History teaching colleagues.

1A VCE Units 3 and 4 Revolutions: Making Sense of the Examination Reports plus Best Practices in Exam Preparation

Sam Cavnoudias, Haileybury

Sam Cavnoudias is a senior History teacher at Haileybury with expertise in curriculum development and assessment for Unit 3/4 History. A seasoned presenter for HTAV at numerous conferences and events, Sam also co-authored HTAV's Ancient Greece textbook. He is passionate about mentoring and collaborating with fellow History educators, and is dedicated to advancing teaching methodologies and fostering a deeper understanding of historical concepts.

1B VCE Units 3 and 4 Australian History: Making Sense of the Examination Reports plus Best Practices in Exam Preparation

Bill Lewis, Haileybury

*Bill Lewis is an experienced senior secondary History teacher. He has contributed to textbooks as a co-author of Cambridge's *Analysing Australian History: Power & Resistance*, for the VCE Australian History curriculum, and a contributing author to *Investigating Humanities for the Victorian Curriculum 9* (Cambridge.) He is a frequent contributor to HTAV conferences and student lectures and has written for HTAV's professional journal *Agora*. Bill is also a recipient of the HTAV Award for Excellent and Sustained Contribution to the Teaching and Learning of History and to the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.*

1C VCE Units 3 and 4 Ancient History: Making Sense of the Examination Reports plus Best Practices in Exam Preparation

Isabella Webster, Loreto Mandeville Hall

*Isabella Webster is an experienced History teacher at Loreto Mandeville Hall. She has taught VCE History, including Ancient History, for many years and has shared her experience with teachers and students at both HTAV conferences and student lecture events. Isabella also enjoys writing History resources. She has contributed to the *Humanities Alive* series (Jacaranda) and has written for HTAV and QATs.*

1D Feedback Matters

Amanda Hann and Chloe Tayler, Coburg High School

This workshop will explore the importance of feedback in the VCE History classroom and how it can support student growth. The session will offer ready-to-use ideas and practical strategies to deliver actionable feedback and build effective routines. It will also explore ways to empower students to self-reflect and self-correct.

VCE UNITS 1-4 | TEACHING IDEAS | GENERAL | BYOD

Amanda Hann is the Humanities Learning Area Leader, a Learning Specialist, and a VCE History teacher at Coburg High School. Amanda is a recipient of the 2024 HTAV Award for Excellence in History Teaching by a Secondary Teacher. She has led the development of an engaging and rigorous History curriculum, strengthening VCE History participation and results at Coburg High School. Amanda also mentors early career teachers to support their pedagogical practice.

Chloe Tayler currently works as the Curriculum and Assessment Leader at Coburg High School. She is passionate about working collaboratively in high-performing VCE teams and developing historical thinking skills across the curriculum. Chloe is deeply committed to building the capacity of middle school leaders and supporting early career teachers to flourish in the profession, ensuring all students have access to the highest quality History teaching.

11.25 AM **Morning Tea**

12.00 PM **SESSION 2:** Please choose one workshop from this session.

2A Fragile Foundations: The Early Days of Weimar

Stephen White, Oxley Christian College

This workshop will cover the early days of the Weimar Republic and the challenges it faced as it sought to establish Germany as a constitutional republic after World War One. Between 1918 and 1923, successive governments faced revolution, rebellion, political threats, invasion and hyperinflation. Teachers will gain an overview of the period as well as ideas for classroom teaching and assessment.

VCE UNITS 1 AND 2 | MODERN HISTORY | CONTENT KNOWLEDGE | BYOD

Stephen White is the Head of Humanities and Commerce at Oxley Christian College and an experienced History teacher of Levels 7-10, Modern History and VCE Revolutions. He is the moderator of the VCE Revolutions teacher network, a regular presenter at HTAV conferences, and a contributing author to HTAV publications.

2B Teaching the Russian Revolution in Times of War

Dr Natasha Wilson, The University of Melbourne

How has the field of imperial Russian and Soviet history been impacted by today's full-scale Russian war in Ukraine? The leading historian of Ukraine based at Harvard University, Serhii Plokhly, remarked recently: 'The most confusing aspect of the term "Russian Revolution" is that it often obscures what actually took place in the multiethnic Russian Empire—a revolution of nations, of which the Russians were only one.' This workshop will explore how the war has accelerated scholarly efforts to decolonise the field using new approaches that consider the longer history of Russian imperialism and amplify the experiences of non-Russian ethnicities and nationalities during the Russian Revolution and Civil War.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | REVOLUTIONS: RUSSIA | CONTENT KNOWLEDGE | BYOD

Dr Natasha Wilson is a historian of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at the University of Melbourne. She received her PhD in History from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London in 2021. She was a visiting doctoral scholar at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow and the European University of St Petersburg. Her published work addresses the reformist ideas, actors and networks that bridge the histories of Soviet and East European state institutions, dissent, and international communism. She is currently completing a book manuscript titled The Young Socialists: Left-Wing Dissent in the Soviet Union from the Brezhnev Years to Perestroika, and is a coordinator and lecturer for the second-year History subject Red Empire: The Soviet Union and After.



2C Understanding the Delian League Through Evidence and Research

Namrata Shipstone, Melton Christian College

The aim of this workshop is to delve deep into the formation of the Delian League and the Athenian Empire. Using primary evidence and scholarly research, attendees will gain a comprehensive understanding of the importance of the Delian League and the Athenian consolidation of power over its allies, while positing this as a major development during the Peloponnesian War.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | ANCIENT HISTORY: GREECE | CONTENT KNOWLEDGE | BYOD

Namrata Shipstone has over a decade of History teaching experience, with most of it in VCE Revolutions and Ancient History. Her love for the subject also led her to complete a Master of Arts in Ancient History, with a research focus on empire-building in the ancient world and exploring how political power, cultural identity and military can shape ancient societies. Her aim is to engage students in ancient world studies using a robust scholarly approach, and her research interests lie in the growth of the Athenian 'empire' and Rome's relationship with the East.

2D Gamification and Creative Student Engagement in the Empires Classroom

Sarah Mandie, Wesley College

This workshop will explore creative and fun strategies to engage students in the Empires classroom. Focusing on the Spanish and British empires, Sarah will share her tried-and-true method of pairing rigorous historical source analysis and conceptual learning with games, role-play, multimedia and rich discussion. This workshop will also explore how to address key knowledge points, outcomes and skills, while helping foster a love for history and a desire to continue History study. It is designed for all teachers of VCE Empires and will offer attendees an opportunity to share ideas.

VCE UNITS 1 AND 2 | EMPIRES | TEACHING IDEAS

Sarah Mandie is an experienced History and English teacher at Wesley College. She is also a singer-songwriter, leads a community choir and likes to use her musical and performance talents to enrich the History classroom.

2E 1776 vs 1856: The American Revolution in Australia

Dr Zachary Gorman, Robert Menzies Institute

It's no secret that VCE Revolutions is a more popular VCE subject than Australian History, but why is that the case? This workshop sheds new light on the debates underpinning the American Revolution by explaining why they helped lead to the relatively peaceful birth of Australian democracy. Zachary will explore how the granting of historically grounded 'British' rights to the antipodes in the 1850s acted as a belated admission that they should never have been denied to the 13 American colonies—which instead had to embark on a novel appeal for abstract and universal liberties.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | AUSTRALIAN HISTORY | CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Dr Zachary Gorman is the Historian and Research Manager for the Robert Menzies Institute at the University of Melbourne. He has authored and/or edited nine books, including Summoning Magna Carta: Freedom's Symbol Over a Millenium, which explores how the Anglosphere's discourse on rights and freedoms has evolved from the famous charter. It features chapters on William Penn, the American Revolution and the birth of Australian democracy.

2F Beyond the Terror: Teaching the Consequences of the French Revolution

Athena Kavaleris, Westbourne Grammar School

From the night of 4 August 1789 to the Constitution of Year III in 1795, the French Revolution can feel like a whirlwind of factions, reforms, setbacks and the Terror. For many teachers, this section is notoriously difficult to teach with clarity and coherence. This workshop is designed to demystify this area of study and help guide students through the turbulence with understanding and greater insight. Athena will unpack the key events and turning points, highlight the role of the challenges within the revolution's phased trajectory, and explore the big ideas that help students make sense of continuity and change. She will offer practical strategies for building clearer timelines, incorporating source analysis and essay writing, and for sparking curiosity of the revolution's legacy, equipping teachers to interpret the aftermath of 1789 with both depth and confidence.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | REVOLUTIONS: FRANCE | TEACHING IDEAS

Athena Kavaleris teaches at Westbourne Grammar School and is the Head of Teaching and Learning (Middle School). She has taught VCE Australian History and currently teaches VCE Revolutions, with a particular interest in French history. Athena is very passionate about history and equipping students with skills to become self-regulated learners who can engage deeply with historical ideas and concepts. Athena is also a recipient of the HTAV Award for Excellence in History Teaching by a Secondary Teacher.

12.55 PM **SESSION 3:** Please choose one option from this session.

3A Teaching the Cold War

1 2 C

Professor Michael Birkner, Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania

The Cold War (c. 1945–1989) offers teachers and students a global historical moment viewed from multiple perspectives. Scholars have never agreed on any of the essential elements, from the decision to drop A-bombs on Japan in August 1945 (was it actually a signal to the Russians?) to who deserves credit for the end of Soviet control of Eastern Europe and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union. In this session, you will discover more about key events in the making of the Cold War, including the shaping of 'containment' policies by US presidents Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, as well as ways in which the Cold War was waged, several Cold War thaws, President Richard Nixon's policy of triangulation, and, in his second term in office, President Ronald Reagan's turnabout in relation to the Soviet adversary.

VCE UNITS 1 AND 2 | MODERN HISTORY | CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Professor Michael J. Birkner is Professor of History at Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania. From 2014 to 2016, he served as president of the Pennsylvania Historical Association. Michael has published widely on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American political history, including three edited volumes on Pennsylvania's only president, James Buchanan. His latest book, coedited with Randall Miller and John W. Quist, is The Worlds of James Buchanan and Thaddeus Stevens (Louisiana State University Press, 2019). In 2003 and 2006, he served as a member of the History jury for the Pulitzer Prize, chairing the jury in 2006. He has recently completed a book on the making of the president, titled 1952, told from the perspective of Eisenhower's campaign adviser Sherman Adams.

3B Drama, AI and Social Media: Breathing Life Into History

3 4 T

Adele Zolott, Ruyton Girls' School

Want to bring more joy into your lessons? This workshop will provide practical ways to use social media and AI to get students laughing, moving and learning in ways they'll remember on the exam. History is an emotional subject, but sometimes a TikTok or AI-generated role-play is exactly what students need to connect with the past and remember that they are learning about people's lives, not just statistics. This workshop will draw examples from teaching the Russian and Chinese revolutions, but the tips and tricks can be used in any VCE History classroom.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | REVOLUTIONS: RUSSIA AND CHINA | GENERAL | TEACHING IDEAS | BYOD

Adele Zolott is a History teacher who wishes she was also a Drama teacher. She loves seeing students jump into character, take on voices from the past, and mix old stories with modern tools. Currently the Acting Learning Leader for Humanities at Ruyton Girls' School, Adele is especially passionate about Russian history and helping students hear the voices behind the societies they are learning about.

3C Power, Politics and Pedagogy: Bringing VCE Empires to Life

1 2 T

Hilary Tieri, Assumption College

Step into the world of conquest, power and cultural encounters in this workshop designed for both new and experienced teachers of VCE Units 1 and 2 Empires. We will unpack the fundamental content and historical thinking skills that underpin the study design and will explore how to build student confidence in analysing sources, constructing arguments, and understanding the broader forces that shaped global empires. Participants will engage with ready-to-use classroom resources for the Spanish and British empires, discuss high-impact teaching strategies, and explore assessment approaches for historical inquiry, source analysis and extended response tasks. The workshop will also provide time for teachers to share their own materials, connect with colleagues, and become part of our professional network to support the growth of VCE Empires across Victorian schools.

VCE UNITS 1 AND 2 | EMPIRES | TEACHING IDEAS

Hilary Tieri is a passionate History educator and Learning Leader of Humanities at Assumption College, Kilmore. With extensive experience teaching VCE Empires, she brings deep knowledge of global history and a commitment to helping students think critically about power, conquest and cultural exchange. Hilary focuses on engaging, inquiry-based learning that connects past and present, and she actively supports teachers through collaborative curriculum design and resource sharing. Her work centres on strengthening historical thinking and building teacher confidence in delivering the study of VCE Empires.

3D Teaching Writing Skills in VCE Revolutions*Jake Bloom, Ivanhoe Grammar**This workshop has been cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances.***3E Making the Switch to Australian History***Tania Ragusa, Mercy College*

This workshop will support VCE History teachers who want to introduce Units 3 and 4 Australian History at their schools but may be apprehensive about making a change or unsure where to begin. Tania will discuss the benefits of offering Australian History, how to generate both student and staff interest in the subject, considerations for curriculum development, and strategies for classroom learning. She will also provide suggestions for place-based learning, incursions/excursions, and ways to make real-life connections to the course.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | AUSTRALIAN HISTORY | TEACHING IDEAS | BYOD

Tania Ragusa is an experienced History teacher, former Head of Humanities, and contributing author to the Jacaranda Humanities Alive textbook series. She is passionate about the study of Australian History, having implemented Units 3 and 4 Australian History at her school for the first time. She is particularly interested in engaging with local histories, using place-based learning to bring Australian History to life and engage students in the world around them. She has written about her experiences teaching Australian History in HTAV's professional journal, Agora.

3F Teaching Middle Kingdom Egypt*Geoff Trevaskis, Carey Baptist Grammar School*

Middle Kingdom Egypt is perhaps the least famous of the three periods, but there is so much material that reveals a fascinating and changing world. This workshop will focus on selecting sources and through-lines of concepts to address in Unit 2, AOS2 Power and Propaganda.

VCE UNITS 1 AND 2 | ANCIENT HISTORY: EGYPT | TEACHING IDEAS | BYOD

Geoff Trevaskis has been teaching Ancient History to senior students for eight years and has studied Classics at a tertiary level. Geoff enjoys the learning experience and the enrichment that teaching Ancient History brings.

1.50 PM **Networking Lunch and Exhibitor Passport Prize Draw**

2.55 PM **SESSION 4:** Please choose one option from this session.

4A The Chinese Revolution in Art, Music and Film*Ian Lyell, Mentone Girls' Grammar School*

In this workshop, Ian will unpack ways to engage and deepen students' understanding of the Chinese Revolution by exploring what revolutionary songs and artworks reveal as primary sources of evidence. He'll also discuss clips from historical dramas which can be used to help prompt classroom discussions. These are some of Ian's favourite activities for improving student engagement, promoting historical empathy and providing opportunities for continuous skill development.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | REVOLUTIONS: CHINA | TEACHING IDEAS

Ian Lyell teaches History and Politics at Mentone Girls' Grammar School. He aims to support teachers in making History an accessible, rigorous and empowering discipline to explore. In 2024, Ian was a recipient of the HTAV Colin Pearce Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Teaching and Learning of History and to the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.

4B The Catholic Church and the French Revolution

3 4 C

Emeritus Professor Peter McPhee AM, The University of Melbourne

The Catholic Church was the most powerful institution in eighteenth-century France alongside the Bourbon monarchy. What was its role in the origins of the revolution, both as a focus of grievances and as an actor in its own right? What role did clerical deputies play at Versailles in 1789? And what were the consequences of the revolution for the Church from 1789 to 1795?

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | REVOLUTIONS: FRANCE | CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Emeritus Professor Peter McPhee AM was appointed to a Personal Chair in History at the University of Melbourne in 1993. He was President of the Academic Board, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and then the University's first Provost in 2007 to 2009. He is now an Emeritus Professor. His most recent books are Liberty or Death: The French Revolution (2016) and An Environmental History of France: Making the Landscape, 1770–2020 (2024). Peter is the Chair of the History Council of Victoria, the state's peak body for history, and Patron of the HTAV.

4C Using Sources in VCE Australian History

3 T

Bill Lewis, Haileybury

This workshop will provide tips and tricks for using sources in Unit 3 Australian History. From scaffolding students with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century primary texts to using sources in school-based assessment tasks, ideas will be provided covering all four investigations in VCE Australian History. Building on ideas presented in a workshop at the 2025 HTAV VCE History Conference, this workshop will offer some new and updated examples and skills for discipline literacy in the History classroom.

VCE UNIT 3 | AUSTRALIAN HISTORY | TEACHING IDEAS

Bill Lewis is an experienced teacher of VCE History, having taught both Revolutions and Australian History. He is a frequent contributor to HTAV conferences and has co-authored the textbook Analysing Australian History: Power and Resistance (Cambridge University Press).

4D Making the Cold War Hot Again

2 T

Siobhan Dwyer, Blackburn High School

Are you teaching Unit 2 Modern History in 2026? This workshop is designed to support teachers in bringing the Cold War to life in the classroom. Participants will explore practical, curriculum-aligned activities that not only deepen students' understanding of key Cold War events and concepts but also foster curiosity and critical engagement. These strategies have been shown to boost student participation, strengthen knowledge retention, and develop empathy for those who lived through the tensions of the Cold War.

VCE UNIT 2 | MODERN HISTORY | TEACHING IDEAS

Siobhan Dwyer has been teaching English and History in Victorian state schools since 2007. She is passionate about creating engaging and inclusive classrooms that encourage students to think critically, connect with content, and develop empathy. With a particular focus on fostering a love of history, Siobhan uses a wide range of strategies to make learning meaningful and inspiring. She believes that studying the past builds curiosity, analytical thinking, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives.

4E 'Don't Lose Your Head': Tried and Tested Strategies for the Revolutions Classroom

Sally Elliott, Cranbourne East Secondary College, and Natalie Shephard, Hume Anglican Grammar

Building on the success of a 2024 VCE History Conference workshop ('Savvy Strategies and Revolutionary Resources'), the 2026 workshop refines and extends the strategies that make VCE History engaging and accessible for all learners. Focusing on practical, classroom-tested routines, this workshop will explore ways to engage struggling learners while stretching confident historians. Participants will leave with adaptable strategies that spark curiosity, strengthen understanding, and empower every student to become an agent of change in their own learning.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | REVOLUTIONS | TEACHING IDEAS | BYOD

Sally Elliott is an educator with 17 years of experience, specialising in History, Humanities and EAL. She is the Literacy Specialist at Cranbourne East Secondary College and teaches Senior History, Junior English and Humanities. Sally frequently presents at HTAV conferences, with a focus on technology usage, vocabulary instruction and pedagogical support. She is also a co-author of Good Humanities 10 History. Sally is dedicated to fostering inclusivity, creating accessible resources, and improving student outcomes, demonstrating her commitment to shaping dynamic and inclusive learning environments.

Natalie Shephard is a History and Humanities educator with over two decades of experience and is currently teaching at Hume Anglican Grammar. As an active contributor to the HTAV, she not only presents at HTAV events and conferences but also enhances educational resources through her involvement in HTAV publications. In addition, she co-authored the Good Humanities 9 and 10 series. Beyond the classroom, Natalie serves as a mentor through HTAV, offering support to colleagues across Victoria. Committed to enriching History education, she provides accessible resources and innovative teaching ideas. Natalie also serves as a Director on the HTAV Board and is a recipient of the HTAV Award for Excellent and Sustained Contribution to the Teaching and Learning of History and to the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.

4F Designing SACs with Wellbeing in Mind

Stephanie Ruth, Mac.Robertson Girls' High School

How might we design SACs that are rewarding for teachers while also being effective for assessing students' knowledge and skills? This workshop offers ideas for planning assessments throughout VCE Revolutions. Alongside this, we will examine how feedback can be used intentionally to enhance both student growth and staff wellbeing, with a focus on building students' emotional regulation, resilience and independence. Attendees will leave with practical strategies and examples for designing SACs (based on VCE Revolutions: Russia and China), while also ensuring that feedback practices support student and staff wellbeing.

VCE UNITS 3 AND 4 | REVOLUTIONS: RUSSIA AND CHINA | TEACHING IDEAS

Stephanie Ruth is a History teacher and Learning Specialist who places student wellbeing at the centre of learning. She teaches VCE Revolutions (Russia and China) and middle school History, with a strong focus on making assessments both meaningful and accessible through differentiation and extension. Steph has gained fresh insight into assessment practices and is especially interested in how feedback can support student growth and teacher wellbeing.

4.00 PM **Social Hour:**

Networking Drinks for Conference Participants

Join colleagues, catch up with old friends, meet new people, harvest good ideas and enjoy a complimentary drink and a selection of canapés at the HTAV Social Hour.

Social Hour will take place in Stampton Bar located in the Novotel Hotel conference venue.

