

Gastvortrag

# Elizabeth Dillenburg “Empire’s Daughters”

## Abstract

This presentation traces the interconnected histories of girlhood, whiteness, and British colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although girls are often consigned to the shadows in studies of colonialism, they nevertheless played a vital role in the empire as migrants, settlers, laborers, and creators of colonial knowledge and were heralded as “empire builders.” Yet their involvement in the empire was anything but straightforward. They not only supported—directly and indirectly—systems of colonial power but also resisted them. To examine the complexities of girls’ engagement and experiences in the empire, this presentation discusses the Girls’ Friendly Society, an organization that emerged in Britain and grew into a global society with branches throughout the empire.

It specifically explores how the Society’s multifaceted emigration and imperial education programs constructed ideas of girlhood, race, and empire that then circulated globally. This presentation uses the Girls’ Friendly Society as a lens to explore the micropolitics of colonialism and argues that understandings of colonialism remain incomplete without considerations of girls and girlhood.



Universitätsstraße 15

HS 15.13

07.04.2025, 17 Uhr

# Elizabeth Dillenburg

Elizabeth Dillenburg is Assistant Professor of History at The Ohio State University. She is a historian of modern Europe and European colonialism with a particular focus on gender and childhood in Britain and the British Empire. She has published articles, chapters, and essays on girlhood in the British Empire, the history of cricket, and women's suffrage and co-edited a volume, *Print Culture at the Crossroads: The Book and Central Europe*. Her recent book, *Empire's daughters: Girlhood, whiteness, and the colonial project*, was published in 2024 by Manchester University Press and is available as open access.



## Lecture series Decolonizing History

The lecture series 'Decolonizing History' addresses the question of how colonial forms of power intertwined in history and how coloniality was embedded in political, socio-cultural, and economic relationships. From a trans-epochal perspective, the lectures focus on cultural negotiation processes between colonisers and colonised and provide insights into multi-layered historical forms of inequality and racialisation. By taking a critical look at historiographical forms of knowledge production, the approaches presented aim to overcome coloniality in historical research.

The 'Decolonising History' lecture series involves the section for Early Modern History, History Didactics, and Cultural and Gender History at the Department of History. The lecture by Elizabeth Dillenburg is organised in cooperation with the section for Global Governance: Law in Context.

**In the winter semester 2025/26 we will continue the series with:**

Stephan Steiner (Vienna) and Juliana Orsós (Pécs) on the topic of 'Cannibalism in 1782? Roma trials under Joseph II'

and

Nicole Garretón (Aachen) on 'Historical Culture and Colonialism'