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Professor Tenure-Line

Communication Arts and Sciences

Title of your research project.

Public Memory, Affect, and the Battle of Culloden: A Rhetorical Analysis of Two Exhibits at the Culloden Visitor Centre

Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.

As an integral event in Scottish history, the Battle of Culloden marked the end of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, the Scottish clan system, the Stuarts' claim to the British throne, and, in many aspects, the highland way of life. Today, Culloden Battlefield is one of the most visited sites in the Scottish highlands. Tens of thousands of people visit the Culloden Visitor Centre each year to remember the tragic battle. Public memory of the battle brings with it feelings of sadness, mourning, and reflection. Through rhetorical criticism as a research method, I explore how public memory of the Battle of Culloden and the night march preceding it is created through two exhibits at the Culloden Visitor Centre in Inverness, Scotland: the 360-degree Battle Immersion Theatre and the Night March Exhibit. In this essay, I seek to contribute to the understudied assumption that public memory is animated by affect by exploring how emotion is created through these two unique exhibits. Using Wood's (2020) process model of emotional memory synchronization, I argue that these exhibits create an emotion-rich shared experience by engaging audiences through immersive exhibits that utilize sensory elements. Through these exhibits, visitors experience a recreation of what Jacobite soldiers may have experienced during the battle and night march, and this experience creates a connection to the historical events, the soldiers who lived through these events, and the Scottish highlands themselves. I suggest that these exhibits provide an example for how other museums and commemorative sites around the world may wish to use immersive, sensory-laden, and emotion-provoking exhibits to teach audiences about and create public memory of different historical events.

Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?

No

If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.

It is currently under review with a peer-reviewed national rhetoric journal.

What problem do you address with your research?

How interactive, sensory-laden museum exhibits may be used to create public memory of events outside of living memory