



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

AHRC CDP studentship topics to start in October 2022

Changing public perceptions of Winston Churchill from the First World War to 2020

This project is about tracing changing perceptions of Winston Churchill over time. It will highlight how the public and the media, as well as Churchill's associates and opponents, have viewed him from the time of his involvement in the First World War, through to his role as Britain's wartime Prime Minister and up until 2020. It will document how both Churchill's reputation and role within modern British history have altered over time, often reflecting wider events and the public mood of the day. It will show that public opinion and media coverage of Churchill was never unanimous in its tone or outlook.

A key contribution to historical knowledge, this project will primarily address issues surrounding one of the most well-known personalities within British politics and 20th-century global history. It will also explore the legacy of the Second World War and how changing contemporaneous discourse has altered, affected and challenged established wartime narratives in the decades since it ended. The project will analyse representations of Churchill not only during the two world wars but also up to the near present, including the events of 2020, in which protesters vandalized Churchill's statue in Parliament Square.

Key research questions to be addressed include:

- How and why has public perception of Churchill vacillated?
- What was the public perception of Churchill during the First and Second World Wars?
- How was he portrayed by the media during and between the wars?
- How far did the events of his public and political life prior to the Second World War shape how he was viewed during the conflict?
- How far did Churchill's First World War service and reputation, as well as his years in the 'political wilderness' during the 1930s, shape how he was viewed after he became Prime Minister?
- How were Churchill's views on the British Empire and its independence movements received by the British public and press during the war and afterwards?
- How have these perceptions changed over time, culminating in the anti-Churchill backlash of 2020?
- What part has the media – both the British and overseas media, as well as the internet and social media – played in shaping public perceptions of Churchill over time?
- How has Churchill been co-opted as a beacon for wider cultural issues?

Likely research to be undertaken will include archival research at IWM, the Churchill Archives Centre, the National Archives and newspaper and media archives including, but not limited to, *The Times* Archive, the BBC Archives, the British Newspaper Archives, the *New York Times* Archive, the *Washington Post* Archive and British Pathé. Research trips may also be necessary to Chartwell, the Churchill War Rooms, the Churchill Museum in Missouri, USA, as well as other archives and media centres as necessary.

Application forms and guidelines are available to download from our website:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/doctoral-awards>

The application will provide an opportunity to elaborate on the strengths of the proposal, and any shared research interests. The deadline for completed applications is **5pm on Friday 26th November 2021** - after which they will be judged by a panel selected by IWM.

If you have any queries, please contact Asha Hall-Jones, Research Manager, at Research@iwm.org.uk