Abstract Ute Frevert

„Historicizing Empathy and Education“

Empathy has had a stellar career as an emotion word in recent years. While empathy is relatively new as a word, it is far older as a practice. But even as a practice, it has been thoroughly redefined during the modern age.  Starting in the late eighteenth century, European societies underwent a process of political, social, and economic change that left its mark on emotional concepts and behaviour. In my talk, I will analyse the challenges to which the new idea of „sympathy“ was the answer. I will also look at how this idea was put into action via media and social institutions. I will thus try to historicize the feeling of empathy and, at the same time, understand how it was cultivated and sustained. This entails shedding light on unempathic behaviour and how it was perceived and assessed in the age of capitalism.