Anthropology of Indigenous Australia

Class code
ANTH-UA 9037 – 001

Instructor Details
Petronella Vaarzon-Morel
pvm2@nyu.edu
Consultations by appointment.
Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

Class Details
Spring 2018

Anthropology of Indigenous Australia

Tuesday 12:30 – 3:30pm
30 January to 8 May
Room 301
NYU Sydney Academic Centre

Prerequisites
None.

Class Description
This course offers an introduction to some of the classical and current issues in the anthropology of Indigenous Australia. The role of anthropology in the representation and governance of Indigenous life is itself an important subject for anthropological inquiry, considering that Indigenous people of Australia have long been the objects of interest and imagination by outsiders for their cultural formulations of kinship, ritual, art, gender, and politics. These representations—in feature films about them (such as Rabbit-Proof Fence and Australia), New Age Literature (such as Mutant Message Down Under), or museum exhibitions (such as in the Museum of Sydney or the Australian Museum)—are now also in dialogue with Indigenous forms of cultural production, in genres as diverse as film, television, drama, dance, art and writing. The course will explore how Aboriginal people have struggled to reproduce themselves and their traditions on their own terms, asserting their right to forms of cultural autonomy and self-determination. Through the examination of ethnographic and historical texts, films, archives and Indigenous life-writing accounts, we will consider the ways in which Aboriginalities are being challenged and constructed in contemporary Australia. The course will consist of lectures interspersed with discussions, student presentations, and films/other media; we will also have guest presenters.
Fieldtrip
There will be two required field trips. They are considered co-curricular, and are essential to your learning over the course of the semester.

Required field trips:

This field trip is in lieu of normal class time from 12:30m – 3:30pm.

Week 13 (Tuesday 24 April): Aboriginal Heritage Tour, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney
During the excursion to the Royal Botanic Gardens an Aboriginal Education Officer will introduce us to Indigenous use of plants and related cultural knowledge and practices.

This field trip is in lieu of normal class time from 12:30m – 3:30pm.

Desired Outcomes
As a result of successfully completing this course, students will be able to:
- Demonstrate understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and ways of being in their historical and contemporary contexts;
- Critically reflect upon, and engage in, the changing nature of ethnographic practice and the problems of attempting to represent the lives of Indigenous Australians;
- Recognise and interpret many of the different symbolic forms of self-representation Indigenous Australians use when communicating both intra-culturally and cross-culturally;
- More clearly articulate their own social, cultural, personal, and political dispositions as they reflect on their own responses to encounters with Indigenous Australia(ns); and
- Draw on this foundational knowledge to further develop the skills needed to sensitively engage cross-culturally with Indigenous Australians (and non-Indigenous Australians).

Assessment Components
Attendance, discussion, participation in class activities: 10%
Short paper (4-5 pages) Due by 12:30pm, Tue 6 March (Week 6): 25%
In-class presentation (15 minutes) and follow-up paper (4-5 pages): 30%
Final essay (8-10 pages): Due by 12:30pm, Fri 11 May (Week 15): 35%

Attendance, discussion, participation in class activities: 10%
Students are expected to do the assigned readings, attend lectures, and participate actively in class discussion.

Short paper (4-5 pages): 25% Due by 12:30pm, Tue 6 March (Week 6)
Topic to be advised in Week 2 when assessment criteria also will be distributed.
15-minute in-class presentation and follow up paper (4-5 pages): 30%
You will present on one selected reading for the week (in addition to the two required readings). You will be asked to summarise authors’ arguments, present major themes, relate to the required readings and raise questions for further discussion. PowerPoint support is welcome but not required. A sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class. A 4-5 page paper write-up on your work is due at the beginning of class in the week following your presentation.
Together, the presentation and the paper will be worth 30% of your final grade.

Final essay (8-10 pages) written essay: 35%, Due by 12:30pm, Fri 11 May (Week 15)
A list of questions and assessment criteria will be distributed in Week 11; you may also select your own topic in advance with approval from the Instructor. Approval must be gained in-person (email is not sufficient).

Written work must include appropriate citations and references (reference lists are not included in the required number of pages). It must conform to the American Anthropological Association Style Guide (AAA Style Guide), which is available on the NYU Classes site for our course. It should also follow the spelling of Aboriginal terms laid out in the short NYU Style Guide prepared for this course (adapted from the AAA Style Guide and available on the NYU Classes site).

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component will result in failure of the class.

For this course your total numerical score, calculated from the components listed above, is converted to a letter grade without rounding.

Extra Credit: Site policy does not allow grading of work outside of the assignments included in the syllabus. The final grade will only be calculated from the assessment components listed here and no other work, whether additional or substituted, is permitted.

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<th>Assessment Expectations</th>
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<td><strong>Grade A:</strong> Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade B:</strong> Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade C:</strong> Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade D:</strong> Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations.</td>
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**Grade F:** Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Work is weak, unfinished or unsubmitted.

This course uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90 to &lt; 94</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0 to &lt; 65</td>
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**Submission of Work**

Assignments (excluding in-class presentations and exams) must be submitted electronically via NYU Classes. It is the student’s responsibility to confirm that the work has been successfully uploaded. In the unlikely event that a submission to Classes fails, students must immediately submit the work to the Academic Programs Coordinator via email before the original submission deadline accompanied by an explanation of the issue. All in-class presentations and exams must be completed during the scheduled class time. An assessment component is considered completed when the student has met all the terms for that assessment component as outlined by the instructor.

An assessment component completed after the deadline without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) for each day the work is late. Work completed beyond five weekdays after the due date without an agreed extension receives a mark of zero, and the student is not entitled to feedback for that piece of work. Because failure to submit or fulfil any required assessment component will result in failure of the course, it is crucial for students to complete every assignment even when it will receive a mark of zero.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.
It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades. The class roster will be marked at the beginning of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalised by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

Faculty cannot excuse an absence. Requests for absences to be excused must be directed to the Academic Programs Coordinator. Students must provide appropriate documentation for their absence. In the case of illness, students must contact the Academic Programs Coordinator on the day of absence. They must provide medical documentation to Academic Programs Coordinator within three days of the absence in order to be medically excused. The note must include a medical judgement indicating that the student was unfit to attend class/work on the specific day or dates of the absence. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Academic Programs staff.

This is a seminar subject and requires the active participation of all students. It also requires engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Your behaviour in class should respect your classmates’ desire to learn. It is important for you to focus your full attention on the class, for the entire class period.

- Arrive to class on time.
- Once you are in class, you are expected to stay until class ends. Leaving to make or take phone calls, to meet with classmates, or to go to an interview, is not acceptable behaviour.
- Phones, digital music players, and any other communications or sound devices are not to be used during class. That means no phone calls, no texting, no social media, no email, and no internet browsing at any time during class.
- Laptop computers and tablets are not to be used during class except in rare instances for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor.
• The only material you should be reading in class is material assigned for that class. Reading anything else, such as newspapers or magazines, or doing work from another class, is not acceptable.
• Class may not be recorded in any fashion – audio, video, or otherwise – without permission in writing from the instructor.

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “…not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU Sydney we are committed to creating a learning environment that:
• fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and
• promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

Religious Obsvance

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Academic Programs Coordinator in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

Provisions to students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

Required Texts

It is a course expectation that you have done the required reading and have prepared sufficiently to discuss them in class.

Supplemental Texts (Available in NYUS Library)

- Nanni, Giordano and James, Andrea (2013) *Coranderrk: We will Show the Country*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

**Week 1  Introduction: Indigenous People, Settler Society, You, Us and Sydney**

**Tuesday 30 January**

**Required Reading:**


Week 2 Cultural Translation, Cultural Knowledge
Tuesday 6 February

Required Reading:
• Bronislaw Malinowski (1978) [1922], Argonauts of the Western Pacific (Routledge), Introduction, 111-1X.

Selected Reading for Class Presentation: 1

Selected Reading for Class Presentation: 2

Week 3 Classical Aboriginal Society: Cosmology, People, and Place
Tuesday 13 February

Guest Lecturer: Craig Elliott

Required Reading:
• Fred Myers (1991), Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place, and Politics Among Western Desert Aborigines (University of California Press), Chapters 2 & 3, 47-102.

Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation 2:

Week 4 Aboriginal Life Worlds, Colonization and Resistance
Tuesday 20 February

Required Reading:

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:**
• Fred Myers (1991), *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place, and Politics Among Western Desert Aborigines* (University of California Press), Chapters 4, 5, 103-126

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 2:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 3:**

In-Class Media: *Coniston* Directed By: Francis Jupurrurla Kelly and David Batty

**Week 5**  **History: Settlement: Aboriginal Perspectives and State Policies**

**Tuesday 27 February**

**Required Reading:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:**
• Diane Barwick (1974): “And the Lubras are Ladies Now” (in Faye Gale, Ed. *Women’s role in aboriginal society*: 51-63.)

**In class reading:** Excerpts from Nanni, Giordano and James, Andrea (2013) *Coranderrk: We will Show the Country*. (Aboriginal Studies Press).

**In-Class Media:** *Freedom for Our Lifetime, First Australians series*, dir, Rachel Perkins, 60 min.

**Week 6**  **History: State Policies and Aboriginal Civil Rights**

**Required Reading:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 2:**
**In-Class Media:** *Freedom Ride, (Blood Brothers)* (dirs. Rachel Perkins and Ned Lander, 55 mins, 1993)

**Assignment:** *Short Paper due (20%)*

**SPRING BREAK: 12 – 16 March (Week 7)**

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**Week 8**  
**History: Land Rights and Self-Determination.**  
**Tuesday 20 March**

**Guest Lecturer: Craig Elliott**

**Required Reading:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 2:**

**In-Class Media:** *Putuparri and the Rainmakers*. Ronin Films. (2015) Dir. Nicole Ma

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**Week 9**  
**Whose History? – Identity and The Stolen Generations.**  
**Tuesday 27 March**

**Guest Lecturer: Craig Elliott**

**Required Reading:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation:**

**Recommended Reading:**

• Nugi Garimara (Doris Pilkington) (1996) *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, University of Queensland Press  

**In Class Media:** *Stolen Generations*, (dir. Darlene Johnson, 52 min, 2000)

**Recommended film:** *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (dir. Phillip Noyce, prod. Christine Olsen, 1 hr 34 mins. 2002).

**Week 10  Identity: Who/What is Aboriginal?**

**Tuesday 3 April**

**Guest Lecturer: Craig Elliott**

**Required Reading:**


**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:**


**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 2:**


**In-Class Media:** Excerpts from Series 1, *First Contact*, produced by Blackfella Film (Rachel Perkins and Darren Dale) for SBS 2014.

**Week 11  How to conceptualise and / or represent contemporary Aboriginal life**

**Tuesday 10 April**

**Required Reading:**


**Field trip/excursion: Australian National Maritime Museum Exhibitions:** 1) Eora First People. Precious Works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture; 2) Gapu-Monuk Saltwater: Journey to Sea Country.

We will meet at the Maritime Museum, 2 Murray St, Darling Harbour, Sydney.
Week 12  Indigenous Media, Cultural Activism

Tuesday 17 April

Required Reading:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation 2:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation 3:

Recommended Reading:

In Class Media: Excerpts, First Contact, produced by Blackfella Film (Rachel Perkins and Darren Dale) for SBS 2014.

Week 13  Indigenous relations to land: environmental knowledge, practices and issues.

Tuesday 24 April

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:
- Jessica K. Weir (2009), Murray River Country (Aboriginal Studies Press), 1-25 (i.e. Chapter 1, “Narratives and their relations”).

Class will be a compulsory fieldtrip/excursion from 12:30pm to 3.30 today at Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
**Details of required fieldtrip/excursion:** Aboriginal Heritage Tour, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. (Duration including travel 3 hrs.) Meet at 12:30am at Woolloomooloo Gate to Royal Botanic Gardens, Mrs Macquarie Road. This excursion is in lieu of normal class time from 12:30am – 3:30pm. During the first part of the excursion an Aboriginal Education Officer will introduce us to Indigenous use of plants and related cultural knowledge and practices.

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**Week 14** Indigenous Futures: Historical Practices and Indigenous Representations.

**Tuesday 1 May**

**Required Reading:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 1:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation 2:**

**In-Class Media:** *Remembering Yayayi*. Directors, Pip Deveson, Fred Myers, Ian Dunlop.

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**Week 15** Course Review

**Tuesday 8 May**

**Required reading:**

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation**

**Assignment:** Final essay due (35%) Friday 11 May

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**Your Instructor**

Petronella Vaarzon-Morel (M.A., Indiana University) is a sociocultural anthropologist whose interests include Indigenous relations to the land, personhood, identity, visual culture and human-animal relations. Over many years she has conducted ethnographic research with Indigenous groups in central and northern
Australia for Aboriginal land and Native Title claims, and for a range of other issues in such areas as environment management, the ‘stolen generation’ and history. In collaboration with Warlpiri she co-authored the book *Warlpiri Women’s Voices*.

Her academic publications include articles and chapters in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, and she has presented papers at national and international conferences. In 2012 she was the recipient of an Anthropology of Native Title Services (ANTS) Research Fellowship, at the University of Adelaide, and in 2013 a Research Writing Placement at the Centre for Native Title Anthropology, Australian National University. She is currently a Research Associate at the University of Sydney on the project 'Re-integrating Central Australian community cultural collections'. Her pedagogic background includes a period teaching introductory anthropology at Indiana University, Bloomington.