Anthropology of Indigenous Australia

Class code  ANTH-UA 9037

Instructor Details  
Michael Walsh  
MW145@nyu.edu  
0407 961 673

David P. Wilkins  
dw91@@nyu.edu  
0448 280 452

Consultations by appointment.

Class Details  
Anthropology of Indigenous Australia  
Tuesdays: 9.30am-11.00am  
Thursdays: 9.30am-11.00am  
Room 304  
NYU Sydney Academic Centre  

Prerequisites  
None

Class Description  
This course offers an introduction to some of the current and classical issues in the anthropology of Indigenous Australia, considering a range of Aboriginal Australian forms of social being, ranging historically and geographically, and giving significant focus to the changing relationship between Indigenous people and the settler nation of Australia. The role of anthropology in the representation and governance of Indigenous life is itself an important subject for anthropological consideration, considering that Indigenous people of Australia have long been the subject 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 Walkabout and Rabbit Proof Fence) or in New Age Literature, or museum exhibitions -- are now also in dialogue with their own forms of cultural production. The course will explore how Aboriginal people have struggled to reproduce themselves and their traditions in their own terms, asserting their right to forms of cultural autonomy and self-determination. In this course, Through the examination of ethnographic texts, art, novels, autobiographies, film and other media, we will consider the ways in which identity is being challenged and constructed.

The course will consist of lectures interspersed with discussions. In addition, there may be some field trips and guest presenters.

Desired Outcomes  
As a result of successfully completing this course of study students will be able to:

- demonstrate understanding of the complex diversity of Australian 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 Australia more generally, and Indigenous Australia in particular
- 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

Students are expected to do the assigned readings, attend lectures and participate actively in discussion. They will make time to watch the assigned films. Course participants will be expected to visit at least one Indigenous Australian museum installation, gallery exhibition or performance in Sydney during the term.

Attendance, discussion, participation in class activities: 25%
2 short (4-5 page) written papers on topics handed out during semester (15% ea): 30%
1 review of a museum installation, gallery exhibition or film: 20%
1 final paper of 10 pages: 25%

Written work must include appropriate citations and references (reference lists are not included in the number of pages). Plagiarism (not only copying of text, but failure to cite the source of ideas that are not the student’s own original idea) attracts an automatic grade of zero for the assignment and will be dealt with severely.

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: 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. Creative work is of a highly sophisticated standard.

Grade B: 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. Creative work is of a superior standard.

Grade C: Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level. Creative work is of an acceptable standard.

Grade D: Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations. Creative work is of a basic standard.

Grade F: Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Creative work is weak, unfinished or unsubmitted.

Grade conversion

NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A=94-100
A-=90-93
B+=87-89
B=84-86
B-=80-83
C+=77-79
C=74-76
C-=70-73
D+=67-69
D=65-66
F=below 65

Where no specific numerical equivalent is assigned to a letter grade by the class teacher, the mid point of the range will be used in calculating the final class grade (except in the A range, where 95.5 will be used).

NYU Sydney aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square. At the College of Arts and Sciences, roughly 39% of all final grades are in the B+ to B- range, and 50% in the A/A- range.

We have therefore adopted the following grading guideline: in any non-Stern course, class teachers should try to insure that no more than 50% of the class receives an A or A-. (Stern has a different grading policy that we follow in all Stern courses).

A guideline is not a curve. A guideline is just that: it gives an ideal benchmark for the distribution of grades towards which we work.

NYU Sydney has a strict policy about course attendance for students. Faculty will not give students permission to be absent for any reason. Students should contact their instructors to catch up on missed work but should not approach them for excused absences.

All non-medical absence requests must be presented by the student to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Non-medical requests should be made in advance of the intended absence. All medical-based absence requests MUST be presented to the Student Life Coordinator. In the case of illness, the student should contact the Student Life Coordinator within three days of the absence or as soon as practicable and provide medical documentation. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Student Life staff and Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Any absences of which faculty have not been informed by the NYU Sydney staff will be presumed to be unexcused.

Students are expected to arrive to class promptly both at the start of class and after breaks. Arriving more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered an unexcused absence.

This attendance policy also applies for classes involving a field trip or other off-campus visit. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the agreed meeting point on time.

The faculty will report all unexcused absences to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, and students’ final grades will be negatively impacted by each such absence. Each unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 3 percentage points from the final grade. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.

There will be no adjustment of attendance records after the end of the semester. If you wish to contest an unexcused absence, you must do so before you leave Sydney. Contact the Assistant Director,
Academic Programs to discuss the attendance record as soon as you think there may be a discrepancy about your attendance in class on a given day.

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 Assistant Director, Academic Programs in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

**Late Submission of Work**

Written work due in class must be submitted during class time to your instructor.

Late work should be submitted in person to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs during regular office hours (9:30-5:00, Monday-Friday). You must also submit an electronic copy of late written work to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs – megan.carrigy@nyu.edu - for submission to Turn-it-in.

The Assistant Director, Academic Programs will mark down the date and time of submission in the presence of the student. In the absence of the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work in person, following the same protocol.

Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale for each day the work is late.

Written work submitted beyond five (5) weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a 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.

Any course work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form. All students must submit an electronic copy of each piece of written work to www.turnitin.com. Instructions will be provided to you in class. Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are severe and are dealt with by the Director, NYU Sydney, not your instructor. Your home school will be notified and you will be dealt with according to the standards of that school. The codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges are outlined in the respective school’s academic resources.

**Required Text(s)**


**Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to**

- Austin-Broos, Diane 2011 *A Different Inequality: The Politics of Debate about Remote..."
- Bell, Diane 1983. Daughters of the Dreaming. [Published by Spinifex Press since 2002]
- Wallace, Kathleen Kemarre (with Judy Lovell) 2009. Listen Deeply, Let these stories in. Alice Springs: IAD Press

Internet Research Guidelines
None

Additional Required Equipment
None

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

August 28 & 30

Required Reading:
- Goodall and Cadzow Rivers and Resilience Chapters 1 and 2. pp 1-50

Session 2
Contact: the Power of Representation and the Telling of Stories

Sept. 4 & 6

Required Reading:
- James Cook: excerpt from Explorations, pp. 82-85
- Deborah Rose: “The Saga of Captain Cook”

Film: Babekueria
### Session 3
**Classical Aboriginal Society: Cosmology, People, and Place**

**Sept. 11 & 13**

**Required Reading:**
- Fred Myers ch.1 and 2 from *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, pp 25-70

**Optional:** Peter Sutton 2003 Aboriginal country groups - ch 3 of Sutton, Peter 2003 *Native Title in Australia: An Ethnographic Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 54-84.

### Session 4
**Classical Aboriginal Society: Myth, Land, Art, Language and Identity**

**This will be a catch-up session. Time TBA.**

**Required Reading:**
- Myers ch 3-5 pp 103-158
- Howard Morphy, 2001, *Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery*

**Film:** *Waiting for Harry*, director Kim McKenzie.

### Session 5
**Ethnography and the Problems of Representing People’s Lives**

**Sept. 25 & 27**

**Required Reading:**
- Gillian Cowlishaw 2009 Talking Under Water. Chapter 1 of *The City's Outback*
- Myers Chapters 6, 8-9 pp 159-179; 219-285

**Film:** *Benny and the Dreamers*

**Optional:** - Diane Bell: *Daughters of the Dreaming* (1st half)

**SEMESTER BREAK OCTOBER 1 - 5**

### Session 6
**Men, Women, and History**

**October 9 & 11**

**Required Reading:**
- Elizabeth Povinelli 1993: excerpt from *Labor's Lot*, chapter 1: 21-63.3
- Nugi Garimara (Doris Pilkington) Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence, 1st half (chs 1-6)
- Goodall and Cadzow. 2009 Chapters 3-5 pp. 51-134

**Optional reading:**
- Diane Bell: *Daughters of the Dreaming* (complete)
Session 7

**History: State Policies and Aboriginal Rights**

**October 16 & 18**

**Required Reading:**
- Diane Barwick (1974): “And the Lubras are Ladies Now”
- Nugi Garimara (Doris Pilkington) *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, 2nd half (chs 7-9)


**Optional:** Sections 1.5 to 1.10 of Commonwealth of Australia (2012) Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution: Report of the Expert Panel. pp 24-37

Session 8

**History: Aboriginal Rights/Civil Rights**

**October 23 & 25**

**Required Reading:**
- Goodall and Cadzow 2009 Chapter 6 pp135-164

**Film:** *Freedom Ride*, dir. Rachel Perkins

Session 9

**History: Land Rights/Self-Determination**

**October 30 & November 1**

**Required Reading:**
- Bain Attwood (2004): *Rights for Aborigines* complete

**Film:** *Tent Embassy*, director Frances Peters-Little

Session 10

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

**November 6 & 8**

**Required Reading:**
- Gillian Cowlishaw (2009) ‘Authenticity’ Chapter 6 of *The City’s Outback*

**Film:** *Two Bob Mermaid*, director Darlene Johnson

**Optional:**
- Sally Morgan, *My Place* (begin)
### Session 11

**November 13 & 15**

**Whose History? – Identity, Aboriginality, and The Stolen Generations**

**Required Reading:**
- Bain Attwood, 2001 'Learning about the Truth': The stolen generations narrative.
- Rudd, Kevin 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations - Speech to federal parliament.
- Goodall & Cadzow chapters 7-8 pp165-213

**Film:** *Stolen Generations*, director Darlene Johnson

**Optional:** *Morgan, My Place* (complete)

### Session 12

**November 20 and 22**

**How to conceptualize or represent contemporary Aboriginal life**

**Required Reading:**
- Goodall & Cadzow Chapters 9-11 pp 214-288

**Optional:** Gillian Cowlishaw (2009) *The City's Outback*

### Session 13

**November 27 & 29**

**Indigenous Media**

**Required Reading:**

**Optional:** Jeremy Beckett (1988): “Aboriginality, Citizenship, and Nation State”

**Film:**
- *Night Cries*
- *Bush Mechanics*

### Session 14

**December 4 & 6**

**Indigenous Futures: Indigenizing/Mixing/Circulating**

**Required Reading:**
- Peter Sutton (2009) Ch 8 On feeling reconciled pp 194-215 of *The Politics of Suffering*
- Bess Nungarrayi Price - October 2010 - "We Need to Change our Law"
  [Link]
- Fred Myers (1991): “Representing Culture: The Production of Discourse(s) for Aboriginal Acrylic Paintings”

Optional:
- Tony Fry and Anne Marie Willis (1989): “Aboriginal Art: Symptom or Success?” (BB)
- Ginsburg and Myers, “A History of Aboriginal Futures”

Film: Dhakiyarr vs the King

Session 15

Date of submission of final paper to be advised.

Classroom Etiquette

Eating is not permitted in any classrooms. Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.

Required Co-curricular Activities

Course participants will be expected to visit at least one Indigenous Australian museum installation, gallery exhibition or performance in Sydney during the term.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Your Instructors

Michael Walsh, PhD.
Over the last 40 years, Michael’s research has focussed on the Top End of the Northern Territory. This research includes descriptive and typological studies of Aboriginal languages as well as investigations into language use among Indigenous Australians. An interest in lexical semantics has given rise to such studies as one on body part metaphors and another on nominal classification. In recent years he has worked collaboratively on a project which analyses Murrinh-patha song and song language at Wadeye (Port Keats). In these and other studies he has been interested in testing general assumptions about how languages (including expressive uses of language) are supposed to work against data collected in the field. He has also contributed to language revitalization efforts in NSW and elsewhere. Outside of strictly linguistic matters he has carried out research or advised on land claims, assessment of Aboriginal witnesses in legal settings and Native Title matters. One spin-off of these interests is a focus on cross-cultural communication problems between indigenous and other Australians. With Colin Yallop, Michael is co-editor of Language and Culture in Aboriginal Australia (2005) Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

David P. Wilkins, PhD.
David is an anthropological linguist whose main interest is the human capacity for meaning-making, no matter what the modalities may be. Since 1982 he has worked with Australian Aboriginal communities in central Australia, and more recently began work in Far North Queensland. He has worked for Aboriginal-controlled community schools helping them establish culturally appropriate education programs. In the early 90’s David taught at UC Davis and later the State University of New York at Buffalo. David then spent seven years as a senior researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen where he undertook fieldwork-based cross-cultural research on the relationship between language, culture and cognition. He returned to live in Sydney in 2006 and has worked as a consultant (Language and Linguistics Consulting). A publication relevant to the current course is ‘W(h)ither language, culture and education in remote Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory?’ which can be found online at: [Link]