Anthropology of Indigenous Australia

**Class code**
ANTH-UA 9037 – 001

**Instructor Details**
Petronella Vaarzon-Morel
pvm2@nyu.edu
0428 633 216 (mobile)
Office Hours: Monday 12:00 – 2:00pm or consultations by appointment.
Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

**Class Details**
Fall 2015

**Anthropology of Indigenous Australia**

Monday, 9:00am – 12:00pm
August 31 to December 7
Room 202
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 may also have guest presenters.

Two fieldtrips are also required content for this class:
Guided Indigenous tour of La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve with Uncle Vic Simms, in Session 3 (Monday 14 September). This excursion is in lieu of normal class time from 9.00am – 12.00pm. During the excursion Uncle Vic Simms will share with us stories of his life at La Perouse Mission and introduce us to bush food and rock engravings. Students will gain insights into Aboriginal history and life in the Sydney area and the effects of Government policies on Aboriginal society. Importantly, they will get an insight into urban Aboriginal life. This fieldtrip is considered co-curricular, and is essential to your learning over the course of the semester.

Aboriginal Heritage Tour, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, in Session 11. (Monday November 16) This excursion is in lieu of normal class time from 9.00am – 12.00pm. During the excursion an Aboriginal Education Officer will introduce us to Indigenous use of plants and related cultural knowledge and practices. This fieldtrip is considered co-curricular, and is essential to your learning over the course of the semester.

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: 15%
Short paper (4-5 pages) Due 9:00am Monday October 28, Session 5: 20%
In-class presentation (15 minutes) and follow-up paper (4-5 pages): 30%
Final essay (8-10 pages): Due 9:00am Monday December 7, Session 14: 35%

Attendance, discussion, participation in class activities: 15%
Students are expected to do the assigned readings, attend lectures, and participate actively in class discussion.
Short paper (4-5 pages): 20% Due beginning of class, Session 5, Monday October 28. Topic to be advised in session 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 summarize 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 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 beginning of class, Session 14, Monday December 7. A list of questions and assessment criteria will be distributed in Session 8; 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.

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.

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.

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

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

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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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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Should work be submitted as a hard copy, or electronically?

Unless otherwise specified, all written work must be submitted as a hard copy. The majority of written assignments must also be submitted electronically via NYU Classes. All in-class presentations must be completed during class time.

Who may submit a student’s work?

Each student’s assigned work must be handed in personally by that student. The student may not nominate another person to act on his/her behalf.

When and where should the work be submitted?

The hard copy of any written work must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of class on the date the work is due. If the assignment due date falls outside of class time, work must be submitted to the Staff Member on duty in Room 2.04 during prescribed Office Hours (11:30am-12:30pm and 2:30-3:30pm Mon-Thu), or by appointment with the Academic Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work received in Room 2.04 will be date and time stamped in the presence of the student. Work submitted in Room 2.04 will not be considered “received” unless formally stamped.

What is the Process for Late Submission of Work?

After the due date, work may only be submitted under the following conditions:

- Late work, even if an extension has been granted, must be submitted in person by appointment with the Academic Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work must be date and time stamped in order to be considered “received”.
- Work submitted after the submission time 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. Written work submitted beyond five weekdays after the submission 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 course component will result in failure of the course, it is crucial for students to submit every assignment even when it will receive a mark of zero. Early departure from the program therefore places the student at risk of failing the course.
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.

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.

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 in the first five minutes 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 penalized 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.

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.

### Religious Observance

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.

### 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

- Anita Heiss (2012) *Am I Black Enough for You?* Sydney: Bantam

### Supplemental Texts (Available in NYUS Library)


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


• Sutton, Peter (2003), *Native Title in Australia: An Ethnographic Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


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

**Monday 31 August**

**Required Reading:**


**In-Class Media:** Excerpts *First Australians*, episode 1: “They Have Come to Stay”: Sydney & New South Wales (17881824) (dir. Rachel Perkins, 60 mins, 2008).

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**Session 2**  
**Cultural Translation, Cultural Knowledge**

**Monday 7 September**

**Required Reading:**


**Selected Reading for Class Presentation**


**Recommended Reading:**

• Bronislaw Malinowski (1978) [1922], *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Routledge), Introduction.
Session 3  Classical Aboriginal Society: Cosmology, People, and Place
Monday 14 September

Required Reading:

Fieldtrip/excursion: Guided Indigenous tour of La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve with Uncle Vic Simms. This excursion is in lieu of normal class time from 9.00 am to 12.00 pm. During the excursion Uncle Vic Simms will share with us stories of his life at La Perouse Mission and introduce us to bush food and rock engravings. Students will gain insights into Aboriginal history and life in the Sydney area and the effects of Government policies on Aboriginal society.

Session 4  Classical Aboriginal Society: Cosmology, People, Place and Identity
Monday 21 September

Required Reading:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation

Session 5  History: Invasion/ Settlement: Aboriginal Perspectives and State Policies
Monday 28 September

Required Reading:

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

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

Assignment: Short Paper (20%) due this week.

FALL BREAK: 5 – 9 October

Session 6  History: State Policies and Aboriginal Civil Rights
Monday 12 October

Required Reading:


Session 7 History: Land Rights and Self-Determination

Monday 19 October

Required Reading:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation:

In-Class Media: *First Australians*, episode 7: “We are no longer shadows”: Queensland & The Torres Strait Islands (1967-1992)” (dir. Rachel Perkins, 60 mins, 2008).

Session 8 Whose History? – Identity and The Stolen Generations

Monday 26 October

Required Reading:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation:

Recommended Reading:
- Nugi Garimara (Doris Pilkington) *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).

### Session 9  
**Identity: Who/What is Aboriginal?**
**Monday 2 November**

**Required Reading**:

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation**

**Recommended Reading**

### Session 10  
**How to conceptualise and/or represent contemporary Aboriginal life**
**Monday 13 April**

**Required Reading**:

**Selected Reading for Class Presentation**:

**Recommended Reading**

**In Class Media**: *Charlie’s Country*, (dir. Rolf de Heer, written by Rolf de Heer and David Gulpilil as a collaborative project), 2014, 108 min. Excerpts.

### Session 11  
**Indigenous relations to land: environmental knowledge, practices and issues.**
**Monday 16 November**

**Required Reading**: 

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*Anthropology of Indigenous Australia*

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 9.00 to 12.00 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 9.00 am at Entrance Gate to Royal Botanic Gardens, Art Gallery Road. This excursion is in lieu of normal class time from 9.00am – 12:00pm. During the excursion an Aboriginal Education Officer will introduce us to Indigenous use of plants and related cultural knowledge and practices.

Session 12 Indigenous Media, Cultural Activism  
Monday 23 November

Required Reading:

Selected Reading for Class Presentation:

Recommended Reading:

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

Session 13 Indigenous Futures: Historical Practices and Indigenous Representations.  
Monday 30 November

Required Reading:


Selected Reading for Class Presentation


Recommended Reading:


In-Class Media: Demonstration of Ara Irititja Digital Archive and/or guest speaker.

Session 14 Course Summary and Review

Monday 7 December

Assignment: Final Essay (35%) Due beginning of class, Monday December 7 (Week 14).

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.