Global Orientations: Australian Society and Culture

Class code: GLBL-UA 9109

Instructor Details:
Dr. Toby Martin
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Consultations by Appointment
Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

Class Details: Spring 2015

Global Orientations: Australian Society and Culture

Required Course
Orientation Week and Friday mornings (Week 1-3)
Auditorium and Rooms 302 and 202
NYU Sydney Academic Centre

Prerequisites: None

Class Description: Australian society is replete with contradictions. Aussies famously describe their nation as the lucky country, yet from the Indigenous perspective, it might more aptly be called the stolen country. Australia is the land of the fair go, which cruelly detains refugees; a multicultural nation with a history of a white Australia policy; a place with distinctive local traditions, which takes many of its cues from global culture; an easy-going country with a surprisingly large degree of governmental control over individual liberties; a highly urbanised population that romances the Bush and the Outback as embodying ‘real’ Australia; a nation proud of its traditions of egalitarianism and mateship, with numerous rules about who is allowed in ‘the club’; a society with a history of anti-British and anti-American sentiment that simultaneously hold strong political allegiances and military pacts with Britain and the USA; and a place with a history of progressive social policy and a democratic tradition, which has never undergone a revolution. This course strives to make sense of Australian society and culture by exploring the complexities and contradictions in Australia’s self-image.
The course will be introduced with an overview, and followed by four sessions covering four distinct themes during Orientation and the first three weeks of semester. Each session will include a 1-hour lecture, either given by the instructor or a guest lecturer, and a recitation-style discussion.

There are seven mandatory field trips: Sydney Harbour Cruise, Milson Island Retreat, Featherdale Wildlife Park, Surfing on Sydney’s Northern Beaches, an AFL game, Sydney Royal Easter Show, and Overnight trip to the Blue Mountains.

**Desired Outcomes**

Students will be expected to develop:

- A critical understanding of Australian culture and its history;
- An awareness of the politics of gender, race and class in Australian society;
- An understanding of the ways in which issues in Australian society are both local and transnational.

**Assessment Components**

**Short Paper (1000 words, 50%) Due 5pm Thursday 26 March (end of Week 7)**

Choose a site in Sydney that you have visited, and use it as a jumping off point from which to reflect on Australian society more broadly. You may wish to consider the way in which a particular place embodies an important theme or has played witness to an important event in Australian society. You must cite at least one of the course readings and one of the lectures.

**Class Participation (50%)**

You are expected to actively participate in class sessions and field trips. You will be assessed not just on the quantity of your contributions to recitation discussions, but also on their relevance to the readings and course themes and your respect for other students’ contributions. This may be judged partly on in-class written exercises.

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

**Assessment Expectations**

This course is graded Pass/Fail. Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Pass = 100-65
Fail = Below 65.

**Grade Pass:**

Students have completed all assignments and attended and actively participated in sessions and field trips. Students have written a paper that offers an original synthesis of the course readings, lectures, group discussions, field trips and their own personal experiences, demonstrating their ability to evaluate critically what they have encountered. Written arguments are clear, well-organised and well-presented. By the end of the course, students will have demonstrated an improved understanding of the complexities of the issues facing
Australia today.

**Grade Fail:**
Student’s work does not demonstrate an understanding of the topics covered in the lectures, field trips and assigned readings. The student has not come to class prepared and has not actively participated in class sessions and field trips.

**Late Submission of Work**
Written work due in class must be submitted to your instructor during class time.

Late work should be submitted in person to the Academic Coordinator during regular office hours (9:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday). In the absence of the Academic Coordinator, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work. The NYUS staff will mark down the date and time of submission in the presence of the student. Students must also submit an electronic copy of late written work to Turn-It-In within 24 hours.

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 (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.

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.

**Attendance Policy**
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 be penalised with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade for every week of classes missed.**

The class roster will be marked in the first five minutes of class and anyone who arrives after
Classroom Expectations

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.

Session 1 Co-curricular Event: Welcome to Country

Wednesday January 28

A “Welcome to Country” will be performed in the NYU Sydney Auditorium. This is an Aboriginal ceremony that has both traditional and contemporary relevance. It is a formal welcome by Indigenous owners of the land to newcomers. It is common to see ‘Welcomes to Country’ at public and civic events in Australia.

From 11.00am-12.00pm students will have the opportunity to discuss the significance of the Welcome to Country with NYU Sydney faculty and staff.

Required field trip/excursion: Sydney Harbour Cruise from Circular Quay, 2.30-4.30pm

Session 2 Introduction and Quiz on Australian Culture

Thursday January 29

We will introduce some key ideas in Australian society, and provide a course overview, through a very Australian medium: pub-style trivia.

Students will take part in a recitation session from 10.00-11.00 am, 11.00 am-12.00 pm or 1.00-2.00 pm.
**Required field trip/excursion:** Rocks Walking Tour, 2.30-4.00 pm

**Required Orientation Retreat: Milson Island**

**Friday January 30-Saturday January 31**

Orientation week will culminate with a two-day trip to Milson Island, located on the Hawkesbury River. First settled over 100 years ago, Milson Island is now a recreation camp offering activities such as: ropes courses, archery, nature walks, kayaking and group games. The NYU-Sydney team and all students will enjoy two days getting to know each other in this very unique environment.

**Unsettling histories: the colonial and indigenous past in the Sydney region.**

As the Welcome to Country showed, history in Australia is very raw. Many wounds from the past have not healed. This session on Milson Island will be a chance to reflect on local Aboriginal histories, colonial histories, and their points of contact.

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Readings (choose from):**
- Grace Karskens, *The Colony*
- *Rivers of Resilience*

**Session 3    Issues in Environmental Politics in Australia**

**Friday February 6**

**Guest lecturer:** Fran Molloy & Jennifer Hamilton (NYU Sydney)

Lecture (NYU Sydney Auditorium): 10.00-11.00 am
Recitations: 11.00 am-12.00 pm, 12.00-1.00 pm or 1.00-2.00 pm

Environmental Issues in Australian Politics: Coal production, population concerns, old-growth forests, global warming, species extinction...environmental issues are acute in Australia and are informed by our history, geography and political circumstances. Today we will look at their centrality in Australian political discourse.

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

- Kathy Marks, ‘Is Tony Abbott’s Australian administration the most hostile to his nation’s environment in history?’ *The Independent*, Tuesday 19 August 2014.

**Session 4   Politics and Political Culture in Australia**

**Friday February 13**

**Lecture: Sacha Molitorisz & Toby Martin (NYU Sydney)**

Lecture (NYU Sydney Auditorium): 10.00-11.00 am  
Recitations: 11.00 am-12.00 pm, 12.00-1.00 pm or 1.00-2.00 pm

Put downs in parliament, mad tycoons, media gaffs, proportional representation, constitutional monarchy...are just a few of some of the weird and wonderful aspects of Australian politics that we will be discussing today.

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

- Anne Summers, ‘Her Rights At Work: The political persecution of Australia’s first female prime minister’, (you can read and watch a video of the lecture at this website)  

**Required field trip: Featherdale Wildlife Park**

**Sunday February 15**

This trip will bring students close to Australia’s native wildlife. Featherdale Wildlife Park is home to 2200 animals from over 280 species.
Session 5  Anzac Day

Friday February 20

Guest lecture: Dr Michael McKernan

Lecture (NYU Sydney Auditorium): 10.00-11.00 am
Recitations: 11.00 am-12.00 pm, 12.00-1.00 pm or 1.00-2.00 pm

25th April 2015 marks the centenary of Anzac Day. This commemorates a battle fought by Australia troops in Turkey during World War One. Anzac Day is now the most important day on the national calendar and the ‘Anzac’ spirit is said to embody all that it is fine and special about Australia. Today we will look at the events of Anzac Day and unpack the Anzac Spirit.

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Required field trip: Surfing Lessons

Friday February 27

NYU Sydney will partner with the team from Mojo Surf for a day at the beach. Students will learn how to surf from expert instructors at one of Sydney’s iconic northern beaches.

Required field Trip: AFL Game

Date TBD

Students will be visiting the home ground of the Sydney Swans to watch an Australian Rules Football game. Known as AFL, Aussie Rules or footy, this game has grown to become one of Australia’s most popular sports.

Required field Trip: Sydney Royal Easter Show

Friday March 27

First held in 1823, the Royal Easter Show is a “city meets country” event that attracts over 1 million people per year. The event is comprised of an agricultural show, an amusement park, and a fair. The show is host to some of the year’s most prestigious competitions including photography, arts and crafts, horticulture, livestock and wood chopping. Some of Sydney’s largest and most popular retail outlets rely on this venue to
showcase their latest products and merchandise. The Sydney Royal Easter Show is one of Sydney’s most well-known and iconic events.

Required field trip: Blue Mountains Retreat

Friday May 1 – Saturday May 2

The Blue Mountains are rich in Aboriginal and European History. The area was inhabited by Indigenous Australians for thousands of years and was considered impassable by early European settlers. Now a popular tourist destination, the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains offers visitors an opportunity to study a very unique ecosystem.

On this two day field trip, students will follow in the footsteps of Charles Darwin, with interpretation from an archaeologist and qualified ecological guides. Aboriginal elder Chris Tobin of the Darug people will examine the history of the area before European settlement.

Students will spend the evening in the Katoomba YHA with night activities including a twilight walk to Echo Point.

Your Instructors

Dr. Toby Martin is an historian and musician. Since finishing his PhD at the University of Sydney in 2011 he has pursued a research interest in histories of music, tourism, and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. He has published several articles and his first monograph – *Yodelling Boundary Riders: Country Music in Australia* – will be published in 2015. Toby was the 2011 ‘Folk Fellow’ at the National Library of Australia where he researched the music of Dougie Young and other Indigenous songwriters from western New South Wales, and formed a band with Young’s grandson to perform these songs. Toby is currently the David Scott Mitchell Fellow at the State Library of NSW where he is researching tourism to Aboriginal communities, 1880s-1950s, and, after many years playing in the rock band Youth Group, he has recently released a solo album called *Love’s Shadow*.

Born in Germany, Sacha Molitorisz arrived in Australia in 1973. After graduating with Arts (English Literature) and Law degrees from the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sacha was hired as a writer by The Sydney Morning Herald, where his specialties included film, music and TV, and also parenthood, education and philosophy. He has published two books: *Australian Bushrangers - The Romance of Robbery* and *From Here To Paternity - A User’s Manual For Early Fatherhood*. As a PhD candidate at Macquarie University, he is currently investigating the ethics of new media, with a particular focus on privacy, truth and trust. Meanwhile, he is also teaching media studies at NYU Sydney and UNSW. Sacha lives in Sydney with his wife, two kids and chocolate brown labrador, and, whenever possible, immerses himself in the Pacific Ocean.