The Australian Experience

**Class code**  
SCA-UA 9809 – 002

**Instructor Details**  
Dr Justine Greenwood  
Justine.greenwood@nyu.edu  
Consultations by Appointment  
Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

**Class Details**  
Fall 2017

**The Australian Experience**

Tuesday 12:30 – 3:30pm  
September 5 to December 12  
Room 302  
NYU Sydney Academic Centre  

**Prerequisites**  
None

**Class Description**  
This course offers a wide-ranging critique of Australian culture and society. It aims to interrogate Australian society with a methodology that draws on critical race theory, feminism, social geography and cultural studies. It will look at issues such as the relationship between Australian settler culture and Aboriginal Australians; Australia’s experience of migration and multiculturalism; Australians’ relationship with their environment; and Australians’ sense of national identity. In particular, it will consider how these issues have played out in popular culture.

This course offers a special experience for students wishing to broaden and deepen their methodologies of cultural analysis. Australian society is fascinating in itself, but it also offers a unique perspective on transnational issues such as identity formation, social justice movements and the experience of multiculturalism. For instance, given Australia’s history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, the issue of race in a post-colonial context is particularly acute here. Through comparison with the Australian experience, students will develop a more critical view of American and global society. Students wishing to pursue a career that involves cultural analysis will benefit greatly from studying Australian society, in Australia, and thus developing this comparative approach.
This course has three interweaving themes of study: race, class and gender. This course will look at how these issues have played out in various facets of Australian culture, ie: attitudes to the landscape; representations of crime; humour; and food.

Required Field Trips: First Australians Gallery Tour, Justice and Police Museum, Darlinghurst Walking Tour

**Desired Outcomes**

Students will be expected to develop:

- A critical understanding of Australian culture and society.
- An Australian perspective on the politics of race, class and gender in a postcolonial context.
- An understanding of the ways in which issues in Australian society are both local and transnational.
- Critical comparisons between Australia and America.
- A comparative approach to cultural analysis
- An ability to undertake nuanced readings of primary source material – especially popular culture.

**Assessment Components**

- Primary source presentation (10%), 10-15 mins
- Follow-up paper (15%), 3 pages
- Short essay (30%), 5 pages
- Long Essay (40%), 12 pages
- Participation (5%)

**10% Primary source presentation. (15 mins)**

Each student will be asked to make one 15 minute presentation.

For this presentation, students will be asked to locate a primary source (i.e. a newspaper article, artwork, photograph or a song) that relates to the week’s topic, briefly describe it and its context, and critically evaluate it. Students will be expected to explain to the class how their chosen source helps to illuminate the attitudes of Australians. In doing so, the presentation should make connections between the required readings for the week and the primary source. Students will be expected to demonstrate a keen understanding of the relevant issue, and the required reading.

**15% Follow-up paper (3 pages)**

A write-up of your presentation is due the week following your presentation. This paper should turn your presentation into an essay-style argument, showing how the primary source illuminates attitudes in Australian culture. Students will need to refer to and demonstrate a keen knowledge of all the required readings and one of the additional readings from the relevant week in this essay.

**30% Short essay (5 pages)**
Due in class, Week 9. Refer to at least three of the required or recommended readings in answering this question.

Select one of the following areas and explain how it has shaped Australian society and culture.

- The relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- The development and decline of the White Australia Policy
- The human relationship with the Australian environment

40% Long Essay (12 pages)
Choice of questions TBA. Due in class, Week 15
Students need to refer to at least six scholarly sources in writing this essay, at least four of which need to be required or additional readings from this course.

5% Participation
You are expected to read the required readings each week. Your participation mark will reflect your lecturer’s weekly assessment of your use of that reading in discussion. This means participation will be marked for quality rather than quantity – i.e. intelligent contributions rather than idle chatter.

Failure to submit or fulfil 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.

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.
The Australian Experience

Grade Conversions

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

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Equivalent</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</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 been 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.
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.

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.

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.

There is no required text, but students will be expected to complete the required readings each week. They are advised to attempt the recommended readings also (these are particularly useful for preparing essays). All readings will be posted on NYU Classes. It is a course expectation that you have done the required reading and have prepared sufficiently to discuss them in class.

- Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2005
- Bain Attwood, *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia*, Sydney, 1996
• Tony Bennett, Michael Emmison and John Frow, *Accounting for tastes: Australian everyday cultures*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999
• Fran De Groen and Peter Kirkpatrick (eds), *Serious Frolic: Essays on Australian Humour*, UQP, Brisbane, 2009
• Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1965
• Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (eds), *What’s Wrong With Anzac: The militarisation of Australian history*, New South Press, Sydney, 2010
• Mark Mckenna, *Looking For Blackfellas Point*, UNSW Press, 2003
• Stuart Mcintyre and Anna Clarke, *History Wars*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003
• Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, *Cultural history in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003
• Richard White, *On Holidays*, UNSW, 2005
• Richard White and Caroline Ford (Eds), *Playing in the bush*, University of Sydney Press
This course promises to provide a ‘wide-ranging critique of Australian culture and society’. But what is culture? And what makes some culture ‘popular’? In this first session we look at the ways in which historians and ethnographers have defined ‘culture’. And we consider how we might use ‘culture’ as a way to approach looking at Australian society and its relationship to the US – both past and present.

**Required Reading:**

**Contemporary reflection:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 2  Encounters: Indigenous and non-Indigenous contact, conflict and exchange**

Tuesday 12 September

This week we will look at how encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have shaped Australian society, with an emphasis on the Sydney experience. Our particular emphasis will be on exploring moments of ‘First Contact’.

**Required Reading:**

**Contemporary reflection (explore the site in preparation for our field trip next week):**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 3  FIELD TRIP - Survival: the struggle for Indigenous rights and culture**
**Tuesday 19 September**

This week we continue our exploration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous contact. We will look at frontier conflict and assimilation policies, as well as more recent attempts at ‘reconciliation’: from the ‘Apology’ to discussions about memorialising the frontier wars.

**Required Reading:**

**Contemporary reflection:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Fieldtrip: Guided Indigenous tour of the First Australians Gallery at the Australian Museum.** The tour will provide an in-depth explanation of the Aboriginal history of Sydney Harbour and surrounds and the significance of the site to Aboriginal Australians.

**Week 4  The Bush: Rural Australian and National Identity**
**Tuesday 26 September**

This week will look at the place which most Australians don’t live, but which are nevertheless very important to them: the bush. We will look at Aboriginal custodianship and landcare, environmental degradation wrought by the pastoral and agricultural industries (with a focus on Western NSW), concepts of ‘wilderness’, natural disasters such as bushfires and drought, and cultural interpretations of the ‘Bush’ in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Required Reading:**

**Contemporary reflection:**

**Recommended Reading:**

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**Week 5 FIELD TRIP - Crime and Larrikins**

**Tuesday 3 October**

Many Australian folk heroes (or anti-heroes) are violent criminals – from convicts to bushrangers to ‘larrikins’ to famous figures of organised crime – and real-crime television shows such as *Underbelly* attracts large audiences. Something in criminals’ mythic sense of lack of deference to authority seems to appeal to Australians’ self-image. This week we will look at some notable examples of criminals in Australia’s history and consider the paradox that, despite the celebration of violent anti-authoritarianism, history shows Australians to be obedient and law-abiding.

**Required Reading:**

**Contemporary reflection:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Field Trip: Justice and Police Museum Guided Tour**
We will visit the Justice and Police Museum at the other end of Circular Quay. The Museum hosts a display of ‘Special Photographs’ curated by Peter Doyle. (see required reading).

Week 6  White Australia: migration and Australian identity
Tuesday 10 October

Race – especially whiteness – has become a key part of Australian identity. This week we will look at attempts to keep Australia white: from responses to Chinese goldminers in the 1850s; to the ‘White Australia Policy’; to the treatment of Aboriginal people; to the rhetoric of right-wing politicians in the late 20th century; to the ‘Cronulla Riots’ of 2005; to current treatment of refugees.

Required Reading:

Contemporary reflection:
- Monica Tan, ‘There have been Chinese Australians since 1818, but have we ever (truly) belonged?, *BuzzFeed*, 25 January 2017. [https://www.buzzfeed.com/monicatan/australian-born-chinese?utm_term=.eivN3zM0QR#.rl3vkZwXVr](https://www.buzzfeed.com/monicatan/australian-born-chinese?utm_term=.eivN3zM0QR#.rl3vkZwXVr)

Recommended Reading:

FALL BREAK: 16-20 October (Week 7)

Week 8  FIELD TRIP - The Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and a Queer History of Sydney
Tuesday 24 October

We will take some time to consider the significance of Sydney’s gay and lesbian mardi gras, both as an expression of rights, but also as an expression of Sydney’s identity. We will also look at the homosexual past of Sydney.

Required Reading:

**Contemporary reflection:**

**Recommended Reading:**
- Robert French, ‘Camping by a Billabong’.

**Field Trip: Walking tour of Darlinghurst and Kings Cross with Robert French**

**Week 9  Home-building and Suburbs**

**Tuesday 31 October**

This week will look at the place where most Australians live, yet haven’t mythologised to the same degree as the beach and the bush: the suburbs. We will consider how issues of gender and multiculturalism have played out in the suburbs, with particular reference to the ‘the Australian way of life’ and the 1950s.

**Required Reading:**
- Richard White, ‘The Australian way of life’, *Historical Studies*, vo. 18, no. 73, 1979, 528-545.

**Contemporary reflection:**

**Recommended Reading:**


**Assignment: Short essay due (30%)**

**Week 10  Republicanism**

**Tuesday 7 November**

This week we explore the history of republicanism in Australia, from the first rumblings of an independent Australia in the nineteenth century up until the present day. We will look closely at the lead up to the unsuccessful 1999 referendum, and the political campaigns for and against an Australian republic. We will ask why isn’t Australia a republic and consider whether or not an Australian republic is inevitable?

**Required Reading:**


**Contemporary reflection:**

• Benjamin T Jones, ‘Long live King Charles? An Australian republic is in Turnbull’s hands for now’, *The Conversation*, 17 November 2015.

• https://theconversation.com/long-live-king-charles-an-australian-republic-is-in-turnbulls-hands-for-now-50764

**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 11  Multiculturalism: Experiences of ‘New Australians’**

**Tuesday 14 November**

**Guest Lecturer: Mohammed Ahmad**
More recently, the hegemony of White Australia has been challenged by a rival myth: that of multicultural Australia. This week we will look at the waves of non-British migration that have taken place throughout the twentieth century: from southern Europeans in the 1950s; to Vietnamese in the 1970s; to Lebanese in the 1980s and 90s. We will consider the migrant experience through cultural expression such as food, language and religious belief and the degree to which people can create homes away from home.

**Required Reading:**
- Mohammad Ahmad, *The Tribe*, first novella.

**Contemporary reflection:**
- Shakira Hussein, ‘Halal chops and fascist cupcakes: on cultural diversity and the weaponization of food’, ABC Religion and Ethics, 14 March 2017. [http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/03/14/4635528.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/03/14/4635528.htm)

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 12  Man’s Country: feminism, misogyny and Australian society**

**Tuesday 21 November**

**Guest lecturer: Catherine Bishop**

This week we will consider the contribution of feminism to Australian culture. In particular we will look at the ways in which feminist scholarship has challenged some of the cherished myths of the Australian self-image. We will examine the role of women in pubs to illuminate how gender plays out in the development of Australian culture, as well as the experience of Australia’s first female prime minister, Julia Gillard.

**Required Reading:**

**Contemporary reflection:**
Week 13  The Beach
Tuesday 28 November

This week we will look at the near-mythic importance of the beach to many Australians, especially as a place for leisure and holidays. We will look at the development of beach culture in the early twentieth century, i.e. surfing, ocean swimming and coastal holidays. We will also consider the Australian beach as a gendered space.

Required Reading:

Contemporary reflection:

Recommended Reading:

Week 14  ‘Taking the Piss’: Humour and the Anti-establishment Impulse
Tuesday 5 December

Guest lecturer: Emma Markezic

Australians pride themselves on their sense of humour. But what exactly do Australians laugh at? And is it any different from any other country? We will look at humour in television and film and in everyday
Australian life. We will also look at Australians’ use of language, especially colloquialisms. Finally, we will consider whether humour in Australia is inclusionary or exclusionary.

Required Reading:


Contemporary reflection:


Recommended Reading:

- Afferbeck Lauder, Strine, Text, Melbourne, 2012, pp 10-44

Week 15 From Parrot Pie to Smashed Avocado: Eating Australian Identity
Tuesday 12 December

To wrap up the course we will consider the role that food and eating have played in imagining Australian identity. Eating is at once a banal and extraordinary act: necessary for survival but also a marker of power, politics, culture and privilege. From Pavlova, to kanga-bangers to mod-oz cuisine, food has been made to carry the burden of Australian national identity. This week will look at how different representations of gastronomy have communicated particular political ideals: from the meat and three veg of assimilationist era Australia to the Asian fusion of multicultural Australia. We will ask what makes a national cuisine?

Required Reading:

- Ghassan Hage, ‘At home in the entrails of the west: multiculturalism, ethnic food and migrant home-building’, in Home/world: Space, community and marginality in Sydney’s West, pp 99-153

Contemporary reflection:

Recommended Reading:

- Blake Singley, “‘Hardly anything fit for man to eat”: Food and Colonialism in Australia’ *History Australia*, vol. 9, no 3, 2012.

Assignment: Long Essay due (40%)

Your Instructor

Dr Justine Greenwood (Ph.D., University of Sydney) is an Australian historian whose research focuses on aspects of immigration and tourism across the 20th century. Justine is currently a Research Associate at the University of Sydney on the ARC Discovery Project, ‘Post-war Russian displaced persons arriving in Australia via the China route’. Previously she has lectured in Australian history at the University of Newcastle, the University of Sydney and at IES Abroad. Her work has been published in a range of journals and books including, *History Australia*, the *Journal of Tourism History*, and the *Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*. 