Global Orientations: Australian Society and Culture

Class code
GLBL-UA 9109

Instructor Details
Dr Toby Martin <tm108@nyu.edu>, assisted by the Director and staff

Class Details
Spring 2014 Compulsory course
- Orientation Week
- Selected Tuesday nights and Thursday mornings (see schedule for dates and times)
- Lectures (Tuesday nights) in the NYU Sydney Auditorium (Ground floor)
- Tutorials (Thursday mornings) on Level 3

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 five sessions covering five distinct themes during Orientation and the first three weeks of semester. Each session will include a 1.5-hour lecture, either given by the instructor or a guest lecturer, and a tutorial-style discussion. There are two mandatory field trips and one optional field trip.

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
A paper (1000-1500 words). 80%. Students can choose between answering one of the set questions (below) and submitting their paper in Week 4, Friday 28th February. Or choose to write a personal reflection paper, which has a self-devised topic and draws on some of their own experiences and observations of Australia, and submit it in Week 13, Friday 9th May.

Class Participation. 20%. Students will be assessed not just on the quantity of their contributions to tutorial and seminar discussions, but also on their relevance to the readings and course themes and their respect for other students’ contributions.

Attendance Policy: NYU Sydney has a strict policy about course attendance for students. No unexcused absences will be permitted. Please refer to the policy outlined in the student handbook.
Regardless of which option students choose, they must refer to at least two of the required or recommended course readings and one of the lectures or field trips. Students are expected to maintain a scholarly tone, even if writing the ‘reflection’ paper. The paper should have a strong central argument, and requires a bibliography and citations. It is recommended that students use the ‘Chicago’ citation style [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch15/ch15_toc.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch15/ch15_toc.html)

The paper should be typed and double-spaced.

Students choosing the first option must choose one of the following paper questions/topics. Be sure to write the question you are answering clearly at the top of your paper:

- How has Australia’s past been used to construct its current identities?
- What do you see as the important differences and/or similarities between Australian and American identity?
- Is there such a thing as an ‘Australian character’?
- Choose a site in Sydney and look at how it has embodied, or played witness to, one of the key themes covered in the course.

**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 all 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.

**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 acknowledging it. 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.

All written coursework must be submitted in hard copy AND in electronic form. All students must submit an electronic copy of each piece of written work to the plagiarism detection software Turn-it-in. Instructions will be provided to you in class.
You are not required to buy any texts. The weekly recommended readings will be available on the NYU Classes. The required weekly readings, along with the extra readings, should form the basis of your final paper.

**Session 1:**
Wed 29 Jan
10:30am-2pm
(Orientation)

**Co-curricular Event: Welcome to Country**
"Welcome to Country" will be performed in the NYU Sydney Auditorium by Glen Doyle of the Tribal Warrior Association [http://www.tribalwarrior.org/](http://www.tribalwarrior.org/). There will be the opportunity for discussion and questions after the Welcome.

**Welcome to the course and Introduction**
In small groups, the instructor will provide a brief overview of the course and its objectives, followed by an interactive session exploring students’ current perceptions of Australian culture and society.

**Session 2:**
Thurs 30 Jan
9am-12pm
(Orientation)

**Uncovering Sydney’s Past**
NYU Sydney is situated in the Rocks, just a sand-stone’s throw from Circular Quay, the site of Australia’s first European settlement. A rich and layered history is all around us. This week we will look at some examples of the way in which the past is present in the landscape in Sydney and surrounds. We will look at several places in detail and the way in which they embody important historical themes in Australian society, such as: Chinatown and race; the Harbour Bridge and modernity; La Perouse and Aboriginal culture; and Sydney’s Post Office and the colonial relationship with Great Britain.

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Mandatory Field Trip:** Rocks Walking Tour, 1-2:30pm
Session 3:
Fri 31 Jan
1pm-4pm
Milson Island

Australian identity

This week’s session will take place at Milson Island on the Hawkesbury River. We will use our time away from the city to consider what have been important elements in creating Australian identity, and how the Australian landscape has informed those identities: from the ‘bush myth’ of the rugged drover; to the ‘coast myth’ of the bronzed lifesaver; to the myth of multicultural Australia; to the incorporation of Aboriginal identity into national identity.

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:

- John Scott and Dean Biron, ‘Wolf Creek, rurality and the Australian Gothic’, in Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies, 24:2, April 2010, pp 207-322

In-class media: 2000 Sydney Olympic Opening Ceremony.

Session 4:

Multiculturalism in Australia. Guest Lecturer Mohammed Ahmad

Lecture:
Tues 4th Feb
5:45-7:15pm

Tutorials:
Thurs 6th Feb
10am, 11am or 12pm

Multiculturalism in Australia. Guest Lecturer Mohammed Ahmad

Australia is famously the ‘land of the fair go’: egalitarian and open-minded. Yet, for some sixty years it restricted immigration from non-European nations. Today, immigration policy is a fraught political issue and racial tensions still exist within an increasingly multicultural society.

Required Reading:

- Ghassan Hage, ‘Multiculturalism and the Ungovernable Muslim’ (pp 165-186) in Raimond Gaita (ed), Essays on Muslims and Multiculturalism, Text, Melbourne, 2011

Recommended Reading:

Session 5: National Pride/National Mourning: The legacy of Gallipoli and World War I
Guest lecturer: Dr Michael Mckernan, Historian, ex-Australian War Memorial

Lecture:
Tues 11 Feb 5:45-7:15
2014 is the one-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of World War I. Anzac Day, 25th April, commemorates the landing of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli in Turkey as part of the World War I campaign. Today, 25th April is a national holiday. It is popularly seen as the moment in which Australian national identity was forged. Lately, the site has become popular with young Australians backpacking around Europe to visit it for the annual dawn service.

Tutorials:
Thurs 13 Feb 10, 11 or 12

Required Readings:
- Mark McKenna and Stuart Ward, ‘It was really moving mate: the Gallipoli pilgrimage and sentimental nationalism in Australia’, in Australian Historical Studies, Vol 38, No 129, April 2007, pp 141-151

Recommended readings:
- Julia Gillard speech, Sydney Morning Herald, 25th April 2011
- Marilyn Lake ‘Intro’ and Joy Dmousi ‘Chapter 4’ in Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (eds), What’s Wrong With Anzac: The militarisation of Australian history, New South Press, Sydney, 2010

Optional field trip: Dawn Service, Martin Place, and traditional two-up game. 25th April.

Session 6: Sexuality in the public sphere: Guest lecturer: Professor Robert Aldrich, University of Sydney

Lecture:
Tues 18th Feb 5:45-7:15
With the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras taking place in March, this is a good time to look at the history of attitudes to non-heterosexual behaviour and the history of the gay liberation movement. Both histories have a current incarnation in the current same-sex marriage debate.

Tutorials:
Thurs 20th Feb 10, 11 and 12

Required Readings:

Recommended readings:
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*. 