### Class Code
SCA-UA 9809

### Instructor Details
- Dr Toby Martin
- tm108@nyu.edu

### Class Details
**The Australian Experience**
- 3 hours per week
- NYU Sydney Academic Center

### 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 units of study: race, class and gender. Each unit contains four sessions which look at how these issues have played out in various facets of Australian culture, ie: attitudes to the landscape; representations of crime; humour; and art. The course is bookended by sessions that consider place-making in Australia: an introductory session that looks at exploration and mapping, and a concluding session that looks at popular music and geographies of place.

### 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

15% 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 Week 5. Refer to at least three of the required readings in answering this question. Question TBC

40% Long Essay (12 pages)

Choice of questions. Due in 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.

NYU Sydney has a strict policy about course attendance and late submission of work. Make sure you familiarise yourself with the policies on attendance and late submission of work in the NYU Sydney Student Handbook.

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.

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.

All written coursework must to 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.

**Required Text**


**Supplemental Texts** (available in NYU Sydney Library)


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


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
Clinton Walker, Buried Country, Pluto Press, 2000
David Walker, Anxious Nation: Australia and the rise of Asia 1850-1939, UQ Press, 2009
Richard White, On Holidays, UNSW, 2005
Richard White and Caroline Ford (Eds), Playing in the bush, University of Sydney Press.

INTRO

Session 1: Voyages: imagining the geography of Australia

This week we will look at the waves of human ‘discoveries’ of Australia and the ways in which laying claim to discovering Australia still seems vitally important. From the First Australians’ sea crossing from modern-day Indonesia some 50,000 years ago; to Europeans search for and ‘possession’ of Australia (beginning with Dirk Hartog’s pewter plate in 1616); to the claim (made recently by the Chinese President, amongst others) of 15th century Chinese settlement in Australia; to recent journeys across Australia and the conception of its interior as ‘empty’. We will also consider the importance of maps: both in helping to convince Europeans that a ‘great southern land’ existed, and in helping to convince them that it was empty, or Terra Nullius. We will also compare western ways of mapping Australia, to Indigenous mapping.

Required Reading:

• Jean Fornasiero, Encountering Terra Australis: The Australian voyages of Nicholas Baudin and Matthew Flinders, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2012, pp 3-34

In-Class Media:

• First Australians, Episode One, ABC Television, 2013;
• Mabo: Life of an Island Man (Trevor Graham, Australia, 1997)
• Historical maps
• Paintings from the ‘Canning Stock Route’ exhibition, 2011.

UNIT A

RACE

Session 2  Encounters: Indigenous and non-Indigenous contact, conflict and exchange

This week we will look at how encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have shaped contemporary Australian society, with an emphasis on the Sydney experience. We will look at past conflict and warfare, as well as recent attempts at ‘reconciliation’ of history: from the apology (and march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge); to the 2000 Olympics; to proposed changes to the Australian constitution; to tourist interest in Aboriginal culture and art.

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:
• Mark McKenna, Looking for Blackfella’s Point, UNSW Press, 2005.
• Stuart McIntyre and Anna Clarke, ‘History Under Fire’ (pp 1-13), ‘Bicentenary Battles’ (pp 93-118) & ‘Frontier Conflict’ (pp 142-170) in History Wars, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003.

In-Class Media:
• Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating’s Redfern Speech, 1993.
• Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s Apology speech, 2008.

Session 3  Survival: the struggle for Indigenous rights and culture

This week we will look at the ways in which Indigenous Australians have fought for their cultural survival. In particular, we will look at political strategies employed for rights and justice in the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st century. We will look at the creative expression of Aboriginal rights through art, particularly music.

Required Reading:
Recommended Reading:

In-Class Media:
- Documentary: *My Survival as an Aboriginal* (Essie Coffey, Australia, 1979)

### Session 4

**White Australia: migration and Australian identity**

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 20\textsuperscript{th} century; to the ‘Cronulla Riots’ of 2005; to current treatment of refugees.

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

### Session 5

**Home-building: the experiences of ‘new Australians’**

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:**
‘The Workers’ Paradise’: The myth of the egalitarian nation

One of the most pervasive myths of Australian identity is that of egalitarianism. This week we will look at the importance of classlessness in Australian society, and the corresponding romanticisation of the working-class, from the ‘bush myth’ of the late 19th century, to the 21st century campaign by the mining industry to create and protect jobs for ‘ordinary’ Australians. We will also look at popular images of this Australian stereotype: from the Drover, to Crocodile Dundee, to the lifesaver, to the digger.

Required Reading:
• Hirst, ‘Mateship’, pp 34-45.

Recommended Reading:

In-Class Media:
• Films: They’re A Weird Mob (Michael Powell, Australia/UK, 1966); Wake In Fright (Ted Kotcheff, Australia/USA, 1971)

Crime: the role of the criminal ‘larrkin’ in Australian society

Many Australian folk heroes (or anti-heroes) are violent criminals – from convicts to bushrangers to ‘larrkinds’ 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:
• Melissa Bellanta, Chapter 1, Larrikins, UQP Press, Brisbane, 2012 pp 1-28
• Hirst, ‘Larrikins’, pp 63-73
Session 8  ‘Taking the Piss’: Humour and the anti-establishment impulse

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. We will also consider whether humour in Australia functions as inclusionary or exclusionary.

Required Reading:

In-Class Media:
- Television: Summer Heights High, ABC Series (2007 - ); Kath and Kim, ABC Series (2002-)

Session 9  The Bush: the centrality of rural areas in the Australian imaginary

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), national parks, concepts of ‘wilderness’, natural disasters such as bushfires and drought, and the rise of the Green movement. We will also consider how pro-development rhetoric often employs the language of class.

Required Reading:
- Bill Garner, Born in a tent: How camping made us Australian, Newsouth, Sydney, 2013, selected chapter

UNIT C  GENDER

Session 10  Man’s Country: feminism, misogyny and Australian society

This week we will consider the contribution of feminism to Australian culture. In particular
we will looks at the ways in which feminist scholarship has challenged some of the cherished myths of the Australian self-image. First-wave feminism of the early twentieth century is sometimes characterised as the effort to get men out of the pubs and into the home; second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 70s is sometimes characterised as the effort to get women out of the home and into the pubs. Consequently we will consider the contribution of feminism via an analysis of drinking cultures. We will also examine the treatment of Australia’s first woman prime minister: Julia Gillard.

Required Readings:

- Tanja Luckins, ‘Pigs, hogs and Aussie blokes: the emergence of the term ‘six o’clock swill’, History Australia, 4:1, June 2007, 8.1-08.17

Recommended Readings:


**Session 11**

**Remembrance: war, grief and nationalism**

April 25th, 2015, will see the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli Landing and accompanying carnival of remembrance. War and the famous ‘ANZAC spirit’ has become a defining feature – if not the *the* defining feature – of Australian nationhood. This week we will examine what the ANZAC myth is and why it has developed its almost spiritual allure. We will also look at what the ANZAC myth leaves out, namely the contribution of women to nation-building and frontier wars that have taken place on Australia’s own soil.

Required Reading:

- Henry Reynolds, Forgotten War, Newsouth, Sydney, 2012, pp 228-251

Recommended Reading:

Session 12  
**Sex: conceptualising sexual relationships and the gay liberation movement**

Despite high-court rulings to the contrary and despite the fact that 75% of Australians support it, same-sex marriage is not legal in Australia. 2014 may be the year in which this changes. Or it may not be. This is one of the most emotionally charged issues in Australian life at the moment. This week we will look at why it has become such a vital issue recently, and why Australia seems to be lagging behind the rest of the western world in this issue. We will also take this opportunity to look at sex and sexuality in Australian culture more broadly.

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Session 13  
**The Suburbs and the Beach: gendered geographies**

This week we will look at the places in which 80% of Australians live: in sprawling cities clustered around the coast. We will look at urbanisation and the near-mythic importance of the beach to many Australians. 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 look at Sydney as a case study, in particular the environmental and economic inequalities between its suburbs. We will consider the Australian beach as a gendered space.

Required Reading:
- Hirst, ‘Suburban Nation’, pp 74-86.

Recommended Reading:
In-Class Media:
  • Film: *Puberty Blues* (Bruce Beresford, Australia, 1981)

EPILOGUE:

Session 14  ‘Wide Open Road’: conceptualising place in Australia through song

To wrap-up the course we will consider the role music has played in imagining Australia. Music is one of the most accessible representations of attitudes in society. Popular, succinct and emotionally-charged, it offers a scholar of culture a rich primary source. This week will look at how different musical genres - such as hip-hop, country, rock and Aboriginal ‘fusion’ music - have expressed feelings of what it means to live in Australia. We will be particularly looking for musical examples that communicate a strong sense of place. We will also be looking at debates of cultural distinctiveness vs globalisation that often seem to surround popular music in Australia.

Required Reading:

In-Class Media:
  • Music by the Triffids, the Go-Betweens, the Warumpi Band, Yothu Yindi, Midnight Oil, Ac/Dc, Paul Kelly, Kerser.

Required Field Trips
Two field trips will be organised from the following list:

Field Trips
  • Maps collection at the Mitchell Library of New South Wales
  • Appin massacre site (near Campbelltown, western Sydney).
  • Tour of Lakemba Mosque and lunch at Jasmin's Lebanese Restaurant.
  • Art Gallery of New South Wales
  • Police & Justice Museum, Circular Quay
  • Cenotaph and Sydney War Memorial

Your Instructor

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*. 