AIX290-390 Australia Today Trimester 3/Summer Intensive

2014-15 Syllabus
Introduction

This unit provides an overview of contemporary Australian life in an historical context. It has an interdisciplinary approach that draws on the insights of several disciplines such as history, geography, sociology, economics and cultural studies. The unit is available to international students enrolled at Deakin and also to international exchange students.

Teaching

The unit is taught by a combination of lectures, seminar and site visits. In 2014-15 the site visited are the Immigration Museum and the Museum of Victoria (in particular the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre). Attendance at all classes is required.

Instructor

Dr Geoff Robinson  
School: Humanities and Social Sciences  
Faculty: Arts and Education  
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Geoff Robinson is a Senior Lecturer in Australian Studies & Politics at Deakin University. Before taking up an academic position he worked in higher education policy research and management. He has published several articles and chapters on Australian, American and Indian history and politics. He is a regular media commentator on Australian and American politics. His book *When the Labor Party Dreams: class, politics and policy in New South Wales 1930-32* was published in 2009.
Geoff Robinson is based at the Geelong campus of Deakin but for the duration of this unit will be based at Burwood. Contact details for his Burwood office will be advised.

He will be assisted by Dr Mark Humphries, Ms Jill Adams and other staff to be advised.

Outline of topics

There will be a lecture & seminar on each topic. Lectures will go beyond the traditional ‘text on screen’ format to include a range of visual aspects.

Claiming a continent

Surveys Australian history from European settlement to the end of the 19th century. Themes emphasised include Australia as a pioneer example of economic globalisation, affluence and modern racism. Particular attention is given to the similarities and differences between Australia and the United states.

Creating a nation

Australian history from Federation in 1910 to the present. Particular attention is given to the rise and decline of Australian distinctiveness. Is Australia today simply a geographical expression?

Indigenous Australia

The experience of indigenous Australians since European occupation is outlined with particular attention is given to the experience of the last forty years. We consider the tension between the appeal of indigenous people to general standards of human
rights and their claim to a distinct identity. Comparisons are drawn between the indigenous experience and those of first nations in North America.

*Cultural diversity*

Australia’s immigration history is outlined with particular attention to the questions of religious identities from Protestants and Catholics in the nineteenth century to Christians, non-Christians and non-believers in the present. Is Australia a post-religious society? Why is the United States more religious?

*Australia and Asia*

The transition from ‘Yellow peril’ to ‘Asian century’ is explained. What is the future of Asian engagement under the new conservative government that emphasises Australia’s British roots?

*Politics*

Australia was a pioneer democracy that combined elements of British and American practice. Has Australian democracy a future? Why is there less political polarisation in Australia than the United States?

*Film*

Since the 1970s film has played leading role in debates about Australian national identity. Are these representations inherently mythic? Has Australian cultural independence come to an end in a globalised world? There be a viewing of a contemporary Australian film.
Sexuality

How have understandings of what it means to be male and female in Australia changed over time? Particular attention is given to the contestation of sexuality in the last thirty years and the development of the gay and lesbian movement in Australia together with debates about sexualisation in contemporary culture. The experience of Julia Gillard, Australia’s first female Prime Minister, is also considered.

Anzac

Anzac Day is Australia’s unofficial national day with a far greater hold on the popular imagination than Australia Day. Why does war loom so large in elite and popular imaginings of national identity?

Inequality

Like the United States Australia has seen increased levels of inequality. Why has this occurred? How have government policies impacted on this? The Australian welfare state and patterns of social support is examined and compared to the United States and East Asia (especially Korea).

Australia’s future

What will Australia be in 2050? In 2100? What will be the fate of this nation, once an exemplar of European colonisation, in a non-European century?
Assessment

Class paper and participation - 15%
Field Report - 35%
Major Essay - 50%

Study resources

There is no set reading but a wide variety of sources and commentary will be available on Cloud Deakin (Deakin's online teaching site). An extensive array of relevant books will be placed on reserve in the Library.

Timetable

The unit commences on Monday 5 January, 2015. Face to face teaching concludes on Thursday, 15 January,

The last item of assessment, the major essay, is to be submitted by Friday 23 January.