

Cultures and Contexts: Indigenous Australia

MAP-UA 536

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Course Description: The indigenous people of Australia have long been the subject of interest and imagination by outsiders for their cultural formulations of kinship, ritual, art, gender, and politics and they have entered into representations as distinctively "Other"- whether in negative or positive formulations of the "Primitive." These representations -- in feature films about them such as Walkabout and Rabbit Proof Fence, in New Age Literature, or museum exhibitions -- are now also in dialogue with their own forms of cultural production. At the same time, Aboriginal people have struggled to reproduce themselves and their traditions in their own terms, asserting their right to forms of cultural autonomy and self-determination. In this course, we will explore a range of Aboriginal Australian forms of social being, ranging historically and geographically. Through the examination of ethnographic texts, art, novels, autobiographies, film and other media, we will consider the ways in which identity is challenged and constructed.

Requirements:

Students will be expected to do the assigned readings, and to attend lectures and recitation sections. Required readings include books, to be purchased at the NYU Bookstore, and articles that will be posted electronically on the course Blackboard site for you to download. The written assignments will be 3 short (4-5 page) papers on topics handed out during the semester and one short piece of additional writing still to be determined.

In order to avoid disturbance and distractions, please turn off cellphones, and you should not get up to leave class to pick up calls or messages! Unless there is a special need, laptop computers should also be turned off. Failure to observe these rules will result in the reduction of grade for participation.

Required Books: (to be purchased at the NYU Bookstore)

Morgan, Sally My Place.

Morphy, Howard Aboriginal Art

Myers, Fred Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self

Reynolds, Henry. Beyond the Frontier

An important resource for this class is the groundbreaking 7-part series, produced for Australian television by Indigenous Producers Rachel Perkins and Daren Dale, ***The First Australians***.

The films are available by podcast [<http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/about>] and also have a fabulous accompanying website that articulates a timeline and topics of Indigenous Australian history [<http://www.programs.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/content/>]

Assignments:

Week 1

Introduction: Indigenous People, Settler Society

-James Cook: excerpt from *Explorations*, pp. 82-85 (BB)

*-Deborah Rose: "The Saga of Captain Cook: Remembrance and Morality." In Attwood and McGowan, *Telling Stories*: 61-79..

-Background: *They Have Come to Stay*, episode 1. *First Australians*

http://media.sbs.com.au/podcasting/videopodcasts/SRS_FE_First_Australians_Ep_23_27_351.mp4

In class film: *Babekueria*

Week 2

Cultural Translation, Cultural Knowledge

*-Ian Anderson, "Introduction: the Aboriginal critique of colonial knowing." (in Grossman, *Blacklines*), pp 17-24.

*-TGH Strehlow: "On Aranda Traditions" (orig. 1947) (chapter 8, pp 79-82)

*-WEH Stanner: "Durmugam, a Nangimeri." (In Casagrande, *In the Company of Man*: 63-100.

*-Inga Clendinnen: "The Power to Frustrate Good Intentions" (2006) (Common Knowledge vol 11: 410-441)

Film: *Wirriya*. Director Beck Cole will show this in class.

Week 3

Classical Aboriginal Society: Cosmology, People, and Place

*-W.E.H. Stanner (1953): "The Dreaming" (in Stanner, *The Dreaming and other Essays*: 57-72

- Myers: *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*), pp 1-102.

Week 4

Classical Aboriginal Society: Myth, Land, and Identity

- Myers: *Pintupi Country*, pp 103-180

- Myers: "The Cultural Basis of Pintupi Politics." *Mankind* 1980.

*- Diane Bell: "Women's Business is Hard Work" (*Signs* 7: 314-337)

optional reading: T.G.H. Strehlow (1947): "Northern Aranda Myths." *Aranda Traditions*. Melbourne U. Press.

Film: *One Man's Response*. Director Ian Dunlop.

Week 5

Culture, Contact, Change, Continuity

- Myers: *Pintupi Country*: pp. 219-285
- Myers (1989): "Truth, Beauty and Acrylic Painting" *Visual Anthropology*
- Myers (2004) "Unsettled Business: Tradition, Indigenous Being, and Acrylic Painting." *Visual Anthropology*.

Film: *Benny and the Dreamers*. Director Ivo Burum.

Background: *There is No Other Law*. Episode 4 ***First Australians***.

http://media.sbs.com.au/podcasting/videopodcasts/SRS_FE_First_Australians_Ep_23_27733.mp4

Week 6

History and Settlement/Invasion: Aboriginal Perspectives

- Henry Reynolds: *The Other Side of the Frontier*

Week 7

History: State Policies and Aboriginal Rights

- *-Diane Barwick (1974): "And the Lubras are Ladies Now"(in Faye Gale, Ed. *Women's role in aboriginal society*: 51-63.)
- Bruce Pascoe: "How It Starts." In Perkins and Langton, eds. *The First Australians*.
- *-Tim Rowse (1987), "Assimilation and After"(AW Martin and **Tim Rowse** (eds), *Australians from, 1939*: 133-149)

Film: *Freedom Ride* or *Tent Embassy*

Background: *Freedom for our lifetime*. Episode 3 ***First Australians***.

http://media.sbs.com.au/podcasting/videopodcasts/SRS_FE_First_Australians_Ep_23_27731.mp4

Week 8

Art: The Circulation and Exhibition of Indigenous Culture

- Morphy: *Aboriginal Art*, intro plus chapters 1, 3, 4.
- *-Dussart: "A Body Painting in Translation." In Banks and Morphy, eds. *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*: 186-202.

Optional Reading: -Morphy: "Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery" (BB)

Week 9

Art: Culture, Survival, Visibility

-Morphy: Aboriginal Art, chapters 6, 7, 8

*-Michael Dodson: "The End in the Beginning: Re(de)fining Aboriginality" (in Grossman, *Blacklines*: 25-42).

Week 10

Identity: Who/What is Aboriginal?

*-Ian Anderson: "Black bit, white bit." (in Grossman, *Blacklines*: 43-51.

-Morphy, Aboriginal Art, chapter 9

*-Philip Jones (1991), "Namatjira: Traveler in Two Worlds" (In J. Hardy, et al, *The Heritage of Namatjira*: 97-136..

(useful website http://www.artistsfootsteps.com/html/Artists_Namatjira.htm)

-Sally Morgan, My Place (begin)

Film: *Two Bob Mermaid*. Director Darlene Johnson.

Week 11

Whose History? – Identity, Aboriginality, and The Stolen Generations

-Morgan, My Place (complete)

*-Bain Attwood, "'Learning about the Truth'." (In Attwood and McGowan, eds. *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory*: 183-212)

Film: *Stolen Generations*. Director Darlene Johnson.

Week 12

Imaging Indigeneity: Self-Determination

-Doris Pilkington (1998), Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence (BB)

Film: *Rabbit Proof Fence*

Week 13

Imaging Indigeneity: Self-Determination (completion)

- Doris Pilkington (1998) Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence (BB)

- Discussion of film and literary representation

Week 14

Indigenous Media

*- Jeremy Beckett (1988): "Aboriginality, Citizenship, and Nation State." *Social Analysis* no. 24: 3-18.

*- Faye Ginsburg (1991): "Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village" *Cultural Anthropology* 6: 92-112)

*-Faye Ginsburg, "Native Intelligence: A Short history of debates on Indigenous Media and the Ethnographic." In Banks and Ruby, eds. *A Short History of Visual Anthropology*: 234-255.

Optional -- BB)

Film: *Freedom Ride*

Film: *Bush Mechanics*

Week 15

Indigenous Futures: Indigenizing/Mixing/Circulating

-Ginsburg and Myers, "A History of Aboriginal Futures"

Film *Djakhiarr vs. the King*