

## World Cultures: Indigenous Australia

V55.0536

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TTh 11:00-12:15

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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 being 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, a final exam, and a written review of one of the films that will be scheduled for viewing outside of class time.

For a large lecture class, a certain decorum is necessary. In order to avoid disturbance and distractions, please turn off cellphones and pagers, 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

Pilkington, Doris Rabbit-Proof Fence

Reynolds, Henry The Other Side of the Frontier

Assignments:

**Week 1**

Sept 4

Introduction: Indigenous People, Settler Society

- James Cook: excerpt from Explorations, pp. 82-85 (BB)
- Deborah Rose: "The Saga of Captain Cook" (BB)

Film: *Babekueria*

**Week 2**

Sept 11

Classical Aboriginal Society: Cosmology, People, and Place

- W.E.H. Stanner (1953): "The Dreaming" (BB)
- Myers: Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self, pp 1-102.

optional background -- Clifford Geertz (1974): "From the Native's Point of View" (BB)

**Week 3**

Sept 18

Classical Aboriginal Society: Myth, Land, and Identity

- Myers: Pintupi Country, pp 103-180
- Myers (1989): "Truth, Beauty and Acrylic Painting"

Film: *Waiting for Harry* or *One Man's Response*

**Week 4**

Sept 25

Culture, Contact, Change, Continuity

- Myers: Pintupi Country: pp. 219-285

Film: *Desert People*

Film: *Benny and the Dreamers*

**Week 5**

Oct 2

Ethnography and the Problem of Representing Other People's Lives

- Diane Bell: "Women's Business is Hard Work" (BB)
- Gillian Cowlishaw: "Colour, Culture, and the Aboriginalists" (BB)
- Stanner: "Durmugam, a Nangiomeri" (BB)
- Inge Clendinnen: "The Power to Frustrate Good Intentions" (BB)

**Week 6**

Oct 9

History and Settlement/Invasion: Aboriginal Perspectives

- Henry Reynolds: The Other Side of the Frontier
- TGH Strehlow: "On Aranda Traditions" (BB)

-Ian Anderson: "Introduction: the Aboriginal Critique of Colonial Knowing." (BB)

**Week 7**      History: State Policies and Aboriginal Rights

Oct 16

- Diane Barwick (1974): "And the Lubras are Ladies Now"(BB)
- Tim Rowse (1987), "Assimilation and After"(BB)
- Horner and Langton, "The Day of Mourning" (BB)

Film: *Freedom Ride*

Film: *Tent Embassy*

**Week 8**      Art: The Circulation of Indigenous Culture

Oct 23

- Morphy: Aboriginal Art, pp

**Week 9**      Art: Culture, Survival, Visibility

Oct 30

- Morphy: Aboriginal Art, pp
- Michael Dodson: "The End in the Beginning: Re(de) finding Aboriginality" (BB)

optional -Fred Myers (1991): "Representing Culture: The Production of Discourse(s) for Aboriginal Acrylic Paintings" (BB)

**Week 10**      Identity: Who/What is Aboriginal?

Nov 6

- Ian Anderson: "Black bit, white bit." (BB)
- Jeremy Beckett (1993), "Walter Newton's World"(BB)
- Philip Jones (1991), "Namatjira: Traveler in Two Worlds" (BB)  
(useful website [http://www.artistsfootsteps.com/html/Artists\\_Namatjira.htm](http://www.artistsfootsteps.com/html/Artists_Namatjira.htm))
- Sally Morgan, My Place (begin)

Film: *Two Bob Mermaid*

**Week 11**      Whose History? – Identity, Aboriginality, and The Stolen Generations

Nov 13

- Morgan, My Place (complete)
- Bain Attwood, "Learning about the Truth'." (BB)

Film: *Stolen Generations*

**Week 12**      Imaging Indigeneity: Self-Determination

Nov 20

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

optional -Michele Grossman, ed., Blacklines: essays of "Part 2: Imaging Indigeneity: art, aesthetics, representations," p. 81-126 (all on Blackboard)

Film: *Rabbit Proof Fence*

**Week 13**      Indigenous Media

Dec 4 -

-Jeremy Beckett (1988): "The Past in the Present; the Present in the Past: Constructing a National Aboriginality" (BB)

-Faye Ginsburg (1991): "Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village" (BB)

-Eric Michaels (1987): "Hollywood Iconography" (BB)

Optional -- Jeremy Beckett (1988): "Aboriginality, Citizenship, and Nation State" (BB)

Film: *Tent Embassy*

Film: *Bush Mechanics*

**Week 14**      Indigenous Futures: Indigenizing/Mixing/Circulating

Dec 11

-Ginsburg and Myers, "A History of Aboriginal Futures" (BB)

FINAL EXAM