



Cultures and Contexts: Indigenous Australia

Cultures and Contexts: Indigenous Australia

CORE-UA 536

Fall 2021

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Office Hours: Tues. 2-4 and by appointment

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Department of Anthropology

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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. We will also consider the ways in which information, description, and analysis is developed in various forms of presentation. Through the examination of these forms -- 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 in the ways that are possible in our current conditions. Required readings include books, to be purchased through the NYU Bookstore (or other booksellers), and articles that are posted electronically on the course NYU Brightspace site for you to download. The written assignments will be of two different sorts:

- Four short (4-5 page, 1000 word) essays **on topics handed out during the semester**. The highest three grades from these papers will be used in your final grade, although all four must be submitted. They will be 75% of the grade, and none are optional. They are not exams and will be graded as essays.
- 2 Group presentations (in recitation sections) (five percent each) These -- along with participation in sections -- will comprise 25 % of the final grade.

I will ask that the papers be submitted electronically, via Brightspace (in your individual sections under the Assignments tab), and graded by your recitation section leaders. They must be submitted by the time and date specified in the assignment.

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

Morgan, Sally *My Place*. (also available in various formats in Brightspace)
Morphy, Howard *Aboriginal Art* (scanned chapters also available in PDF in Brightspace)
Myers, Fred *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines*. (also available in PDF in Brightspace)

Important resources for this class include a number of films made by Indigenous directors, and some will be screened in class and others available through BRIGHTSPACE or on Kanopy, the streaming service available through Bobst. These are included in the course as a significant form of knowledge and representation involved in Indigenous political and cultural activity, but also as important arenas of Indigenous social action.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at [212-998-4980](tel:212-998-4980).

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675
Telephone: [212-998-4980](tel:212-998-4980)
Voice/TTY Fax: [212-995-4114](tel:212-995-4114)
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TA Information:

Parmida Mostafavi
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CORE-UA 536 002 --- W 8:00AM - 9:15AM
CORE-UA 536 003 --- W 9:30AM - 10:45AM;

Matthew Webb
mrw435@nyu.edu

CORE-UA 536 004 --- W 8:00AM - 9:15AM
CORE-UA 536 005 --- W 9:30AM - 10:45AM

Andrew Ashley
ara449@nyu.edu

CORE-UA 536 006 --- W 12:30PM - 1:45PM
CORE-UA 536 007 --- W 2:00PM - 3:15PM

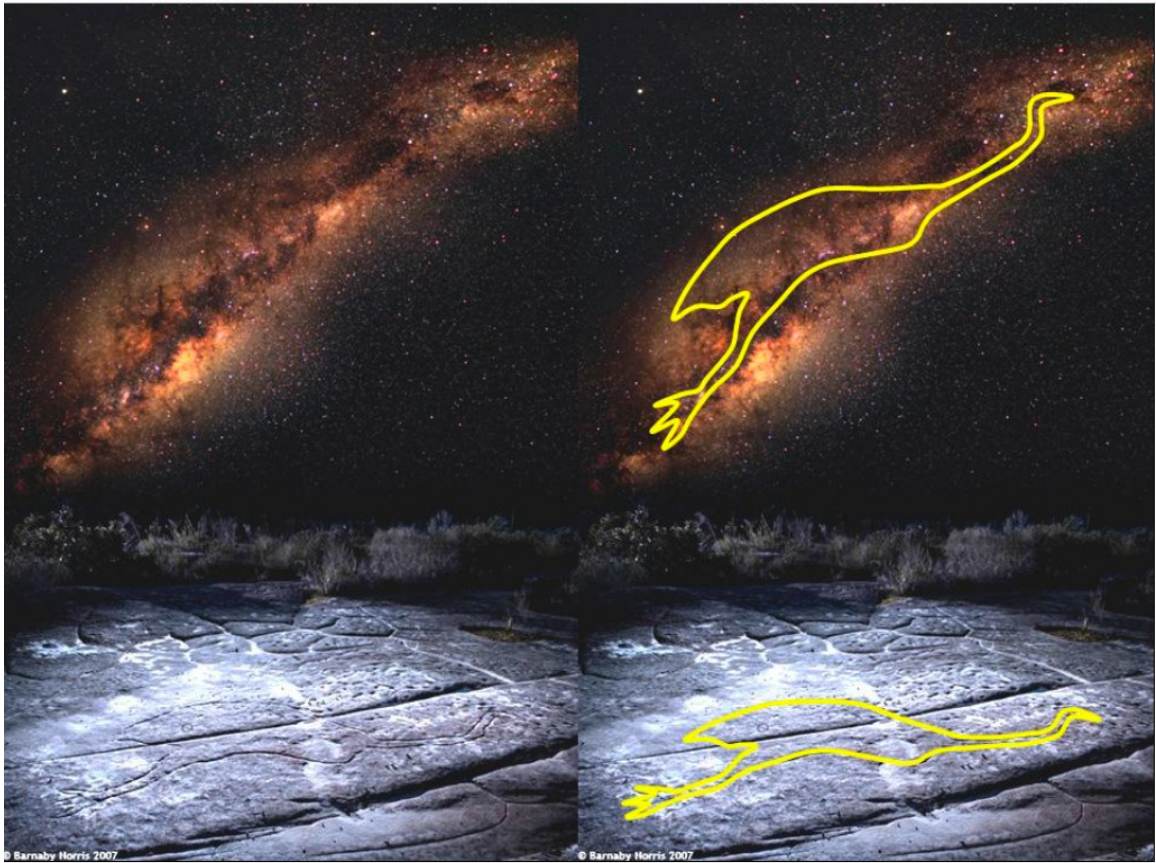


Figure 2: Kuringai Emu in the Sky (images courtesy Barnaby Norris and Ray Norris).

Assignments:

Week 1 -- September 2.

Please come to first class having read the short Cook excerpt and having watched the Episode *First Australians*

Introduction: Indigenous People, Settler Society

- James Cook: excerpt from *Explorations*, pp. 82-85 (BRIGHTSPACE)
- *They Have Come to Stay*, episode 1. *First Australians* (BRIGHTSPACE)

-In class film: *Babekueria*

Week 2 -- September 7

Cultural Translation, Cultural Knowledge

For Tuesday

- TGH Strehlow: "On Aranda Traditions" (orig. 1947) (chapter 8, pp 79-82) (BRIGHTSPACE)
- Ian Anderson, "Introduction: the Aboriginal critique of colonial knowing." (in Grossman, *Blacklines*), pp 17-24. (BRIGHTSPACE)
- Deborah Rose: "The Saga of Captain Cook: Remembrance and Morality." In Attwood and McGowan, *Telling Stories*: 61-79. (BRIGHTSPACE)

For Thursday

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

Optional readings

- Inga Clendinnen: "The Power to Frustrate Good Intentions" (2006) (*Common Knowledge* vol 11: 410-441) (BRIGHTSPACE)
- B. Malinowski, (1922), Introduction, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.(BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 3 – September 14

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.

Songlines – Tracking the Seven Sisters. Website accompanying exhibition of Western Desert mythology and place. National Museum of Australia

<https://songlines.nma.gov.au/>

Week 4 – September 21

Classical Aboriginal Society: Myth, Land, and Identity

- Myers: *Pintupi Country*, pp 103-180
- Myers: "The Cultural Basis of Pintupi Politics." *Mankind* 1980: 197-213. (BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 5 – September 28

Culture Dynamics: Contact, Change, Continuity

-Myers: *Pintupi Country*: pp. 219-285

-Myers (1989): “Truth, Beauty and Acrylic Painting” *Visual Anthropology* (BRIGHTSPACE)

-Diane Bell: “Women’s Business is Hard Work” (*Signs* 7: 314-337)

Watch Film: *Remembering Yayayi*. Dirs: Deveson, Dunlop, Myers (link in BRIGHTSPACE)

October 1 – first 3-5 page essay on *Pintupi Country* topics due (electronic submission)

Week 6 – October 5

History and Settlement/Invasion: Aboriginal Perspectives

-Bain Attwood “My father’s country.” Chapter 1, *Rights for Aborigines*. (BRIGHTSPACE)

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

Watch: *Freedom for our lifetime*. Episode 3 ***First Australians***. (in BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 7 – October 14 [no class on October 12, Legislative Day]

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.) (BRIGHTSPACE)

-Jack Horner and Marcia Langton (1987): “The Day of Mourning.” (BRIGHTSPACE)

-Tim Rowse (1987), “Assimilation and After”(AW Martin and Tim Rowse (eds), *Australians from, 1939*: 133-149) (BRIGHTSPACE)

Watch: *Freedom Ride* or *Tent Embassy*

Week 8 – October 19

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. (BRIGHTSPACE)

Optional Reading:

-Myers, Introduction to *Painting Culture* (pp 1-16)

-Morphy: “Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery” (BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 9 – October 26

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. BRIGHTSPACE)
- Anne-Marie Willis and Tony Fry: “Art as Ethnocide: the Case of Australia”, *Third Text*: 3-20

Week 10 – November 2

Identity: Who/What is Aboriginal?

- Ian Anderson: “Black bit, white bit.” (in Grossman, *Blacklines*: 43-51. (BRIGHTSPACE)
- Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, chapter 9, 11
- Sally Morgan, *My Place* (begin)

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

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

3-5 page essay on Morphy topics, Nov. 5

Week 11 – November 9

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

- Morgan, *My Place*
 - Bain Attwood, “‘Learning about the Truth’.” (In Attwood and McGowan, eds. *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory*: 183-212) (BRIGHTSPACE)
 - Ceridwen Dovey, “Mapping Massacres,” *New Yorker* (2017) (BRIGHTSPACE)
 - Watch Film: *Stolen Generations*. Director Darlene Johnson.
- Available in Bobst. <https://nyu.kanopy.com/video/stolen-generations>

Recitation discussion of *Stolen Generations*

Week 12 -- November 16

Recovering Indigeneity

- Morgan, *My Place* (complete)

3-5 page essay on Morgan topics, due November 22, electronic submission

Week 13 – November 23 11/25 is Thanksgiving

Recovering Indigeneity, Resisting Assimilation

- Faye Ginsburg (1991): “Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village” *Cultural Anthropology* 6: 92-112) (BRIGHTSPACE)
- Eric Michaels (1987): *For a Cultural Future: Francis Jupurrula Kelly Makes TV at Yuendumu* (BRIGHTSPACE)

Watch Film: Warwick Thornton, *Green Bush*.

Available in Bobst <https://nyu.kanopy.com/video/green-bush-caama-collection>

Week 14 – November 30

Imaging Indigeneity: Telling One's Own Stories

-Faye Ginsburg "Native Intelligence: a Short History of Debates on Indigenous Media and Ethnographic Film." (2011)

Film: Sally Riley, *Confessions of a Headhunter*.

<https://nyu.kanopy.com/video/confessions-headhunter>

In class Film: *Tjawa Tjawa*. <https://ictv.com.au/video/item/3836>

Week 15 – December 7

Indigenous Futures: Indigenizing/Mixing/Circulating

-Ginsburg and Myers, "A History of Aboriginal Futures" 2006 (BRIGHTSPACE)

-Trish Morton Thomas, video interview (BRIGHTSPACE)

Watch – Trish Morton-Thomas, *Occupation Native*.

<https://nyu.kanopy.com/video/occupation-native>

December 14

Final 3-5 page paper due on December 14, 10 am, electronic submission