

HIST 296 (86696)—WI Focus

The Nature of Australia: Past, Present and Future

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Course Overview

Structure

This class will be taught as a seminar. The major requirements include: reading assigned texts and watching videos; writing weekly papers and submitting them on time; and participating actively in the class.

Subject Matter

The class will examine the interaction between humans and their natural environment in Australia. Focusing initially on Aboriginals and then European colonists, we will look at how various peoples experience their environment: how they have attempted to change it; how they have been limited by it; and how Australia is likely to cope in a climate change world.

Learning about the Australian environment in Sydney will offer students a wealth of opportunities to explore the topic in the classroom and in the field. Our unit on national parks will involve a field trip to the Blue Mountains National Park to the west of Sydney (accessible by train). We will also visit various areas within the greater Sydney area to explore how the city is dealing with issues such as global warming, bushfires, sea-level rise, and environmental justice.

Textbooks

- Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?*
- Joëlle Gergis, *Sunburnt Country: The History and Future of Climate Change in Australia.*

There will be other class readings as well. More details will be available on Lulima.

Assessment

1. Weekly reaction papers approximately one page in length. These will be graded out of ten, aggregated, and constitute 25% of your final grade.
2. Three essays focusing on specific topics on the Australian environment. Students will formulate their own topics in consultation with the instructor. In preparing for each assignment, an entire class will be devoted to writing skills. This will include discussing examples of effective writing and why it is important, how to construct clear and grammatically correct sentences, avoiding overuse of passive voice, and how to write in an engaging fashion. Each paper will be worth 15% of your final grade.

3. Class participation. This does not mean merely turning up. Nor will just talking a lot suffice. You need to demonstrate that you are well-prepared and engaged. This will constitute 30% of your final grade.

Schedule

Week	Topic
1	Introduction: The unique environment of Terra Australis.
2	The Dream Time: Paleolithic Megafauna rule the continent
3	The First People: Adapting to a new land
4	Aboriginal Land Use Practices: Fire Stick Farming
5	Did Aborigines practice agriculture? Field Trip to the Australian Museum
6	Captain Cook “discovers” Australia
7	Early British views of the Australian environment
8	Invasion by proxy: sheep, clover, and microbes reshape the Australian environment
9	Fire! British misunderstanding of the role of fire in Australia’s forests and grasslands
10	Where do Camels Belong? Feral animals in modern Australia
11	Nature’s Metropolis: Sydney and its hinterland
12	Field Trip to the Blue Mountains National Park
13	“Of drought and flooding rains”: Agriculture in an extreme environment
14	Australia in the Anthropocene

Writing Focused Course (WI)

Good writing is an important skill, not just in college but in life in general. In addition to enabling you to clearly communicate your ideas, the act of writing also helps you to formulate your thoughts and ideas about a subject in a way that oral communication rarely does. Throughout the semester, and particularly before assignment due dates, we will have mini writing workshops in class in which we will discuss topics such as how to convey a strong argument and how to write clear and engaging prose. Below are some of the basics you should keep in mind as you begin writing your assignments, as well as some helpful resources.

- **Typos and spelling mistakes:** Turn your spell check on and don’t ignore the squiggly red lines! Proof read carefully.
- **Poor grammar:** This disrupts your flow and effects your ability to convey meaning. Grammatically poor essays are frustrating to read and make readers cranky. Read your work out loud to yourself or someone else. If you find yourself

stumbling over your words or if you run out of breath before finishing a sentence, chances are the sentence is poorly structured and badly punctuated. Your word processor's grammar check is helpful; make sure it is turned on.

- **Other common writing problems:** passive voice, platitudes and clichés, poor word choice, weak introductions and conclusions, plagiarism, and lackluster prose. A couple of useful resources:
 - The UH Writing Center (run by the Department of English). It is a helpful free service available to all students and you can make video chat appointments. The University of Sydney also offers writing tutorship. It is best to make an appointment once you have written a first draft so that tutors can go over it with you:
<https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/writingcenter/appointments>
 - There are numerous writing websites. One of the best is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL). It offers abundant advice and tips for how to improve your prose, avoid plagiarism, etc.:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/index.html
- **Citations:** Multiple citation styles exist in the world. Common ones include APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), and Chicago (based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*). Learning a new one is not difficult, but it does take some initial effort. In order to ensure consistency, we will use the Chicago style for this class, specifically the **author-date style**, which is the easiest. Here is a link to the Quick Guide for this style. Read through it carefully and refer to it whenever you are citing a source or writing a bibliography:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html