

HIST 4591

AUSTRALIA SINCE 1788

Professor Mark Thomas
Departments of History and Economics

This course will look at the history, culture and society of the land 'down under.' Australia is a land of opportunity and paradox. It began as a penal colony and became the richest country in the world within a hundred years. It is a country that has been independent of Britain for a century, yet still has the Queen as head of state. It is a vast continent of only 25 million inhabitants, yet has remarkable regional diversity. It has long been among the most urbanized of global societies, yet its cultural identity is largely shaped by rural idealism.

To understand contemporary Australia, one must understand its past, both as myth and reality. This course will look closely at some of the major events in Australian history, from the voyages of Captain Cook and the arrival of the First Fleet at Botany Bay, through the excitements of continental exploration and Ned Kelly, to the traumas of Gallipoli and the Great Depression. We will use both traditional and non-traditional means to understand these events, applying the realist perspective of the historian, the subjective perceptions of the diarist and the story-teller, and the powerful imagery of the artist and the film-maker. We will be careful to look both at white and black Australia. The course will end by examining Australia's place in the 21st century world.

Grading: Evaluation will be based on the following components:

- i) Five academic journal entries 20 %
- ii) One group research assignment 10 %
- iii) Two term papers 20 %
- iv) Class participation and engagement 25 %
- v) Final examination 25 %

The academic journal entries, of 350-400 words each, will focus on perspectives on Australian history learned during site visits, and will be written in response to prompts given by the instructor. There are a dozen site visits altogether on the program, in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, so students will have some choice of topics. Deadlines for submission will be given at the program orientation.

The research assignment will be based on primary source materials made available during a site visit to the State Library of Victoria in Melbourne. Students, working in small groups, will use newspaper archives to examine a topic of their choosing (eg drought, federation, Aboriginal issues, the Melbourne land boom, conscription, etc.) as reflected in news reports from the period between 1880 and 1940. The results will be presented in class.

Two short papers, of 4-5 pages each, are required, based on primary and secondary materials provided to each student. One paper is due before departure from Australia; the other on or before Friday, January 16. Students may choose from the following topics:

- a. What were the motives behind the British settlement of Australia?
- b. Why is Ned Kelly an Australian icon?
- c. How was Australian national identity different at the end of the 19th and 20th centuries?

The final exam (Saturday, January 17, 9.30-12.00) will be open-book, open-note, cumulative and oriented towards testing student understanding of the main contours of Australian history as discussed in classroom presentations, site visits and the assigned materials.

Readings: All readings will be made available on a memory-stick provided by the program. Students are required to bring their laptops.