

**Department:** Anthropology

**Course No:** 228

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Australian Aborigines

**Contact:** Sally McBrearty

**Diversity:** CA4 International

**Catalog Copy:** Either semester. Three credits. Recommended preparation: ANTH 220. Dussart An introduction to the study and understanding of Aboriginal ways of life and thought. Social relations, modes of thought and belief that are particularly Aboriginal and which show continuity with the past. Notions of identity and the relationship of various indigenous communities to the non-Aboriginal population of Australia.

**Course Information:** The first half of the course is designed to help us understand the complexity of contemporary indigenous social orders and their location within the Australian nation-State. To deepen our understanding, the second half of the course will focus exclusively on the importance of land rights for the indigenous peoples of Australia. We will try to understand why it is so difficult to improve the circumstances of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. We will conclude the course by looking at international struggles over land led by other Fourth World peoples.

b. Course requirements: Specify exam formats, nature and scope of weekly reading assignments, nature and scope of writing assignments, problem sets, etc.

Course Format: Lectures expand on issues addressed in your required readings, which are chosen to provide historical and theoretical background to the weekly topic. Assigned readings complement lectures. **YOU WILL GAIN LITTLE FROM LECTURES IF YOU FAIL TO DO THE REQUIRED READINGS AHEAD OF TIME.**

Course Requirement: Students will be asked to submit a short summary of all assigned reading (approx. 50pp. per week). They hand in their summaries each Tuesday and Thursday. Summaries should not exceed 200 words.

Students will be ask to all participate in a class project. The aim of the class project is to have a mock "land claim" for a specific piece of land or property on campus. Students will split into different groups: lawyers, claimants, University Administrators, judges, advisors to judges (anthropologists) and witnesses.

Exam Summaries will count for 50% of the grade. Oral participation and class project will count for 25 %. Final exam will count for 25. Exams will consist of essay questions.

c. List the major themes, issues, topics, etc., to be covered.

History of Hunters and Gatherers in Australia  
Aborigines and Contemporary Nation-State

Land, Kinship and Religion  
Land, Kinship and Gender  
Citizenship and Referendum  
Social Resonances of Citizenship  
Australian Assimilation Policy: Principles  
Australian Assimilation Policy: Practice  
Conundra of Self-determination?  
Self-determination, Land and Mining  
Land Rights and Native Title: Show and Tell  
Land Rights: Impact  
Native Title Era and Citizenship  
International Law. International Struggles

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** 1. Become articulate; This course introduce students to salient issues regarding identity and citizenship. Through readings, discussions, analyses of films students are asked to not only formulate opinions but understand and empathize with those of others.  
2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility; Readings, lectures, films will all elicit reactions from students which they will have to articulate orally and in writing. Early on in the class students will receive formal instruction about articulating their arguments clearly orally and in writing.  
3. Acquire critical judgement; Critical judgement will be sharpened by class discussions and especially the class project which will force students to argue their case and understand where others stand on a particular issue.  
4. Acquire moral sensitivity; This course will help students empathize for the plea of others and reflect on their own stereotypes of others in general and Fourth World people in particular  
5. Acquire awareness of their era and society; Throughout the semester we will deal with issues which may be far away (Australia) but also quite salient to the situation of Native Americans in the United States. The class project will help students understand how some of the issues debated can be relevant to their lives and their future as citizens.  
6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience; and  
7. Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

**CA4Criteria:** 1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity;  
The course focuses on issues of diversity/multiculturalism outside the United States and exposes students people (Aborigines) whose modes of thought and social order which are suffused of egalitarian ethos while living in a very Western and hierarchical world (Australia).  
2. Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations; Tis will be emphasized indeed in helping students understand how the life of Aborigines has changed through different colonial and post-colonial periods. The centerpiece of the course deals with issue of land claims to enable students to understand how land is an intricate part of how Aborigines construct themselves in the world, but also how land is an intricate part of the Western world as well, and how these different social orders and modes of thoughts clash through time.  
3. Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups; The reading material as well as

discussions and lectures will locate the plea of the Aborigines with those of other Fourth World peoples such as Natives of the Americas, !kung people, Maori, and other Pacific Islanders.

4. Develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration; Studying land rights issue speaks directly to human rights issues. In Australia the most important question debated for more than 3 decades is to figure out how and why Aborigines should be treated differently and be considered sovereign people and thus different from the rest of the Australian citizens.

5. Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of any of the above four items.

Lectures and readings address issues of power relations between the state and Aboriginal groups since colonization. Despite full-citizenship, large sums of money spent by the welfare state, effort and 30 years of well-meaning government politics, the material circumstances of Aborigines are still terrible by all the standard social indicators. The why is what we will address in the course.