

# **AN368 Australian Culture and Society**

## **Spring 2025 Modules**

### **Modules**

**FOUR modules will be offered in weeks 3 and 4. A brief description of each module appears below:**

**A. Aboriginal Australia** - The indigenous people of Australia, most commonly known as the Aboriginal people, are considered to be the world's longest continuing civilization. Western pre-historians and archaeologists now date Aboriginal occupation of the continent back to more than 50,000 years ago. In Aboriginal cosmology this is a somewhat irrelevant detail. What matters to these people is their ongoing connection to the land and the way that this relationship has shaped their existence. This module will examine the most important elements of Aboriginal culture both in traditional and contemporary settings. The central theme will involve looking at how aboriginality has managed to survive just over 230 years of European contact by balancing the need for continuity and the impact of change. Field trips will examine aboriginal culture in particular settings with the aid of aboriginal guides.

**B. Australian Cultural Transmissions** – Australia began its existence as a European nation as very much a “Child of the Empire”. However, as an immigrant nation it has played host to a vast array of cultural influences that have gradually worn down and re-defined the country's Anglo-conformist traditions. The Irish were the first group to challenge the dominant culture and they have been followed by many other significant groups such as the Chinese, Italians and Germans who have added to Australia's developing sense of ethnic diversity. The development of a multicultural society has recently been somewhat

overshadowed by the new politics of globalization that has seen specific cross-cultural influences through the spread of media and communications dominating. In this case the power of ethnicity has given way to the idea of “hybrid” expressions of national identity. This module examines both these old and new forms of cultural transmission and their respective impacts on Australian culture. Field trips will involve examining particular ethnic groups and neighbourhoods.

**C. (Un)Popular Cultures** - Australia’s international and national identity has largely been constructed around popular images of the beach (the bronzed Aussie), the bush (the man from Snowy River), the sporting hero (Don Bradman), and the outback (the pioneer or the noble aboriginal). While there are strong historical reasons for the production of these representations, the images no longer accurately reflect the complexity of contemporary Australia. Since the 1950s Australian national identity has been influenced by a succession of developments in popular culture, many imported from outside of its national boundaries. This module will examine a number of these movements, analysing the way in which various youth movements, or subcultures, have appropriated ‘foreign’ influences to produce new and unexpected expressions of Australian cultural identity. (Un)Popular Cultures will focus on a selection of Australian subcultures – Rockabilly’s, Yobbo’s, and Bogan’s – and a variety of contemporary Australian cultural forms – street art, car culture and popular music. The lecture program will develop a number of concepts to situate and discuss these movements, providing students with an analytical framework with which to describe Sydney’s contemporary urban tribes – the Mods, Wogs, Emos, Psychobillies, Skaters, Bra-boys and Drag Kings which will be examined in class presentation and essay assignments.

**D. Australian Sporting Traditions** – Australia as a sporting nation punches well above its weight in a wide variety of sporting pursuits. It is one of only two countries to attend all of the Modern Olympic Games (the other being Greece). It placed 5th or better on the Olympic Medal tables for the decade following Sydney 2000, and has won recent World and Olympic Championships in Cricket, Field Hockey, Rowing, Rugby, Swimming, Water Polo and Women's Basketball. What makes Australia such a "Paradise of Sport" and does the country suffer from being in the grip of "Saturday Afternoon Fever"? The module will look at how this fanatical enthusiasm for sport developed from strong historical antecedents and why it remains so strong today.