

AUSTRALIA PROGRAM (GAUS) COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

GAUS 330 – Culture, Place and Identity in Australia (3 units)

This interdisciplinary seminar provides students with an overview of Australian history and an introduction to Australian culture and representations of national identity. Through readings, films, excursions, guest speakers and class discussions, students will consider the major social, political, and cultural themes of contemporary Australian society and how they have been shaped by past policies and practices. Of particular importance will be the impact of colonialism, issues of social justice and the question of human rights for Indigenous peoples, for those seeking asylum in Australia, and for other marginalized groups. Students will explore the impact and application of important theoretical concerns and relevant contemporary debates in Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Indigenous Studies to enrich their understanding of local, national and global issues. To this end, comparisons with North America and other settler societies will be included in course discussions, enabling students to both learn about Australia as well as consider their own identity, culture and history in light of the critiques presented in this course.

GAUS 331 – Environmental Sustainability (3 units)

In addition to offering an ongoing critique of current approaches to resource use in modern fossil-driven, industrial-based society, the course provides an overview of principles and applications of ecologically sound, sustainable approaches to resource and land use, energy applications, and architectural design in the Australian context. We will study the principles of appropriate shelter design for Australia's hot-humid and hot-arid regions and visit an owner-built, ecologically-designed home where students will participate in a full-day workshop. We will focus on the use of Permaculture and its importance for sustainable land settlement, and on alternative agriculture as a path to sustainable food production in local communities. We will also look at the issue of local, community-based economics, and the notion of Buddhist Economics as a basis for a sustainable society. We will use a combination of classroom lectures, readings, videotapes, workshops, site visits, and hands-on experience to present course material. Classes will be held in student houses or at designated sites when workshop and site visits are involved.

GAUS 332 –Encountering Australia's Environment (3 units)

Based on an experiential learning framework consisting of preparatory study, field trips and structured reflection, this innovative outdoor course allows students to directly experience and relate to Australia's unique environment as well as challenge their own understanding of concepts such as nature, culture and wilderness. Via outdoor activities such as camping in bushland, swimming under waterfalls, hiking in forests and climbing rocks in national parks and other protected areas, students will explore and gain a first-hand understanding of diverse ecosystems, different ways of knowing and relating to the land, and the relationships between natural and cultural landscapes, particularly by spending time with Indigenous peoples on their lands. While individual venues are subject to change, the course typically includes group travel to coastal areas of northern New South Wales such as Cape Byron, Broken Head and other coastal national parks, several national parks on the New England Tableland, including those exemplifying subtropical rainforest and open-canopy bushlands, and Bald Rock - the second largest monolith in Australia. Furthermore, students will spend up to a week camping at Gudhum Wadjelah, a Bundjalung-run Aboriginal bush learning camp and spend time with custodians on their land. Finally, the course involves independent travel towards the end of semester where students are free to visit environments of their choice, such as Tasmania's ancient forests, the Outback, the Great Barrier Reef, the Daintree Rainforest, and Fraser Island – the world's largest sand island.

GAUS 333 - Australia's First Peoples (3 units)

The Course introduces students to the diversity and complexity of Indigenous Australian Peoples, philosophy and cultures. Through quality print and audio-visual materials, guest lectures, field trips and class discussions students will be introduced to a diverse and challenging range of Indigenous perspectives, cultural values and practices. Students will consider Indigenous knowledge as valid contemporary ways of knowing, relevant to informing a sustainable and socially just global future. Students will be encouraged to develop a critical awareness of the issues pertaining to human rights and social justice for Indigenous Australian peoples through an investigation of the interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian society and the dominant processes of Indigenous exploitation.

GAUS 334 - Australian Coastal Environmental Issues (3 units)

Australia has the world's third largest coastal zone: with iconic beaches, breathtaking coastlines, world heritage reefs, tidal rivers, forests and wetlands. Australians take full advantage of this spectacular coastal zone, with 85% of the population choosing to live within 50 kilometres of the ocean. This ever increasing population fuelled by 'the sea change' generation is placing numerous pressure and impact upon coastal habitats and resources. Through field trips within the local coastal and marine habitats, lectures and seminars, students will explore Australian coastal environmental issues. Local and national initiatives will be examined to better understand how the human population – coastal interface is managed within Australia.