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Australian History and Society: An Introduction 1788–2000

Section 1:
1788–1850

Fakultät für
**Kultur- und
Sozialwissen-
schaften**

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Preface

This introductory course traces some of the major social, political and economic influences in the development of the Australian nation and society from 1788 to the present. The movement from British convict outpost to self-governing colonies of the British Empire to nationhood will be illustrated with a focus on themes such as: European discovery, invasion and settlement of Australia; the impact of mass immigration; the nature and impact of Australia's rural industries and mineral wealth; urbanisation and national identity; the development of social reform movements; the political and social consequences of Australia's involvement in war; and public and government responses to asylum seekers, Native Title and national apologies.

The course also recognises the re-orientation in Australian historical discourse: where historians previously wrote of 'settlement', many now write of 'occupation' or 'invasion'; rather than drawing on British ancestry, today Australians refer to a myriad of cultural backgrounds. Since the 1970s, approaches to Australian history have attempted to reinterpret the past to feature issues that had hitherto overlooked – the shift in interpretation demanded by groups who were previously marginalised by the Eurocentric and celebratory nature of traditional approaches to Australian history is recognised. For example, the participation of women in Australia's history and the inclusion of Aboriginal historical issues is now standard practice. The rejection of the concept of *Terra Nullius* and acknowledgement of prior ownership of the land by Aboriginal people has forced a fundamental reinterpretation of Australia's past.

Acknowledgement of the contribution of marginalised groups to Australia's historical record – commonly referred to as 'addressing silences' – raises issues about power and powerlessness and demonstrates how categories of analysis such as class, race and gender flow through broader themes of social relations, resistance and reconciliation. This course will examine the relationship between a variety of groups – Indigenous, transported, settler and Australian born – who made up Australian society in the past. Using immigration as an umbrella, this course highlights circumstances that have cut the path towards a multicultural society at different stages of Australia's development. The transformation from a mono-cultural to a *multi-cultural* society can only occur once historical injustices have been acknowledged and there is commitment to lessening the effects of discrimination, misunderstanding and ignorance throughout the Australian community.

Now in the second decade of the new millennium, Australia consolidates over 100 years of nationhood. Learning about Australian history is a process of continual re-examination of the sources as new perspectives emerge. Furthermore, conflicting hypotheses demonstrate that Australian history is alive and subject to considerable and passionate historiographical debate. This course provides only a starting point from which students might be inspired to look elsewhere for more detailed evidence about the issues and events that interest them. We hope you find the course useful and interesting, and that you are encouraged to look elsewhere for more detailed evidence about topics of interest to you.

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Reading

Suggested preliminary reading

Peel, Mark 2007: *A Little History of Australia*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing.

General Histories

Blainey, Geoffrey 2001 [1966]: *The Tyranny of Distance*, Sydney: Pan Macmillan.

Blainey, Geoffrey 2009 [1994]: *A Shorter History of Australia*, Sydney: Vintage.

Clark, Charles Manning Hope 1994: *A Short History of Australia* (4th revised edition), Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin.

Davison, Graeme/ Hirst, John/ Macintyre, Stuart (eds) 2001: *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Denoon, D./ Mein-Smith, P./ Wyndham, M. (eds) 2000: *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub.

Lyons, Martin/ Russell, Penny (eds) 2005: *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*, Sydney: Uni. of NSW Press.

Macintyre, Stuart 1999: *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Molony, John 1987: *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia: The Story of 200 Years*, Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin.

Peel, Mark/ Twomey, Christina 2011: *A History of Australia*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shaw, A.G.L. 1966: *Convicts and Colonists: A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain and Ireland to other Parts of the British Empire*, London.

White, Richard 1981: *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Using the Documents

This course invites you to examine many primary sources or documents. The documents emanate from government sources as well as personal accounts. Many are drawn from CMH Clark's *Select Documents in Australian History 1788–1850* and Martin Crotty's and Erik Eklund's *Australia to 1901: Selected Readings in the Making of a Nation*.¹ When using primary material there are a number of things you should bear in mind. Firstly, the English language has changed over the last two hundred years. Some terms in Australian history are referred to in the glossary. However, sometimes the modern spelling of words may differ. For example, the word "risk" was once spelled "risque". You will need an adequate dictionary.

Secondly, from all sources the reader can get both information (what happened) and interpretation (why it happened, what it means). Ask yourself: what information can the reviewer get from the source and what information is withheld (absent, omitted); what interpretation of events does the author of the document provide; is this interpretation deliberate (intentional) or implicit (unintentional); can you confirm/corroborate or contradict the information imparted by the document using other sources; how can knowledge of the historical context in which the document was produced help the historian extract information contained in the document and/or understand the interpretation/perspective of the author?

Thirdly, when dealing with primary sources, in many cases you will have to "read between the lines" as much important information will not be stated explicitly but can be extracted only by examining the document's historical context and the biases, preconceptions, and expectations of the author. Some things to consider when analysing the document are the following (this list is only a guideline):

- Where did the source come from – e.g. a dusty archive or library, or an edited and printed collection of documents?
- When was the document written or produced? What is the author/speaker's class background, nationality, political perspective, gender, religion? Why was it written? Who is the author's audience? Whose "voice" are we hearing? Is the author speaking for him/herself or on behalf of others? What was the historical context in which the document was created? How is it written? What style does the author use? What rhetorical devices are used? Are they effective?
- What does the document say? What doesn't it say?
- Is the document accurate in what it does say? Does the author "blend" the truth? If so, why? How can or should an historian use this document in order to understand the past?

Don't forget that this is only a guide. Don't be concerned if your documents don't provide answers to all of the questions.

¹ CLARK 1950; CROTTY/EKLUND 2003.

Maps of Australia



Figure 1: The comparative sizes of Australia and Europe.

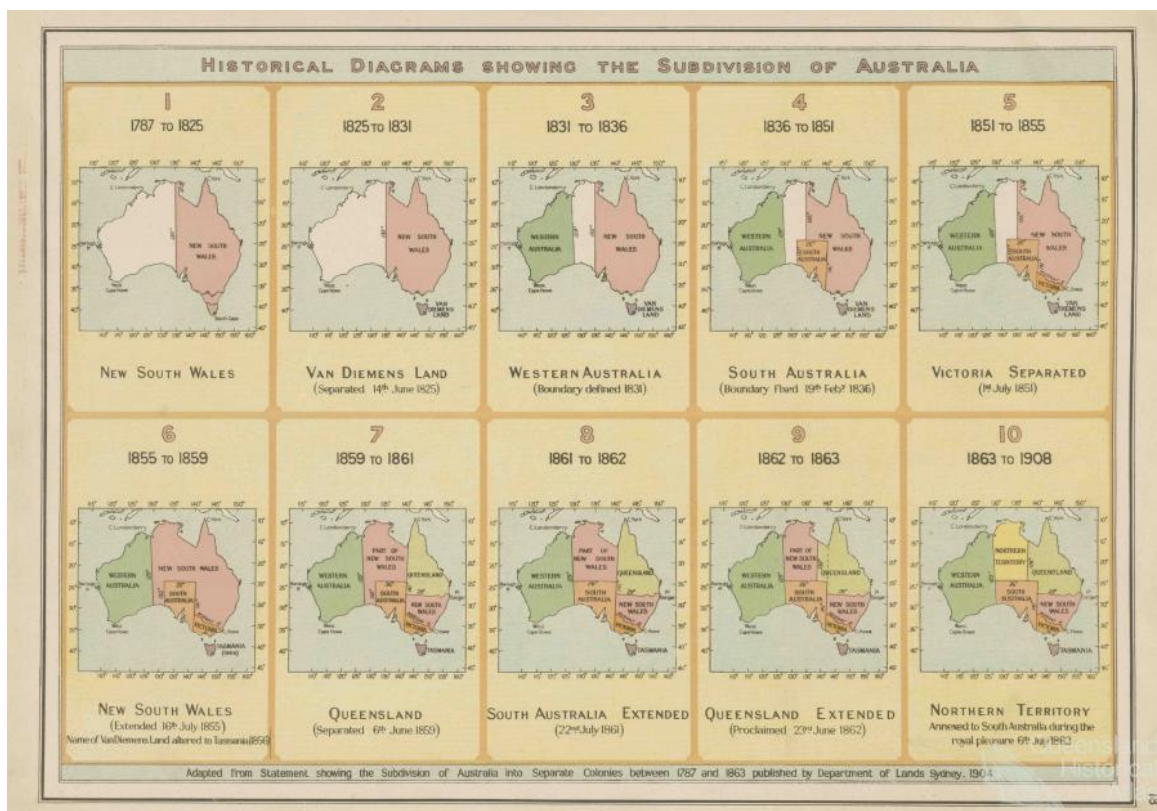


Figure 2: The subdivision of Australia into colonies and states, 1787-1908. Source: The Lady Northcote Atlas of Australasia, Sydney: HEC Robinson, 1908.