

**Aboriginal Sacred Art & Music
HARRA 2050 Spring 2020**

Prof. J. Hilary Martin, O.P.
Tues. 3:40 to 6:30 pm
DSPT rm FBD
Office Hours Fri. 10:00-12:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Aboriginal People of Australia possess the oldest continuous culture on the planet, more than 50,000 years old. This course will teach about the Dreaming and the Land, and will celebrate the contemporary art of local aboriginal communities. Aboriginal art is intimately connected with stories arising from the *Dreaming*, so aboriginal art cannot be well understood without understanding sacred land and the Dreaming Ancestors. While some representations occur across the Continent, "Dreaming sites," are local and their influence is local and over particular peoples. This course will treat all aboriginal art, but will focus on the Kimberley and the Northern Territory.

METHOD

The seminar method will be employed. The course will begin with lectures on the Dreaming and of Aboriginal claims of their land. This will lead to examination of ancient and contemporary Aboriginal art and music. Students will be given opportunities to examine and particular works of art and music. They will learn about Land, its religious and secular significance and about the struggle Aboriginals have had in protecting the Land we *all* enjoy.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance at class lecture and participation in discussion is expected.. Since aboriginal culture is not well known in this country, and is often misunderstood, students will be expected to build a bibliography books, articles and recorded performances that reflects Australian aboriginal and indigenous culture. Students will be on the watch for possible connections with the art of other indigenous peoples, particularly those of North America.

Bibliography

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Caruana, Wally, *Aboriginal Art* (3rd edn.) London New York: Thames and Hudson,

World of Art, 2012

Edwards, R., *The Art of the Alligator Rivers Region, Northern Territory*, Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974. 1979

Ellis, Catherine, *Aboriginal Music Making: a Study of Central Australian Music*, Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1964

Isaacs, Jennifer, *Arts of the Dreaming, Australia's Aboriginal Heritage*, Willoughby NSW: Weldon Publishing, 1990. (N.B., There are other publishers of this work)

Isaacs, J, *Australian Dreaming, 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History*, Sydney: Landsdown, Press, 1980

Yothu Yindi "Tribal Voice"

16 tracks done in 1992, distributed by MGM

Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane*, New York: Harper and Row, 1957.

Stanner, W.E.H., *On Aboriginal Religion*, With introductions by Francesca Merlan and L.R. Haitt, Sydney: Sydney University press, 2114. (first published 1959)

_____, "The Dreaming," *White Man Got No Dreaming*, Canberra: Australian National Univ. Press, 1979

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Jung, C.J., Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, *The Collected Works IX.1* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, 3-53.

Martin, John Hilary, *The Reality of Myth*, Antioch, Ca.: Solas Press, 2001

_____, "Bringing the Power of the Past into the Present" *Religious and Social Ritual: Interdisciplinary Explorations*, ed. M. Aune, N.Y.: SUNY, 1996).

_____, "Aboriginal Dreaming as a Text," *Festschrift for Campion Murray*, Adelaide: CTF Press, 2004.

_____, "Aboriginal Communities and Globalisation" in *Religion and Global Society*, Oxford: Oxford Uni. Press, 2005.

, "Intervention in Aboriginal Life", *New Blackfriars*, Oxford:
2011. vol 93.

Moyle, Alice, *Aboriginal Sound Instruments*, Canberra: Aboriginal Institute of
Aboriginal Studies, 1978.

*My Country of the Pelican Dreaming. The life of an Australian Aboriginal of the
Gadjerong, Grant Ngabidi (1904-1977) as told to Bruce Shaw*, Canberra,
Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981.

Turner, Victor, *The Ritual Process*, Ithica, New York: Cornell Univ. Press,
1969

Requirements

Reading

1. Article on aboriginal religion will be assigned and/or slides of aboriginal art or a gallery catalogue.
2. Two short papers evaluating art or musical materials that have been assigned in terms of aboriginal cultural values.

Written Work and Assessment

1. Two short reflection papers (3-4 pgs) a written analysis of an art work presented in class. (15%)
2. Either review a book (or a notable article) on Indigenous religion, **or** attend and review a performance of an aboriginal music or dance event (15%)
3. A final paper on the notion of the *Dreaming* in connection with art or music performance; **or** an essay on the relevance of this ancient art in a modern world that is no longer hunter-gathering society. (70%)

Purpose and Outcomes

Course goals

1. Students will learn about *the public and the secret* in aboriginal life; i.e., about boundaries, prohibitions and freedoms in aboriginal art,
2. Students will learn about the *Dreaming*, as a basic religious concept and its connection with land and with the claims to land (both legal and religious)
3. The importance of possessing title to "cultural" sites and the struggle of aboriginal people to gain recognition and ownership of their lands.
4. Students will become aware of bibliographical materials in local libraries and websites that are concerned with indigenous peoples and their culture.

Course Outcomes

1. To acquire a **critical understanding** of another culture, ancient and quite different from our own.
2. To **communicate** their visual and oral experiences of this course to academic and non academic audiences by giving talks and serious and semi-serious writings.
3. To be aware and to understand the **contemporary problem** aboriginal and other indigenous communities have in their struggles to acquire legal title to traditional lands.
4. To see the **prophetic value** of aboriginal warnings, “to take care of the land, so that the land can continue to take care of you.” Bush fires and global warming is a present and future cultura disaster

Grading Rubrics

- “A” The ability to interpret aboriginal visual and oral art materials in a culturally sensitive manner. Can distinguish between ancient and more contemporaneous aboriginal art. Aware of the anthropological literature (both the good and the naive) about aboriginal culture as seen in their bibliography. Is aware of the religious /cultural reasons for the aboriginal struggle for land-title..
Faithfulness to class discussion and to required papers. The ability to write a clear and concise final paper on the topic chosen using appropriate examples and bibliography.
- “A-“ The ability for interpret aboriginal visual and oral material in a culturally sensitive manner. Is aware of a difference between ancient and contemporary aboriginal art. Is aware of the struggle for land title among indigenous peoples. Weak on building a bibliography.
Faithfulness to class discussion and required papers. The final paper on the topic chosen imprecise in places and with lack of examples and a thin bibliography.
- “B+” Some missteps in interpreting aboriginal visual and oral material. Not much awareness of differences in aboriginal styles. Unaware of legal struggle for acquiring title to land. Neglect in building a bibliography.
Lack of faithfulness to class discussions or to papers The final paper lacking a clear statement of the problem chosen, and/or not on the topic previously agreed upon.
- “B” Lacking of understanding the aboriginal art or culture we have been discussing. Lack of clarity and/or mistakes about contemporary art and/or music. Uninformed discussion of contemporary viewpoints

with no awareness of aboriginal ideals. Unaware of aboriginal discussion of land

Gaining a "B" in the first semester indicates the student show some promise, but needs to see the advisor for basic instructions about what is expected.

"C" You will get three credits for this course on your transcript, but the work is below graduate level.

Plagiarism

This is taking credit for the work of another without giving credit to your source.

Sometimes this is *unintentional*, but you will have to prove that. Plagiarism includes, paraphrasing texts, lifting ideas from another without citing your source. The academic penalties for plagiarism can be severe. Zero or an F for a grade is common. But remember **if** you give the full name of the author and the title of the work or the slides used, you are **not committing** plagiary. Your paper may be a long string of quotes and little more, but all you can be accused of is not being very original.