School of Humanities Creative Industries SocialSci

HIST2006: Australian Underworlds: Histories of Crime in Australia

Online

Semester 2 - 2025

The School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences is committed to providing an inclusive environment for open debate in our courses. We expect students and staff to act with respect, honesty, fairness, trustworthiness and accountability as outlined in the university's Code of Conduct for students and staff. We also abide by the university's Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, which includes a duty to foster the wellbeing of staff and students. We advise that our courses may contain language, images, voices, representations, and names of deceased persons. Our courses may also contain material on difficult subjects that may cause offence. We treat such material with special consideration when it is available as context in the pursuit of knowledge in our courses. As a matter of particular significance in the Australian context, the School acknowledges and respects the unique histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their unbroken relationship with the lands and the waters of Australia over millennia, and the validity of Aboriginal ways of knowing. We are dedicated to reconciliation and to offering opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access and succeed in higher education.

OVERVIEW

Course Description

Crime holds a special place in Australian history, having facilitated colonisation, provided its most celebrated anti-hero in Ned Kelly and been used to sell millions of newspapers, books and movie tickets. Drawing upon a rich array of digital history resources, this course will examine the back stories of Australia's best known crimes and criminals, setting this underworld in its historical context. It will address the role of sex, class, race and ethnicity in decisions about which behaviours are defined as crimes and why certain people become criminals.

Academic Progress Requirements

Nil

Assumed Knowledge

20 units in History at 1000 level or equivalent.

Contact Hours

Online
Lectorial
Online
2 hour(s) per week(s) for 12 week(s)

Unit Weighting

10

Workload

Students are required to spend on average 120-140 hours of effort (contact and non-contact) including assessments per 10 unit course.

COURSE OUTLINE

CONTACTS

Course Coordinator

Online
A/Pr Nancy Cushing
Nancy.Cushing@newcastle.edu.au
(02) 4348 4055
Consultation: Consultations in person, via zoom or by telephone can be arranged email.

Teaching Staff

Other teaching staff will be advised on the course Canvas site.

School Office

School of Humanities Creative Industries and Social Sciences
Social Sciences Building
Callaghan
HCISS@newcastle.edu.au
+61 4985 4500

SYLLABUS

Course Content

The course will investigate major trends in the history of crime and punishment in Australia, combining a thematic and chronological approach. It will begin with crime in traditional Indigenous cultures in Australia and how their justice systems responded to the unlawful takeover of their country. It will examine the crimes in Britain which created the convicts who settled in Australia and their experience of transportation and punishment, as well as the systems of policing put in place as the colonies transitioned into free societies; Themes to be explored may include youth gangs, the gendering of crime, organised crime, domestic violence and criminal celebrities.

Course Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Outline key historical debates, themes and concepts around the history of crime in Australia;

2. Integrate primary and secondary sources into a research outcome, drawing on digitised sources as appropriate;

3. Evaluate information, ideas, and arguments about the history of crime, including those from cultures other than their own;

4. Demonstrate intermediate written and visual communication skills, and information literacy skills relevant to history;

5. Reflect on their learning and express an ethical stance towards the history of crime in Australia.

Course Materials

Recommended Text:

We will make regular use of Nancy Cushing, *A History of Crime in Australia: Australian Underworlds*, Routledge, 2023. It is available from the University library and for purchase online.

Further details on course materials can be found on the course Canvas website.

SCHEDULE

Week	Week Begins	Topic	Learning Activity	Assessment Due
0	Before 21 July	Course Preparation	Information and advice on the successful completion of this fully online course	
1	21 July	What is the history of crime?	Work through short lectures, readings, responses and other activities on Canvas in your own time each week. Nancy will send out an email about the week's topic on Sunday evening and each week's material will be released on Monday morning.	
2	28 July	Crime in Aboriginal Societies		Assignment 1 Briefing (in course materials on Canvas)
3	4 August	The Settler Colonial Criminal Justice System		
4	11 August	English Crime and Life in the Convict Colonies		
5	18 August	Frontier Violence	Pre-Assignment 1 Zoom consultation: Tuesday 19 August, 12 - 1	
Recess				
6	1 September	Identifying Underworlds		Assignment 1 due – Sunday 7 September, 11.59pm
7	8 September	The World of Ned Kelly		
8	15 September	Race, Class and Sexual Violence		Assignment 2 Briefing (in course materials on Canvas)
9	22 September	Bad Girls: Women as offenders	Pre-Assignment 2 Zoom: Tuesday 23 September, 12 - 1	
Recess				
10	6 October	Razor Gangs and the Black Hand: Criminalisation and ethnicity		Assignment 2 due – Sunday 5 October , 11.59pm
11	13 October	The Distraction of the Underworld		
12	20 October	Innocent Criminals		
13	27 October	NA	NA	Assignment 3 – Opens Monday 27 October, 9 am Due Monday 27 October, , 11.59pm
Exams				
Exams				

ASSESSMENTS

This course has 3 assessments. Each assessment is described in more detail in the sections below.

	Assessment Name	Due Date	Involvement	Weighting	Learning Outcomes
1	Online task and reflection	Sunday 7 September, 11.59pm	Individual	40%	2, 3, 4, 5
2	Research Essay	Sunday 5 October, 11.59pm	Individual	40%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3	Online - short answer test	Opens Monday 27 October, 9 am Due Monday 27 October, 11.59pm	Individual	20% (4x5%)	1, 3, 4, 5

Late Submissions

The mark for an assessment item submitted after the designated time on the due date, without an approved extension of time, will be reduced by 10% of the possible maximum mark for that assessment item for each day or part day that the assessment item is late. Note: this applies equally to week and weekend days.

This is a human intelligence course only. The use of generative AI will not be accepted. Where there are indications that AI has been used on any assessment task, the student will be asked to attend a zoom meeting to discuss their assignment with the course coordinator and if warranted, the case will be referred on to the Student Academic Conduct Officer.

Assessment 1 - Online task and reflection

Assessment Type Online Learning Activity

Description

This assignment allows for the investigation of a little known crime, the demonstration of digital research and presentation skills and the development of understandings of how to place crimes in an historical context.

Students will develop a timeline of a crime using either presentation software such as Powerpoint or the timeline generator available at https://timeline.knightlab.com. The subject must be an Australian crime which took place before the year 1954; and is not currently well researched. That is, I want you to undertake original research into a specific crime (or multiple crimes by one offender), and analyse it using secondary sources. The timeline should employ a range of media including text, maps and images to tell the story of the chosen crime, place it in historical context and situate it in Australian history.

The purpose of this assessment is to:

- Develop knowledge about crime and criminal justice processes through primary and secondary research
- Interpret and evaluate sources about crime and the law, in ways that support further development of written, visual and digital communication skills
- Critically reflect on the historical, social, legal and ethical issues that affect crime and criminal justice across different contexts and on what the documentation of crimes can reveal about historical periods and issues

For further details, see Canvas site.

Weighting 40%

Length 1000 words of text (+/- 10%), plus supporting material (approximately 10 images, maps, newspaper articles, etc.))

Due Date Sunday 7 September, 11.59pm

Submission Method Online

Assessment Criteria Please see the assessment rubric on the course Canvas site.

Return Method Online

Feedback Provided Online – three weeks after submission.

Opportunity to Reattempt Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 2 - Research Essay

Assessment Type Essay

Description	This assignment will draw upon set scholarly sources to develop an argument in response to a question chosen from the list provided on Canvas. The essay must follow the conventions of History essay writing as set out in the Essay Writing Guide and in the related course materials (Week 7). The required referencing style is Chicago footnoting, for which a guide has been provided on Canvas. If you have not been taught how to write history essays in 1000 level History or closely related courses, please be sure to pay close attention to the guidance offered, use the opportunities for practice during class activities and take advantage of resources on Canvas and support from Academic Learning Support. Note that your essay is to be based on the sources provided. You are not being assessed on your capacity to locate suitable sources, but on how well you use the ones that have been set. The purpose of this assessment is to: • Extend knowledge about crime history by reading high quality primary and/or secondary sources (list provided) • Interpret and evaluate historical sources to inform analysis and develop written communication skills, including making an argument supported by evidence • Critically reflect on the historical, social, legal and/or ethical issues related to a particular crime, set of crimes or criminal group in Australian history
Weighting	40%
Length	1500 words (+/- 10%), not including bibliography
Due Date	Sunday, 5 October 2025, 11.59pm. Note this is during the Labour Day long weekend.
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	Please see the assessment rubric on the course Canvas site.
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online – essays submitted on time will be returned with marks and comments prior to the final test.
Opportunity to Reattempt	Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 3 - Online - short answer test

Assessment Type	In Term Test
Description	The test encourages students to engage with course materials throughout the course. Each week, questions are posed to students as part of the learning exercises for which a written response is required. The test will include a selection of those same questions, enabling students to improve upon their earlier answers, enriching them with what they have learned later in the course. The aim is to encourage reflection on the learning process and higher order thinking. The final test will be made up of a selection of 12 questions already asked throughout the course of which students must select four to answer in 250 words each = 1000 words total. Assessment is based on the understanding of course materials and students are not required or expected to go beyond them in these responses. The test will be conducted in Cadmus. All work must be composed there. Pasting from outside will result in a 0 grade for that answer. The test will be open from 9 am to midnight on Monday 27 October.
Weighting	20% (4x5%)
Length	1000 words +/-10% (4x250 words)
Due Date	Monday 27 October, 11.59pm
Submission Method	Online – via Cadmus
Assessment Criteria	Please see the assessment rubric on the course Canvas site.
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online
Opportunity to Reattempt	Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Grading Scheme	This course is graded as follows:

Range of Marks	Grade	Description
85-100	High Distinction (HD)	Outstanding standard indicating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an outstanding level of academic achievement; mastery of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
75-84	Distinction (D)	Excellent standard indicating a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a very high level of academic ability; sound development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
65-74	Credit (C)	Good standard indicating a high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a high level of academic achievement; reasonable development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
50-64	Pass (P)	Satisfactory standard indicating an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an adequate level of academic achievement; satisfactory development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
0-49	Fail (FF)	Failure to satisfactorily achieve learning outcomes. If all compulsory course components are not completed the mark will be zero. A fail grade may also be awarded following disciplinary action.

*Skills are those identified for the purposes of assessment task(s).

Communication Methods

Communication methods used in this course include:
Canvas Course Site: Students will receive communications via the posting of content or announcements on the Canvas course site.
Email: Students will receive communications via their student email account.

Course Evaluation

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the University for the purposes of identifying areas of excellence and potential improvement. The university's student experience surveys can be accessed here. Once a year you will also receive a student experience survey from Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT). The School welcomes your constructive feedback and thanks you in advance for the time and thought you put into your survey responses.

Assessment Workload

Each assessment in this course has been calibrated to its level of learning outcome complexity (Blooms levels 1-6) as well as its depth and breadth of knowledge from introductory first year courses to more senior third year and postgraduate advanced levels. Because assessments vary considerably in the School, different lengths are designed with an estimate of the effort required to complete them. When considering the workload for each assessment item in a course, students can assume that 100% of the assessment equates to ~100 hours of expected time needed at each level. For example, in a 10-unit 1000-level course with a 1000-word written task weighted at 25% assumes it will take ~25 hours of work on average for most students at that level. This is a general guidance note, not indicative of grades to be expected, and some students may complete their assessments with more or less effort than others. Students should consult their course coordinators for advice on workload expectations for their different assessments.

Learning Analytics

The University uses an evidence-based approach to enhancing student learning and delivering support. Our careful analysis of data through learning analytics informs decision making processes related to student learning, academic outcomes, and support services. Learning analytics may be used to identify targeted individual opportunities for additional support services or interventions.

Oral Interviews (Vivas)

As part of the evaluation process of any assessment item in this course an oral examination (viva) may be conducted. The purpose of the oral examination is to verify the authorship of the material submitted in response to the assessment task. The oral examination will be conducted in accordance with the principles set out in the Oral Examination (viva) Procedure.

In cases where the oral examination reveals the assessment item may not be the student's own work the case will be dealt with under the Student Conduct Rule.

Academic Integrity and Ethical Academic Conduct Policy

All students are required to meet the academic integrity standards of the University. These standards reinforce the importance of integrity and honesty in an academic environment. Academic Integrity policies apply to all students of the University in all modes of study and in all locations.

Please refer to the Academic Integrity and Ethical Academic Conduct Policy

Adverse Circumstances

The University acknowledges the right of students to seek consideration for the impact of allowable adverse circumstances that may affect their performance in assessment item(s).

Applications for special consideration due to adverse circumstances will be made using the online Adverse Circumstances system where:

1. the assessment item is a major assessment item; or
2. the assessment item is a minor assessment item and the Course Co-ordinator has specified in the Course Outline that students may apply the online Adverse Circumstances system;
3. you are requesting a change of placement; or
4. the course has a compulsory attendance requirement.

Before applying you must refer to the Adverse Circumstance Affecting Assessment Items Procedure.

Use of generative artificial intelligence in course assessments

It is critical that any work submitted for assessment is your own original work. Before using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, Microsoft Copilot, etc) in any assessable work you must ensure that such use is in line with the requirements for the course and expectations of your Course Coordinator. **As noted above, GenAI is not to be used in this course.**

Misuse of AI tools may be considered a breach of the University's Student Conduct Rule and could result in disciplinary action.

Artificial Intelligence detection software may be used to review any work you submit. If you have used AI in any way other than has been expressly permitted by your course coordinator, you may be engaging in academic misconduct and be subject to penalties.

For information, refer to:

- Generative AI Tools
- Academic Integrity

Important Policy Information	The Help button in the Canvas Navigation menu contains helpful information for using the Learning Management System. Students should familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures at https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/respect-at-uni/policies-and-procedures that support a safe and respectful environment at the University

This course outline was approved by the Head of School. No alteration of this course outline is permitted without Head of School approval. If a change is approved, students will be notified and an amended course outline will be provided in the same manner as the original.

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