In this subject, students explore textual and visual representations of Pacific Islanders and Aboriginal Australians, with particular focus on women and gender relations. Most of the representations studied were produced by male colonial Europeans and require rigorous critical reading to identify and deconstruct their ethnocentric, racist, colonialist and gendered presumptions. Particular attention is paid to the cultural, political and strategic contexts which they described and in which they were written and read. Theories of race, gender, representation, discourse analysis and postcolonial critique are considered for the light they throw on the texts consulted, and are themselves subject to critical scrutiny.

There are five main themes. In Semester 1: (1) ambivalent images of paradise (early European contacts with Tahiti and Australia; the myth of 'paradise lost'; invidious comparisons); (2) women, Christianity and colonialism. In Semester 2: (3) anthropological representations of Pacific women; (4) challenges to anthropological orthodoxies (especially feminist critiques); (5) representations and self-representations of women in the postcolonial Pacific (literary representations; "custom" and feminism).

**READING GUIDE - SEMESTER 1**

**WEEK 1:** introduction

**Lecture:** Introduction: imag(in)ing others.

**Workshop:** Introduction; name game; general discussion of ethnocentrism, racism and gendering in popular primitivist discourses.

**Handout** "Lured by the Lost Tribes", Age, 26 August 1989, "Saturday Extra", 17.

**WEEK 2:** a general problematic - primitivism, gender, reading

**Lecture:** Choosing appropriate words: cultural description as discourse.
Robert Borofsky and Alan Howard


Nicholas Thomas


**Workshop:**

Reading about natives and women.

- what does "primitivism" mean? What forms does it take and in what ways are they discourses rather than simply ideas or ideologies?

- what strategies does Mani propose for a critical, subversive, against-the-grain reading of colonial (male) texts in order to recuperate "the possibility of a female subjectivity that is shifting, contradictory, inconsistent" (p. 397). What are their pros and cons? What are the politics of her representations - her discourse?

**Core Reading:**

Lata Mani


Marianna Torgovnick

*Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago 1990), 3-41 (see also Notes, pp. 249-60).

**Recommended Reading:**

Edward Said


**WEEKS 3-8: THEME I: AMBIGUOUS IMAGES OF PARADISE**

**WEEK 3:** exchanges, violence, "prostitution" and "possession" in Tahiti

**Lecture:** Tahiti and Europe in the 18th century.

Greg Dening

*Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge 1992).

Douglas L. Oliver


**Film:** Charles Chauvel's *In the Wake of the Bounty* (1933).
Workshop: Contemporary and later representations of first contacts in Tahiti: the politics of nomenclature.

- what indications are there from Robertson's account of the first European visit to Tahiti that Tahitians and Europeans placed different meanings on what happened? Who "possessed" whom? Who exploited whom? Who depended on whom? Why does it matter to an historian?

- compare and contrast the appropriateness in Tahitian terms of Pearson's discourse of political/economic reaction, compared with Dening's focus on Tahitian ritual actions.

Core Reading:


WEEK 4: Tahitian women in early European experience and fantasies

Lecture: Gender and subversion of dominant colonial discourses: reading ambivalence in Beatrice Grimshaw's *In the Strange South Seas*.

Workshop: Early European representations of women in Tahiti.

- what were the relationships between empirical observations, ethnocentrism/racism, and gendering in Robertson's, Banks' and Cook's descriptions of Tahitian women? (See also visual representations from Cook's voyages in the Recommended Reading.)

- what is the significance of the genre (= "kind") of text: contemporary or later?

- do these eighteenth century images bear out Torgovnick's contention that "gender issues always inhabit Western versions of the primitive" (p. 17)?
Core Reading:

Extracts from contemporary texts:


Marianna Torgovnick *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago 1990), 42-72.

Recommended Reading:


WEEK 5: Polynesian women in Western discourses

Lecture: Politics and poetics of ethnographic representations of women’s actions and status in Polynesia.

Workshop: Discourses of gender, rank and sacredness in Polynesia.
- what do we know about gender relations, the meanings of *tapu:noa* and the power of high-ranking women in indigenous Polynesian societies? How?

- how adequate are the concepts used in the texts, especially "pollution"?

- consider the politics of the representation of gender in terms of (a) Polynesian discourses of rank and hierarchy; (b) European/Christian ethnocentrism and androcentrism; (c) anti- and postcolonialism; (d) feminism.

**Core Reading:**


Nicholas Thomas  "Domestic Structures and Polyandry in the Marquesas Islands", in Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (ed.), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Cambridge 1989), 65-83.

**WEEK 6:**

**domesticating the exotic, change as indigenisation**

**Lecture:** Imperial projects and the politics of agency and change.

**Workshop:** Gender relations and transformations of Hawaiian society.

- in what ways might women's lives and social relationships have changed in early postcontact Hawaii? How can we know?

- how useful is Sahlins' theory of the reproduction of cultural categories and their transformation in novel action contexts, given Ralston's history of early postcontact Hawaii and Thomas' critique? How does each author conceive the contribution of women to transforming Hawaiian society?

**Core Reading:**
Caroline Ralston "Changes in the lives of ordinary women in early post-contact Hawaii", in Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (ed.), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Cambridge 1989), 45-64.


**WEEK 7:** stereotypes of Tahiti: passive victims out of time

**Lecture:** Noble savages and fatal impacts.


**Workshop:** "Paradise Lost"? Tahitian women in Western literature and art:

- what images of Tahitian women did Gauguin convey in (a) his autobiographical novel; (b) his art? Why?

- consider the significance of Gauguin's work in terms of Western discourses of art, the primitive and gender as discussed by Torgovnick and Solomon-Godeau. What are the advantages and ethnographic/conceptual limitations of their critiques?

- "Western idealization of the primitive has been as damaging as any other Western version and often conceals more pejorative views" (Torgovnick, p. 122). What does she mean? In what ways are idealisation of the primitive and civilised nostalgia for a lost primitive paradise (the "noble savage"; the "fatal impact"; the "romantic/tragic savage") as demeaning as more negative forms of racism? Compare the tendency of modern Islands and Aboriginal nationalists to romanticise the precontact past.

**Core Reading:**

There are numerous art books in the Library stacks under this G268 call number which reproduce examples of Gauguin's Tahitian paintings, drawings and sculptures.


Marianna Torgovnick  *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago 1990), 85-104.

**WEEK 8: Polynesia and "Melanesia" in Western discourses**

**Lecture:**
From the sublime to the grotesque: Polynesians and "Melanesians" in eighteenth and nineteenth century European discourses.


**Workshop:**
comparing European images of Polynesians and "Melanesians," especially women:

- what were the varied, changing, and at times ambivalent, criteria of description and classification of Pacific Islanders used in these texts? Note changing meanings of the terms "race", "nation", "tribe", "variety", and the increase in emphasis on collective, rather than internal differentiation.

- compare and contrast the casual ethnocentrism of late eighteenth century scientific empiricism (Cook/Forster) with the *a priori* racism of nineteenth and twentieth century evolutionism (d'Urville/Grimshaw). In what ways did contemporary discourses help shape European images of Islanders? Critically consider Jolly's or Thomas' critique.

**Core Reading:**

Jules S.-C. Dumont d'Urville

Jules S.-C. Dumont d'Urville

John Reinold Forster

Beatrice Grimshaw

Margaret Jolly

**Recommended Reading:**

Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith
*The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, vol. 2, *The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772-1775* (Melbourne 1985), esp. 86-101 - compare Hodges' depictions of Maori with those of other Polynesians, and the several versions of images of people encountered at Malakula, Erromango and Tanna (New Hebrides [Vanuatu]) and in New Caledonia.

**WEEKS 9-13: THEME II: WOMEN, CHRISTIANITY AND COLONIALISM**

**WEEK 9:**
**European female images of Islanders**

**Lecture:**
Understanding social, cultural and historical contexts and gender in Aneityum, Vanuatu.

**Bronwen Douglas**

**Workshop:**
Charlotte Geddie on Aneityumese women and men; Beatrice Grimshaw on Fijians and ni-Vanuatu.

- what were Charlotte Geddie's impressions of Aneityumese women and men? How did her impressions of each differ? Why?
- what were her (and her daughter's) conceptions of her role, experiences and relationships with Islanders?

- what were the main tropes and discourses in Charlotte Geddie's text? In what ways were they similar to/different from those of other categories of European encountered so far and from those of the early twentieth century travel writer Beatrice Grimshaw?

Core Reading:

Charlotte Geddie  

Beatrice Grimshaw  

Recommended Reading:

John Inglis  

WEEK 10: male and femal European representations of women compared

Lecture: Race, gender, conversion and context in evangelical missionary discourses.

Catherine Hall  

Nicholas Thomas  

Video:  
*The Transformed Isle* (c. 1907-17).

Workshop: Male and female European discourses on Aneityumese women.

- compare and contrast Charlotte Geddie's images of Aneityumese women with those of John Geddie, John Inglis and the anonymous seaman.
- what can we know from contemporary texts about Aneityumese women's experiences of indigenous and European male behaviour, their understandings of Christianity and their significance in the Christianisation of Aneityum? How?

- compare and contrast the different genres of text and interpretation, focussing on the construction of discourses about widow strangling.

**Core Reading:**


John Inglis *Bible Illustrations from the New Hebrides With Notices of the Progress of the Mission* (London 1890), 33-35, 162-75, 287-90.


**WEEK 11:**

**European female missionaries**

**Lecture:** Missionary wives in Hawaii (Prof. Pat Grimshaw, History, Melbourne University).

**Workshop:** Comparative perspectives on missionary women.

- compare and contrast the varying roles attributed to nineteenth century European missionary women in Hawaii, Aneityum and Papua New Guinea, with particular attention to time, place, denomination, and correlation with contemporary discourses of femininity and domesticity. How significant were women in missionary enterprises?
- how were missionary women constructed by male missionaries? by each other? by feminist historians?

**Core Reading:**

Minnie Billing  
*Sister Minnie's (Billing) Life and Work in Papua* (Sydney 1930), 23-94.

John Inglis  

Patricia Grimshaw  

Diane Langmore  

**Alternative Reading:**

Patricia Grimshaw  

Diane Langmore  
"The Object Lesson of a Civilised, Christian Home", in Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (ed.), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Cambridge 1989), 84-94.

D. Langmore  

**WEEK 12:**  
**white women and colonialism**

**Lecture:**

To be announced (Dr Klaus Neumann, History, Melbourne University).

**Workshop:**

Images of colonial white women.

- what images do these texts present of white women, their attitudes, actions, relationships and significance in Pacific colonial contexts? Identify the agenda of each author.

- what are the discourses and politics of representation involved? What do they imply for the study of intersections of gender, race and class?

**Core Reading:**
John Young  

Claudia Knapman  

Pat Grimshaw  

Margaret Jolly  

Recommended Reading:

Beatrice Grimshaw  
*Isles of Adventure: From Java to New Caledonia but Principally Papua* (Boston 1931), 1-26.

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WEEK 13: **women and Christianity**

**Lecture:**  
Modern Islanders' stories about missionaries and their impact on family life, daily lives and sexuality: a Tubetube case study, Milne Bay Province, PNG.

**Workshop:**  
Women and Christianity in the Pacific.

  - what were/are the attractions and meanings of Christianity to Massim and Solomon Islands women? In what ways does "conversion" mean loss of indigenous culture, or indigenising Christianity?

  - compare and contrast male and female, traditionalist and Christian, Europeans' and Islanders' positions in the texts consulted.

  - in what ways were Keesing's and Young's questions and interpretations shaped by their own liberal, agnostic, anthropological discourses and the particular indigenous discourses they favoured?

**Core Reading:**

Alice Wedega  


Michael W. Young  "Suffer the Children: Wesleyans in the D'Entrecasteaux", in Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (ed.), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Cambridge 1989), 108-34.

Recommended Reading:


**SEMESTER 2**

**WEEKS 1-6: THEME I: ANTHROPOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF PACIFIC WOMEN**

**WEEK 1:** introduction

Lecture: Anthropology, colonialism and the establishment of an academic discipline.


Workshop: Women as objects of study in missionary and early colonial ethnography.

- what images of Melanesian and Samoan women did George Brown sketch in his ethnology? What words and discourse did he use to construct them? Where did his information come from? Compare Brown's representations of women with Geddie's and Seligmann's.

- what were the intellectual aims of Seligmann's expedition to British New Guinea? Who were the informants/authoritative persons for the information recorded? Whose discourse was it?

**Core Reading:**
George Brown  *Melanesians and Polynesians: their Life-Histories Described and Compared* (London 1910), v-vii, 31-49 [George Brown, missionary in Samoa, founder of the Methodist mission in Papua New Guinea, also wrote an autobiographical account of his missionary activities; in it he referred to particular incidents, particular male Islanders, but almost never to women; he was a valued correspondent of the anthropologists Tylor and Frazer].


**WEEK 2:**  
Malinowski, the Trobriands and women

**Lecture:**  
Malinowski and the invention of fieldwork.

**Video:**  

**Workshop:**  
Malinowski and women: as ethnographer and man.
- how did Malinowski establish/assert his authority? In what ways was his study "scientific“? primitivist?
- how did Malinowski justify his focus on sexuality? What are the problems with his project and his gaze?
- what was the significance of women in his ethnography? Why?
- what relationships between Malinowski as scientist and man were suggested in *Sexual Life* compared with the diary? Why?

**Introductory Reading** (essential for non-Anthropology students, but skim the case studies):


**Core Reading:**


Marianna Torgovnick  *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago 1990), 3-11, 227-35.

**WEEK 3:**  
**Margaret Mead, American anthropologist**

**Lecture:**  
Pacific women as mothers, sisters, wives (Dr Helen Kavapalu, Melbourne University).

**Workshop:**  
Margaret Mead's work on Sex and Temperament: whose project?
- what did Mead mean by "culture"? Why?
- how did she establish her own authority as an ethnographer?
- was her representation of women essentialist? In what ways? Why?

**Core Reading:**

*Margaret Mead*  
*Coming of Age in Samoa: a Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies* (various editions, Penguin 1943 [1928]), ch. 1 (pp. 9-18), ch. 7 (pp. 74-91), Appendices 2, 3, 5 (pp. 206-19, 223-33).

*Margaret Mead*  

*G.W. Stocking*  

**WEEK 4:**  
**the anthropological debate about Margaret Mead**

**Lecture:**  
Women ethnographers.

**Video:**  
*Margaret Mead and Samoa* (1988).

**Workshop:**  
the Mead/Freeman controversy: nature/nurture and male/female oppositions.
- what were Derek Freeman's major criticisms of Mead's interpretation of Samoan culture and Samoan female sexuality? Why?

- what were the major responses to Freeman? Why so much passion?

- was the controversy mainly about Samoa?

Core Reading:

Derek Freeman  

Marilyn Strathern  

Annette B. Weiner  

*Albert Wendt  
"Three Faces of Samoa: Mead's, Freeman's and Wendt's",  

Recommended Reading:

Lowell D. Holmes  

WEEK 5: women in PNG Highlands anthropology

Lecture: Anthropology and the conceptualisation of equality and hierarchy in Melanesia.


Workshop: Women in Papua New Guinea Highlands anthropology: reading images of Mendi women and the "sexual antagonism" literature.

- compare and contrast the representations of female-male relations and the status of Mendi women by Ryan, Lederman and in the video, with particular attention to gender, discourse and chronology.
- whose construction was "sexual antagonism"? Why? What did the concept, or its equivalent, signify in Meggitt's classification of Highlands societies? How, if at all, was it applied/applicable to the Mendi?

Core Reading (see MAP in handbook):

The Mendi (video).


Recommended Reading:


WEEK 6: women as objects, subjects, persons

Lecture: The problem of bias, female ethnography and changes in perspectives on Highlands ethnography.

Workshop: Female agency and gender in Melanesian anthropology.

- what similarities and differences in interpretation and experience of female-male relations and the status of indigenous women are there in this week's readings compared with last? Why? In what ways are the differences theoretical, cultural, historical, political, gendered?

- what are female agency and subjectivity? How can they be identified? Do they matter? Why were they not an issue in earlier ethnographies?

Core Reading:

Roger M. Keesing  "Ta'a geni: Women's Perspectives on Kwaio Society", in Marilyn Strathern (ed.), *Dealing with Inequality: Analysing Gender Relations in Melanesia and Beyond* (Cambridge 1987), 33-62.


Recommended Reading:


WEEKS 7-10: THEME II: CHALLENGES TO ANTHROPOLOGICAL ORTHODOXIES

WEEK 7:  feminist anthropology

Lecture:  Feminist anthropology.

Workshop:  Feminism and the essential woman.

- why has the issue of female status been of such absorbing interest to anthropology (and anthropology so interesting to feminism)?

- compare and contrast Macintyre's and Weiner's representations of the power of different Massim women? Were their arguments ethnocentric? essentialist? (cf. Malinowski)?

Core Reading:


Henrietta L. Moore  *Feminism and Anthropology* (Oxford 1988), 1-41 (including footnotes).

Recommended Reading:


WEEK 8: anthropology and feminism

Lecture: Anticolonial and postcolonial critiques of anthropology: some keywords.

Video: Anthropology on Trial (1983).

Workshop: Feminist critiques of anthropology: how feminist? how anthropological?

- what issues have feminists seen as central to their theoretical and substantive interests? What are the differences between an anthropology of women, feminist anthropology and anthropology of gender?

- what are the varying meanings of difference (cultural, gender, racial and class) to feminists and feminist anthropologists? How have intersections between different differences over time been conceived? Compare Macintyre's argument for a focus on commonalities.

Core Reading:


Henrietta L. Moore  Feminism and Anthropology (Oxford 1988), 186-98

Recommended Reading:


WEEK 9: "invention" of culture and the limits of liberal humanist discourse

Lecture: Critique of male postmodernist critiques of anthropology.

Workshop: Constructing culture: universal values, authority and the Guam abortion debate.

- try to disentangle the various discourses and claims to authority in the contest over the anti-abortion bill in Guam.

- how were the tropes of culture, identity, Catholic, self-determination, female agency, rights, citizen and liberty variously deployed in the actual debate and in the texts?

- consider the politics and moralities of tension between (ethnocentric?) humanism and (nihilistic?) cultural relativism.

- whose culture? When and for what? Is "authenticity" an issue? For whom?

Core Reading:

Vicente Diaz "Pious Sites: Chamorro Culture at the Crossroads of Spanish Catholicism and American Liberalism", in Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (ed.), *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Raleigh 1993), 312-339.


Recommended Reading:

WEEKS 10-13: THEME III: WOMEN IN THE "POSTCOLONIAL" PACIFIC: LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS, "CUSTOM" AND FEMINISM

WEEK 10: women in modern male Pacific literature

Lecture: Women and modernisation.


Workshop: Male representations of women in modern Pacific literature.

- how were women variously represented by these male Papua New Guinean and (New Zealand educated) Samoan authors? How did they treat sexual and gender relations in the context of tensions between custom and modernity?

- in what ways do these fictional representations contradict/confirm ethnographic representations of female-male relations in Papua New Guinea and Samoa?

Core Reading:

*Toby Waim Kagl Extract from Kallan, in Ganga Powell (comp.), Through Melanesian Eyes: an Anthology of Papua New Guinean Writing (South Melbourne 1987), 35-44 [set in Simbu, PNG Highlands].

*Jim Baital Tali, in Mike Greicus (ed.), Three Short Novels from Papua New Guinea (Auckland 1976), 87-140 [the novel moved between a village setting in the Siassi Islands and Port Moresby and Rabaul].

*Albert Wendt "A Talent", in The Birth and Death of the Miracle Man: a Collection of Short Stories (Harmondsworth 1987), 11-30 [the story moved between village and urban settings in Samoa].

WEEK 11: modern Pacific women's fiction

Lecture: Pacific women's voices: women's organisations, women's writings.

Workshop: Modern women's fictional writings in the Pacific.
- compare and contrast the themes and discourses of the Maori short stories by Patricia Grace and Keri Hulme (indigenous writers in a modern Western nation), Samoan Apelu Aiavao's short story (a writer - gender unclear to me - in an independent, postcolonial nation), and the extract from Vilsoni Hereniko's recent postmodernist play, based on Teresia Teaiwa's story (Hereniko is a male Polynesian playwright; Teaiwa a female Afro-American/Micronesian postgraduate student at the University of California, who has mostly lived in Fiji).

- how are these texts different from/similar to the male fictional writings read last week, in terms of themes and representations of women, gender relations and custom/ modernity? Why?

- were these distinctively women's voices?

**Core Reading:**


Keri Hulme  "While My Guitar Gently Sings", in *Te Kaihau = the Windeater* (St Lucia 1986), 91-117.

**WEEK 12:** Melanesian women, "custom", development and domestic violence

**Lecture:** The domestic violence debate.

**Workshop:** Women's movements, "custom", "development", and domestic violence in postcolonial Melanesia.

- what relationships were there between "custom" (inherited or constructed? essential or innovating?) and "development" in Sexton's representation of the *wok meri* movement? Compare the status and agency attributed to these Eastern Highlands women with the Enga women's self-accounts in Kyakas and Weissner.
- what varied and ambivalent attitudes towards "custom", "development", domesticity, violence were suggested in the modern Melanesian women's writings sampled in the handbook? What were the important issues for these educated women compared with the PNG Highlands village women described by Sexton and Kyakas and Weissner? Why?

Core Reading:


Melanesian Women's Writings (in publication order):


Recommended Reading:


**WEEK 13:** Melanesian women, nationalism and feminism

**Discussion:** History, anthropology and the study of gender in the Pacific.

**Video:** *The Fantastic Invasion.*

**Workshop:** Ni-Vanuatu women's changing encounters with race, nationalism, gender, feminisms, and humanisms.

- what indications are there in these texts of changes since independence in 1980 in the things that mattered to ni-Vanuatu women: from anticolonialist nationalism to a more differentiated critique of all kinds of oppression, in terms of gender and class, as well as race.

- in what ways might this transformation involve strategic appropriation and indigenisation in local struggles of feminist and human rights discourses, which had previously been rejected on nationalist and cultural grounds?

**Core Reading:**


**Melanesian Women's Writings (in publication order):**


Vanuatu Nasonal Kaonsel Blong Ol Woman  
*Who Will Carry the Bag?* (Port Vila 1990), 18, 23, 30, 40, 44, 46, 53.

Grace Mera Molisa  

**Recommended Reading:**

Diane Johnson  