

“Australia – New Country, Old History”
2005 Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad

Australian Media and Indigenous Affairs

Yanmin Yu, Ph. D.

Associate Professor & Chair

Department of Mass Communication

University of Bridgeport

Bridgeport, CT 06604

USA

Summary

While the first European settlement was not established in Australia until 1788, Australia has been inhabited by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for an estimated 60,000 years. For many people in Australia, however, Australian history is just over 200 years old. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' lives, their history, culture, beliefs, customs, and current situation are little known to many and they are not adequately or fairly presented in the media either.

This curriculum unit – Australian Media and Indigenous Affairs -- introduces students to the Australian media and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. In particular it explores the relationship between the media and Indigenous people through media's coverage of Indigenous people and their affairs. The course also examines Indigenous people's current status, Australian government policies towards them, as well as media's portrayal of Indigenous people and the impact of the portrayal on the relationship between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people.

Grade Level

This Curriculum Project is intended to be used by university instructors as a seminar course for freshmen to seniors.

Background

Professors who teach international journalism, media and social issues or related courses may find the material useful. The author of this curriculum project has taught international journalism which surveys media systems and journalistic practice around the world. An examination of Australian media and their coverage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will broaden students' views of Australian media and assist them in understanding the role media play in addressing social issues. This curriculum project can be used as a stand-alone course – Australian Media and Indigenous Affairs, as a special topic course – Media, Society, and Race Relations, or as a segment of a course on International Journalism (Australian Journalism and Indigenous People and Their Affairs).

The course will include the following units. Each unit can be either covered extensively with depth for several sessions or condensed into one to two sessions depending on time availability.

- Unit One: Overview of Australian Media
- Unit Two: Indigenous People in Australia
- Unit Three: Australia's Media Coverage of Indigenous Issues
- Unit Four: Government's Role
- Unit Five: Journalistic Education

The instructor's role is to present the information initially and facilitate discussions thereafter. Students' participation is crucial.

Rationale

The author of this curriculum project teaches mass media, news reporting and news writing, media law, intercultural communication as well as international journalism. To learn and then to be able to teach about media communication in a global context has always been an interest of this author. The Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Program in Australia with the help of Australian-American Fulbright Commission has made it possible for me to further

understand Australia, Australian people (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), and Australian media. To study Australian media from the aspect of their reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and media's role in covering Indigenous affairs will enrich the global media studies program where understanding of Australian media has traditionally been weak due possibly to Australia's geographical location and/or its political visibility on world stage.

Course Objectives

To examine the role Australian media play in covering Indigenous people and their affairs.

To understand the Indigenous people, their history, culture, and current situation.

To study the role the Australian government plays in addressing Indigenous issues.

To analyze the relationship between the Australian media and Indigenous people.

To discuss how journalists can better report on Indigenous issues.

COURSE OUTLINES

Part I. INTRODUCTION

This course introduces students to the Australian media and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. In particular it explores the relationship between the media and Indigenous people through media's coverage of Indigenous people and their affairs. The course also examines indigenous people's current status, Australian government policies towards them, as well as media's portrayal of Indigenous people.

Part II. COURSE MATERIALS

Unit One: Overview of Australian Media

Australia has a well developed media system in the world. It publishes a large number of newspapers and magazines. On a per capital basis, Australia has one of the highest newspaper and magazine circulations in the world.

Print Media

The total number of daily newspapers Australia has is 49. Media analysts distinguish between capital-city or metropolitan dailies and dailies in smaller population centers (referred to as regional newspapers). Ten metropolitan and two national dailies are published in the capital cities of the six states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania) and two territories (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory). Six of those dailies are published in Sydney and Melbourne, the two largest population centers in Australia (Quinn, 2004).

While the number of print media is large for a small population of 20 million by 2005's estimate, ownership of the media is highly concentrated. News Limited and the Fairfax Group are the largest newspaper publishers and ACP the largest magazine publisher. News Ltd. controls almost 68% of the capital-city and national newspaper market by circulation, 76% of the Sunday newspaper market, 47% of the suburban newspaper market, and 23% of the regional newspaper market. Fairfax Group controls about 20% of the metropolitan and national daily newspaper publishing, runs three regional dailies and a number of ancillary country newspapers, and controls about 50% of the suburban circulation in Sydney and Melbourne (Quinn, 2004, www.cia.gov).

Electronic Media

Australia has three nationally available commercial television networks and two national public broadcasters, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).

ABC as a prominent national and non-commercial broadcaster has shared its history and development with the growth of Australia as a nation. From its beginnings during the Depression years, ABC has grown into Australia's largest broadcaster, entertainment and marketing organization. It has become an important part of Australia's cultural heritage, fostering the arts and reflecting the nation's cultural diversity (www.abc.com.au).

While there is no provision in either the federal constitution or any of the state constitutions that explicitly guarantees freedom of speech, Australian media by and large do enjoy freedom of the press. However, with fierce competition and growing concentration in ownership, Australian media have become business oriented and profit-driven with an increasing amount of entertainment and decreasing amount of hard news.

Unit Two: Indigenous People in Australia

Indigenous people in Australia include both Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. About 2.2% of Australians identifies themselves as Indigenous (Indigenous Australians: The Facts. www.diversityatwork.com.au).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Indigenous people in Australia may have numbered as many as a million in 1788 but had dwindled to 93,333 in 1901. Aborigines were forced off their land after British and other European settlers began arriving in 1788 and then brutally suppressed and many were killed. The latest Australian census reports the Indigenous population as 427,094 among an overall population of more than 20 million (Perlez, 2004).

Indigenous people in Australia live a marginalized, Third World life in a First World country. Specifically, here are some statistics:

The life expectancy level of Indigenous people is 20-21 years less than the general population.

Indigenous people are more than four times as likely to die as non-Indigenous people if younger than 30, and seven times more likely to die if over 30.

Mortality level of Indigenous people is more than three to five times higher than that for other Australian childhood.

The unemployment rate for Indigenous people is 22% and for the general populations it is 5.1%.

Indigenous peoples are 17.3 times more likely to be arrested; 14.7 times more likely to be imprisoned; and 16.5 times more likely to die in custody than non-Indigenous Australians.

30% of Indigenous people own their home compared to 70% of non-Indigenous Australians.

13.6% of Indigenous people have tertiary degrees, compared with 34.4% of all Australians.

Only 20% of Indigenous students meet reading standards, and fewer than 30% meet writing standards.

Indigenous women are 50 times more likely to endure domestic violence than non-Indigenous women in Australia.

(Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australia Now – Australia Social Trends 2002: Health and Morbidity: Mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* www.abs.gov.au, 2005; www.cia.gov/cia/publicactions/factbook, 2005; "Indigenous Australians: The Facts" www.diversityatwork.com.au, 2004; Mercer, BBC News, 2004; Perlez, 2004; Behrendt, *Achieving Social Justice*, 2003; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, *Indigenous Australians Today*, 1999; Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner, *Face the Facts*, 1997).

The dire living condition of the Indigenous people in a country where the standard of living for the majority is that of a First World is disgraceful to Australia and Australians. Aborigines may well be the major thorn in Australia's conscience. Segregated from the mainstream of Australian socioeconomic life, Indigenous people in Australia are largely unable to realize the wealth and opportunity that Australia has promised.

Unit Three: Australia's Media Coverage of Indigenous Issues

Generally there is not much media coverage on Indigenous people and their affairs in Australia's mainstream media. When there is, it is usually the negative stereotypical images of the Indigenous people. Indigenous people are more likely to be portrayed as the following:

- Criminals
- Rioter
- Wife beaters
- Drug users
- Petrol sniffers
- Welfare dependents
- School dropouts
- Patch burners
- Lazy
- Dirty
- Violent
- Live in drug-infested slum
- Don't want to work
- Cannot hold a job
- Helpless
- Hopeless

When reporting on Indigenous people, media stories tend to focus on crisis, conflicts, and tragedies and stories how Indigenous people are overrepresented in the jail population and underrepresented in school population. Some problems are real, notwithstanding the causes and roots of those problems; others are exaggerations with little foundation. Those negative images may be a result of ignorance or may be because of prejudice and bias.

It is fair to say that in general successful Indigenous people are underrepresented, problems are overrepresented, and Indigenous people by and large are misrepresented in Australian media.

The case in Redfern, Sydney, known as "the Block," in February 2004 presents an example. On February 14, 2004 Thomas (TJ) Hickey, a 17-year-old Aboriginal teenager rode his BMX bicycle from his aunt Virginia's home, where he was living, to visit his mother, who had arrived in Sydney on Friday from Walgett, a small town in rural New South Wales. After seeing his mother, Thomas encountered the police. He then cycled away at high speed. A short time later the boy came off his bicycle at the rear of the high-rise Turanga public housing commission tower. Thomas was impaled through the chest and neck after somehow landing on his back on a blunt metal fence and later died in the hospital.

While the exact nature of the incident is being contested in court, Redfern residents, believing police were responsible for Thomas's death, took to the street.

The police have denied ever chasing Thomas, although they admit seeing him shortly before the fatal crash. In a press conference held on Sunday, Inspector Bob Emery claimed that Thomas "saw the police and [the] police saw him, but because he wasn't a person of interest to them they continued on their patrols" (Birch, "Overland Redfern" 2005; Kelly, 2004).

It is not surprising that Thomas would flee when he saw the police. In an environment of extreme poverty and social deprivation, every Aboriginal youth in Redfern has grown up experiencing police harassment and provocation (Birch, 2005; Kelly, 2004).

Media had a field day with the incident when death (of Hickey), violence (against Redfern residents and the police), and conflict (between Redfern residents and the police and between whites and Aborigines in general) were the major ingredients. As Professor Tony Birch points out, "The media reacted with a typically orchestrated frenzy, momentarily transferring the chaos of Baghdad to the 'war zone' of Redfern, adding an ironic twist to 'think globally, act locally' sloganeering."

Media's coverage of the Incident further polarized and antagonized Aborigines and white Australians with Aborigines enraged and frustrated and white Australians disgusted and alienated. "In the days after the riot media headlines and editorial commentaries condemned Redfern to the singular status of a drug-infested slum, absent of any social function beyond performing the role of the Other within the shadow of the corporately sanctified 'globally informed and vibrant metropolis' that is the city of Sydney in 2004." Although some media commentators labeled the Redfern images a new and "frightening" instance of an assault on Australian "values," Birch believes there is nothing to sustain this hyperbole (Birch, "Overland Redfern" 2005).

There are a number of factors contributing to the negative portrayal of Indigenous people.

Lack of understanding of Indigenous people by journalists is one of them. Many Australian journalists are not well-versed in Indigenous affairs. Lack of desire to learn is another factor. Journalists do not feel the pressure or need to learn about Indigenous people and their affairs. Perpetually competing for readers and viewers is yet another reason. Many journalists believe they are compelled to focus on conflict and violence.

Ignorance and Misunderstanding

The gap between white Australians and Indigenous Australians in understanding as well as wealth is wide and the tension is genuine. Historically, Indigenous Australians were suppressed, chased away from their land, and killed when European settlers arrived. Although racism does exist, the more wide spread problem is ignorance among white Australians about Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and their affairs in Australia. Many people have little knowledge or understanding of the issues of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. The majority of Australians goes through their lives never meeting an Indigenous person, let alone knowing someone personally.

Former Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke (1983-1991) once said to the reporter from *The Australian*, "When I listen to some people and talk to some people, I'm staggered by the degree of ignorance" (Harvey, Claire. "Whites Ignorant," January 30, 2001).

The "out of sight, out of mind" mentality permeates among white Australians. As Hugh Mackay, a social researcher, points out, "Aborigines are effectively off the white agenda" (Perlez, 2004). And the media are not doing an adequate job in informing the public about Indigenous people, their history, culture, and the deprived conditions they are in today.

The public's ignorance may be a result of lack of interest, little learning in school about Indigenous people, or government policies (especially the ones implemented by the current Howard's Administration); and it may also be a result of media's coverage (either lack of it or a distorted version of it) of Indigenous people and their affairs since most people in Australia obtain their information regarding Indigenous people from the media alone. Many journalists themselves are not well-educated on Indigenous Australians and their lives either, and consequently they convey to the public a less than accurate picture of Indigenous people. As Bud White argues, "Many of the myths and misperceptions that persist among non-Aboriginal people are perpetuated by no communication, poor communication or one-sided communication" (1998).

Therefore, it is not just the public that is ignorant of Indigenous issues; media professionals do not have a clear understanding of Indigenous issues either. According to Michelle Tuahine, Series Producer/Presenter of ABC TV's Indigenous Programs Unit, the media's stereotyping of Indigenous Australians is largely due to misunderstanding and ignorance. Much of the media's stereotyping of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people can be put down to a great void of understanding about indigenous issues in media organizations; this lack of understanding is not helped by the simple fact that there are so few Aboriginal people working in the Australian media (www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/media_guide).

Prejudice and Bias

Ignorance is only part of the problem; racial prejudice can still be found and in some cases it is deep-rooted. Examples of prejudicial portrayals of Indigenous people include the following:

1. Cartoon from the *Cairns Post* – the caption reads “Do you feel we should integrate into a mainstream, multicultural Australia apropos economic, societal and cultural opportunities and rights ... or should we just go on taking whitey's hand outs?”

Message/myth – Aborigines are lazy and don't want to work.

Fact: The Aboriginal community suffers a far higher rate of unemployment, currently at 20% on average compared with 5.1% of the general population. About 30% of the Aborigines live in the harsh desert environment of central Australia where jobs are difficult to come by.

2. Land grabs – From the *Cairns Post*. FNQ Blacks lay claim to 7,000 square kilometers.

Message/myth – land claims by Aborigines are illegitimate and inflated.

Fact: Prior to the Mabo decision in 1992, Aboriginal people had no rights to traditional lands except those given by government under limited legislation. Since the Mabo decision, Aboriginal peoples have not been greedily grabbing land. The Mabo decision will only benefit those Aborigines who can prove a continual association with the land claimed. The native title legislation protects all non Indigenous titles to land. The land this story refers to belongs to the crown and the land grab referred to is the traditional land of the Yindinji people (Dodson, 1997).

3. Plight of Aborigines – worsened (*Northern Territory News*) claims that 3,000 organizations claiming to represent Aboriginal interest in Australia run at a cost which “is anybody's guess although one thing is certain, it runs into billions of dollars.”

Message/myth – Black Australia is awash with money, too much money.

Fact: In 1994, Commonwealth expenditure on indigenous health was only 1.26% of the total expenditures even though the indigenous population comprises 1.6% of the total population then (Dodson, 1997).

4. Aboriginal policy was for their own good (*West Australia*)

Message/myth – The policies (taking children away from their parents) were for the wellbeing of Indigenous people.

Fact: This shocker refers to the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families by the Australian government. (This practice started in 1885 and lasted till 1969.) This policy, officially abandoned in the late 1960s, aimed to assimilate children of “mixed” Aboriginal blood into the white community. The goal was to segregate the full blood Aboriginal race with the view that they would eventually die out. The removal policies amounted to genocide of the Aboriginal race. The on-going impact of this dark and terrible time in Australian's history is realized by many in the Aboriginal community. The 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal

deaths in custody reported that 43 of the 99 people whose deaths were investigated had been separated from their parents as children.

As Tony Birch points out, since mid-1990s, real change has been limited, with many young indigenous people being damaged, not only by immediate family and community disadvantage, but also by deeply engrained forces of racism located in both the contemporary socio-political landscape in Australia and its historical landscapes of violence (“Beneath Clouds” working paper, 2005).

Conveniently assuming that Indigenous people are shy and do not want to be contacted, many white Australians comfort themselves with the belief that Indigenous people do not want to be helped.

Even the most liberal-minded amongst non-indigenous Australians continue to look at “fair-skinned” Indigenous people with *natural* curiosity (and sometimes with disbelief, particularly when they may have paid for an indigenous scholar to ‘perform’ at a university conference) (Birch, “Beneath Clouds” working paper, 2005).

Other more extreme right wing opinions include that there is too much media coverage and that the media is biased, one-sided (pro-Aborigines), treacherous, and disloyal to white Australians. The *Australian News Commentary* referred the “Stolen Generation” report as furor (January 11, 2001).

Birch notes that right-wing populist responses to Redfern were expressed with more directness than the “grave concerns” of the more liberal-minded. For instance, the New South Wales Opposition leader, John Brogden, made his intentions clear when he claimed on the morning after the Redfern riot that “bulldozers should flatten the area known as The Block,” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, February 16, 2004). Birch observes that this rhetoric was supported by the democracy feigning ‘Your Say’ pages of the tabloid press, suggesting some very hard medicine that would save the ‘Australian way of life’ through the aid of rubber bullets and a shoot to kill policy (*Herald Sun*, 18 February 2004). Although some of the broadsheet media coverage was not so openly hostile toward the Redfern community they in fact displayed a more insidious form of racism, be it delivered with subtlety, through the trope of benevolence (Birch, “Overland Redfern” working paper, 2005).

Unit Four: Government’s Role

The Australian government has not done much in alleviating Indigenous Australians’ impoverishment. In fact the current conservative government headed by John Howard of the Liberal Party has retreated from the progress made by the previous administration since 1996 when the Coalition Government won the election and gained control of the government (and it was re-elected in 1999, 2001, and 2004). “Australian silence” is encouraged in part by the government’s inaction.

To really help Indigenous Australians move out of poverty, one needs to understand the Indigenous people and their suffering today. To understand the indigenous people and their suffering today, one needs to understand their history and the colonial history of Australia in particular. The Australian’s history is marked by violence against Indigenous people and deep-rooted racism. European settlers drove Indigenous people away from their land, deprived them of their natural resources, decimated tribes after tribes, took children away from their families, and dispossessed them of their cultural identity and human dignity. Australian government has to recognize that the colonial legacy has left a devastating economical, social, cultural, and psychological impact on Indigenous people and that the current problems Indigenous Australians face have roots in history. Australia needs to confront itself with its ugly past, come to terms with the violence it committed against the Indigenous people, and apologize for its atrocities. While the economic disadvantages

suffered by Indigenous Australians must be addressed, many scholars of Indigenous rights believe a treaty or document in which white Australians acknowledge responsibility for past injustices and Aboriginal Australians accept that apology is the key. Until that is done, Indigenous people's future will not be fundamentally improved.

The Howard government, however, refuses the treaty proposal. The approach the government has taken is "forget the past; let's move on." Unfortunately, Australia cannot move on with some 400,000 people living in poverty.

United Nations has also been critical of Australian's government track record. According to *Wikinews*, the Australian government has been keeping quiet about a UN committee's repeated criticism of its record on race issues. A report issued by the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination in March 2005 has not received comment from the Australian government in the media, and domestic media coverage has been scant, as reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and confirmed by a search of news search engine news.google.com (*Wikinews*, "Australia Silent on UN Racism Committee condemnation," March 28, 2005).

The UN report on Elimination of Racial Discrimination contained a large number of serious criticisms, and a reminder that the Convention prohibits direct as well as indirect discrimination. Australia was asked to report back on progress on a number of items within one year.

The criticisms include the following:

That there was nothing to stop racially discriminative Commonwealth laws.

Proposed reforms to Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) that may limit its independence and hinder its effectiveness at monitoring Australia's compliance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), an elected body of indigenous representatives, the main policy-making body in Aboriginal affairs.

A lack of legislation criminalizing serious acts or incitement of racial hatred, in the Commonwealth, the State of Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

That no cases of racial discrimination as distinct from racial hatred have been successfully litigated in the Federal courts since 2001.

Reversal since 1998 of progress made under 1993's Native Title Act and Mabo case with new legal certainty for government and third parties provided at the expense of indigenous title.

Diverging perceptions between governmental authorities and indigenous peoples and others on the compatibility of the 1998 amendments to the Native Title Act with the Convention.

That proof of continuous observance and acknowledgement of the laws and customs of indigenous peoples since the British acquisition of sovereignty over Australia is required to establish native title.

Very poor conditions of employment, housing, health, education and income for indigenous Australians, compared with non-indigenous.

Mandatory sentencing in Western Australia, which disproportionately impacts indigenous Australians.

The "striking over-representation" of indigenous people in prison, and dying in custody.

That indigenous women are the fastest growing prison population.

That the Federal Government has rejected most of the recommendations adopted by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation given in 2000.

Unit Five: Journalistic Education

Journalists are public eyes, through which they learn about the world around them. If a tree fell in a forest and no journalist was there to report it, did the tree fall? It might as well that the tree did not fall. If a journalist did report on the falling of a tree without knowing why it fell, but went ahead to speculate the causes, the public would take what was presented to them. The power of journalists is undeniable. With media conglomerates becoming more consolidated, media voices become less diverse. With media companies becoming more entertainment oriented, hard news become a rare commodity. In the case of reporting on Indigenous people and their affairs, there are additional problems, one of which is the lack of journalistic education on Indigenous people and their issues.

Most journalists in Australia do not have a sufficient understanding of Indigenous people, their history, their culture, their way of living, and their sufferings, and journalists are not trained to cover Indigenous affairs adequately. As a result, Indigenous issues remain a blind spot in Australian journalism.

The Royal Commission was told by a journalist that "Racial stereotyping and racism in the media is institutional, not individual. That is, it results from news values, editorial policies from routines of news gathering that are not in themselves raciest or consciously prejudicial. It results from the fact that most news stories are already written before an individual journalist is assigned to them, even before the event takes place. A story featuring Aboriginals is simply more likely to be covered, or more likely to survive sub-editorial revision or spiking, if it fits existing definitions of the situation" (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991, National Report, 5 Volumes, Commission E. Johnston, AGPS, Canberra).

However, a large number of journalists believe that there are few extremely racist reporters, but many, many ignorant ones. It is the responsibility of the industry to do something about that ignorance.

Compared to some 30 and 40 years ago when coverage on Indigenous people amounted to zero, Australian's media today are at least paying attention to Indigenous people and their issues. However, most of the media cover Indigenous issues more for business concerns than social concerns. Media are run as commercial enterprises. As such, subscription figures and programs ratings are the determining factors for media to decide what to publish or broadcast. The motto that "The worse the story, the better the ratings" is religiously followed. Publishers and broadcasters believe that Indigenous issues have certain appeals to certain segments of the population for different reasons. Some may be sympathetic to Indigenous people; some truly care about Indigenous people, so they want to know what is happening to the Indigenous people; some read the miserable stories about Indigenous people to confirm that they are better.

One example that illustrates how business comes first is a media company called *Imparja*. *Imparja* is a television station which started in 1988. It is a private, fully commercial television company registered in the Northern Territory. It is totally owned and controlled by Northern Territory and South Australian Aboriginal shareholders with a white Australian as its CEO and majority of its employees being white. Its vision is to deliver information and communication services to the community, while promoting indigenous culture and values.

As of July 2005, one program *Yamba*, a children's program, is fully and originally produced by *Imparja*. A brief news and weather report is also provided by *Imparja*. Other than that, *Imparja* purchases much of its programming from the Nine and Ten Networks. During July

2005, American programs such as *Desperate Housewives* and *24*, a far cry of indigenous program, were shown on Imparja's prime time. So much for promoting Aboriginal culture and values.

To inform the public adequately, responsibly, accurately, and objectively with sensitivity and persistence about Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander and their affairs, media should not just consider profits as their priority. The problems Indigenous Australians face cannot be solved by Indigenous people alone. They need government policies. But government policies to improve Indigenous Australians' lives would not be supported by the public if the public remains ignorant of Indigenous issues. The public will not overcome its ignorance if the media keep misrepresenting the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in a stereotypical way. It takes the whole nation to help the Indigenous communities -- the government, the public, the media, as well as Indigenous people themselves.

For journalists, adequate journalistic education is the key to understanding Indigenous people and to a balanced and objective reporting on Indigenous people. The Royal Commission has recommended that "courses contain a significant component relating to Aboriginal affairs thereby reflecting the social context in which journalists work" (Plater, 1993).

Instead of focusing only on crimes, violence, petrol-sniffing, unemployment, journalists should report on Indigenous people as an integral part of Australia, a group of people who have rights, values, views, a history of injustice, their share of problems, and their struggle for fairness.

Many media or journalist associations establish ethical standards for journalists covering indigenous issues. Typical ones would include the following:

Publishers and broadcasters should not distribute material that is likely to incite or perpetuate hatred against, severely ridicule or incite serious contempt for, a person or group based on the reason that the person is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or the group is composed of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

Broadcasters and publishers should avoid prejudicial references to, or overemphasis of a person who is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Media reports about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander should respect the customs of that person and his or her people.

A positive emphasis and balanced approach is expected. Reporting should report the causes and not simply symptoms of problems that exist. Reporting that implies a community has a problem because the community is made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is an example of reporting that should be avoided (Plater, 1993; Roberts, 1994).

Institutional watchdogs such as the Australian Broadcasting Authority and the Australian Press Council play a role in policing these guidelines.

Part III. STUDENT ASSESSMENT (SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS FOR THE COURSE)

Students can be assessed by term papers, term projects, and class discussions.

Class Discussion

For each class there should be ample time for discussion.

Students will raise many questions. The instructor can answer some of them if he/she knows the answers. More importantly, the instructor should guide the students and explore with them the issues.

The instructor can also ask questions to challenge students.

Term Paper: Media Study

Study one particular media and examine how it has covered Indigenous people and their affairs and write a term paper on Australian media and their role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' affairs. Media to be selected can include the following:

ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation)

Sydney Morning Herald

The Australian

Imparja (meaning footprints)

CAAMA (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association)

Term Project: Issue Analysis

Issues that can be analyzed include the following:

Thomas (TJ) Hickey's death

Redfern "riot"

Mabo case

"Bring them home"/"The lost generation"

Stereotypical images in the media

Successful stories of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders

Part IV. SUGGESTED READINGS

Behrendt, Larissa. *Achieving Social Justice: Indigenous Rights and Australia's Future*. Sydney, Australia: The Federation Press, 2003.

Cowlshaw, Gillian. *Blackfellas Whitefellas and the Hidden Injuries of Race*. Victoria: Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

De Beer, Arnold S. and Merrill, John C. *Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media System*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2004.

Griffiths, Tony. *Beautiful Lies: Australia from Menzies to Howard*. South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2005.

Lyons, Martyn and Russell, Penny. (eds.). *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*. Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press, 2005.

Moreton-Robinson. (eds.). *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Canberra: Australia: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004.

Muecke, Stephen. *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*. Perth, Australia: API Network, 2005.

Part V. REFERENCES

Birch, Tony. "Overland Redfern." (Working paper to be published in 2005).

Birch, Tony. "Surveillance, Identity and Historical Memory in Ivan Sen's *Beneath Clouds*." (Working paper to be published in 2005).

Dodson, Michael. "Democracy, the Media and Human Rights." Speech delivered in Manila, Philippines, January 22, 1997.

Harvey, Claire. "Whites Ignorant," *The Australian* January 30, 2001.

Kelly, Rick. "The Death of "TJ" Hickey—The Social and Economic Circumstances," February 17, 2004. Retrieved from www.wsws.org/article/2004.

Mercer, Phil. "Australia's Lost Generation," BBC News. February 16, 2004.

Perlez, Jane. "Aborigines Say Australia Pushes Their Plight to Sideline," New York Times 2004. Retrieved from www.genocidewatch.org.

Plater, Diana. "Aboriginal People and the Media—Reporting Aboriginal Affairs" *Aboriginal Justice Issues*, p. 203-209, 1993).

Plater, Diana and Roberts, R. *Going for Red Black and Gold: The Indigenous Media Manual*. Jumbunna Center for Australian Indigenous Studies, Education and Research, UTS, 1994.

Quinn, Stephen. "Australia," *Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media System* in de Beer (ed.). Boston: A For each class there should be ample time for discussion.

Allyn & Bacon, 2004.

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991, National Report, 5 Volumes, Commission E. Johnston, AGPS, Canberra.

“Stolen Generation’ Furor,” Australian News Commentary, January 11, 2001.

White, Bud. Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples. Retrieved from www.media-awareness 1998.

Wikinews, “Australia Silent on UN Racism Committee condemnation,” March 28, 2005.

www.cia.gov/cia/publicactions/factbook.

www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/media_guide.