

## Reflections on teaching a first-year Indigenous Australian studies subject

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*Robyn Heckenberg and Andrew Gunstone team taught a first-year subject in Indigenous Australian Studies at Monash University for eight years. The significant majority of students undertaking this subject are non-Indigenous students who are studying the subject as an elective rather than as part of an Indigenous Studies course. In this paper, we discuss our experiences and reflections in teaching this subject, including our teaching philosophies and approaches, the various successes and challenges that we have encountered, and our views of the usefulness and potential of this subject in preparing students to genuinely work and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.*

*Keywords: Indigenous Australian studies; higher education, whiteness, teaching philosophy.*

From 2005 to 2012, we team taught a first-year subject on Indigenous Australian Studies at the Churchill campus of Monash University. The Churchill campus is situated in the Gippsland south-east region of Victoria, approximately two hours east of Melbourne. In this paper, we reflect on the eight years that we taught this subject. We first discuss the background issues of teaching Indigenous Studies, including introducing ourselves, the place of the first-year subject within various courses, and the modes of teaching, student cohort and the curriculum of the first-year subject. We then discuss our experiences and reflections in teaching within this area, including our teaching approaches and philosophies, the successes and obstacles we have seen, and the adequacy of the subject in preparing students to successfully engage and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. In this paper, we have adopted Fredericks (2009, p.2) definition of Indigenous Studies:

The term Indigenous Studies within this article refers to content which encapsulates Australian Aboriginal Studies and/or Torres Strait Islander Studies (Nakata 2006, p.265) and studies that may include references to Indigenous peoples in other

geographic localities. Once located within anthropology and history, Indigenous Studies may now be found, taught and researched within all faculties in a university and across numerous disciplines including health, education, politics, law, geography, environmental science and business (Moreton-Robinson 2005a). It is now a cross-disciplinary endeavour and seemingly is a site of collection and redistribution of knowledge about Indigenous people (Brady 1997; Nakata 2006).

## **BACKGROUND**

In this paper, we consider it important to briefly discuss who we are and our approach to teaching Indigenous Australian Studies in general. We discuss our approach to teaching Indigenous Australian Studies, in particular the first-year subject, more thoroughly later in the paper.

Robyn Heckenberg is a Wiradjuri woman speaking up for culture. She is a practicing artist and has worked at several universities. Her studentship at Batchelor Institute in the Northern Territory in educational leadership stimulated a binding challenge regarding teaching methodology and philosophy vocalised by an Aboriginal school principal, who said, ‘you need to send us teachers who have more of an understanding of Aboriginal people and can work with us in our way’. Her vantage point is about awakening dormant open heartedness and revealing to students the exhilaration of different ways of seeing. Andrew Gunstone is a non-Indigenous person who has been teaching Australian Indigenous Studies for almost 15 years and has worked in several Indigenous Studies Centres in Australian higher education institutions. At Monash University, he taught subjects on Indigenous politics and activism and Indigenous human rights, as well as co-teaching the first-year Indigenous Studies subject. His teaching is informed by his research interests in the politics of Australian reconciliation and the contemporary and historical political relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia. Freire (1992, 46) helps us to perceive our transformative roles in teaching, “Cultural action is always a systemic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structure, either with objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it”.

This subject is offered as an undergraduate subject in the first semester of each year. It is taken as the first unit by students who are looking at majoring in Indigenous Australian Studies in an Arts undergraduate degree. Students wishing to major in Indigenous Studies also take subjects in art, education, women, human rights, literature, global Indigenous studies and politics. The introduction subject though is mostly taken by as an elective subject by students, who are majoring in other disciplines within an Arts degree, including criminal justice, community welfare and counselling, community studies, history and politics (see Monash University, 2012b). The majority of students who study this subject are Arts degree students, but the subject is also taken as an elective by students who are enrolled in other undergraduate degrees, particularly education students, but also students from nursing and science.

Over the eight years of us teaching the subject, there has been an average of one hundred and ten students enrolling in this subject each year. This has been reasonably consistent over these years, although there were considerably fewer students in the first three years. The subject is offered both in on-campus mode (traditional face-to-face teaching) and in off-campus mode (distance education). A specific issue with teaching in these modes will be discussed in the next section. The numbers of students studying in on-campus and off-campus modes are approximately 40 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. The on-campus students are mostly school-leavers from the local Gippsland region or mature-aged people who are committed to pursuing studies at a higher education level. Off-campus students come from diverse geographical and educational backgrounds.

The vast majority of the student cohort who have enrolled in this subject over the past eight years have been non-Indigenous people. They are overwhelmingly Caucasian, although in the past couple of years, there have been an increase in migrants, particularly from Africa, studying the subject. The numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students would be about 1-2 per cent of all students. This has been a different experience for both of us as we have taught at other higher education institutions with significantly higher Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments. Also, the substantial majority of the students studying this subject are female, with approximately under 5 per cent of the cohort being male. Finally, the overwhelming majority of the student cohort, both on-campus and off-campus, have very little, if any, knowledge or understandings of Indigenous Australian Studies, with almost no students having previously studied in this area. As with the teaching modes, the implications of this student cohort studying this subject will be discussed in the next section.

An important consideration in facilitating a greater awareness of an Aboriginal perspective is introducing a pedagogy that enhances the student experience in terms of closing the cultural divide by creating a cultural harmonic and seeing education as being meaningful and part of a collective wisdom (Johnson and Cayuga-Seneca, 2000, p.xv-xvii). In this sense, education can be something to be appreciated, going beyond an economy of entitlement.

The first-year introductory Indigenous Studies subject is divided into two main sections. The first section predominantly discusses Indigenous culture and the second section looks mainly at the political history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships. The subject synopsis illustrates this focus on these two sections:

The unit will commence with an examination of the representation of Australian Indigenous peoples and societies. It will then explore the topics of Indigenous spirituality, customary law, kinship systems and languages. The unit will then examine government policies, Indigenous resistance, land rights and native title, deaths in custody, stolen generations, reconciliation and sovereignty (Monash University 2012a).

Each of us taught one specific section. The subject has twelve weeks of teaching. Robyn teaches the first section on Indigenous culture in weeks one to six. The main areas that Robyn teaches in this section are as follows: Week 1: Representation and Images and Ethical Considerations; Week 2: 'The Dreaming', Aboriginal religion and 'The Dreaming', Cultures in Conflict and 'The Dreaming' Today; Week 3: Social Organisation, Custom, Law and Practices, What is 'Law'? and Customary Law and the Contemporary World; Week 4: Social organisation, Family, Kinship and Languages, and The Revival and Survival of Indigenous Languages; Week 5: Indigenous Australian Resistance, 'The Frontier' and Forms of Resistance, Contemporary Resistance, Cultural Survival and the Battle of the 'Black Armbands' vs the 'White Blindfolds'; and Week 6: Australian Indigenous Histories, Contested Forms, Contested Meanings and Aboriginal Histories by Aboriginal People (Monash University 2012a).

In teaching this section, Robyn draws much from lived experience and instruction from the Old People, many of whom are now gone physically but live on in memory and spirit. They come to us in dreams, provide their essence to cultural spaces and evoke remembering. In terms of experiential knowledge and knowledge from community perspectives, there is a unique authority of lived histories and oral telling. This provides mechanisms for demonstrating an 'Indigenous Standpoint' (Foley 2008; Nakata 1998) in *our* ways of seeing and *our* ways of doing, within an ontological narrative. With this authority comes an obligation to only tell parts of the story that are permitted culturally (this is where associations with the Old People comes in handy as a barometer of reason and law). Obligations are aligned to respect and self-respect, and are current with those who came before and those who are here now. Students engage in a world beyond Western constructions of reality and they begin to understand why we could call the Land Mother. Traditionally the Land itself provides everything in association with wind, fire, rain, and Sun. In understanding an Aboriginal perspective, or more academically an Indigenous Standpoint on issues such as spirituality and the philosophies and tradition of The Dreaming, students gather the Aboriginal sense of binding mind and spirit, physical, and metaphysical. It becomes plausible why Aboriginal Law or ways of doing have a place in contemporary organisational structures and approaches. The Morwell Koorie Court represents a regional model, for example, where Aboriginal Elders knowledge of traditional Law and 'Indigenous Standpoint' is valued. In harnessing the *Aboriginal way of doing*, local Elders participate in decision-making and sentencing, talking to the young perpetrator who is part of the community. This is a less estranging experience and the sentence suits the person. Traditional way is that young people respect Eldership, but also respect themselves. The method of utilising the Aboriginal experience and the Aboriginal voice within our way of teaching resonates across many contexts. Maenette Kape'ahiokalani Padeken Ah Nee-Benham (2000, p.3) frames this beautifully in discussing her experiences as teacher, in this case to her niece:

As Native people, what we know about our past and our present comes from the stories that have passed from one body to the next, from mouth to ear, through the voices of our *kupuna*. Because the power of the word carries the truth, cradles

emotions, and creates facts, the story can bring to life the distinctive ways of knowing.

In the beginning of teaching this section, within the classroom environment, students listen attentively to the story of 'other'. As the hands of the classroom clock tick, the minds of the students' ticks over, as well. It is not long before the currency is commonality rather than difference. The injustices to one are injustices of all. The stories begin on both sides of the teacher's desk; humanity is what we all have in common. The interest in some of the background philosophies begin to emerge: cultural sovereignty, the right to speak your own language, the right to access traditional land, family relationships, racism. Students talk in the class, and realise each has her/his own story. By the time the students are about to embark on week 7 with Andrew's guidance they are eager to look for solutions to what seem intractable concerns for contemporary Indigenous Australians, whilst at the same time realising we are a living culture with a lot of positives.

Andrew taught the second section on political history in Weeks 7 to 12. The main areas that Andrew taught in this section were as follows: Week 7: Government Policies, Invasion, Early Years, Protection, Missions, Reserves, Stolen Generations, Self-Determination, the Howard Government and the Rudd and Gillard Governments; Week 8: Land Rights and Native Title, the *Mabo* Decision, the Native Title Act, the *Wik* Decision and the Native Title Amendment Act; Week 9: Indigenous peoples, International Experiences, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and International Comparisons; Week 10: Treaty, an Historical Background, Modern Treaty Movement and Overseas Examples; Week 11: Reconciliation, 1991-2000 Reconciliation Process, Australian Declaration towards Reconciliation and Reconciliation since 2000; and, Week 12: Overview and Revision of the Subject (Monash University 2012a).

## REFLECTIONS

Robyn's teaching approach has much to do with exposing the full history of this country in ways that do not threaten the students' own validity. Within our educational institutions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history has been circumvented for more comfortable histories that exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and instead talk about this continent as belonging to non-Indigenous society's histories alone. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were long regarded to be like the flora and fauna; indeed there was an inclusive Act which placed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in that exact location. Robyn's main encouragement is to allow students to see the world through an Aboriginal lens. Looking at our Traditional perspectives on land, kinship, spirituality and story accommodate her view. Robyn wishes to develop a sense of community for students, whereby they themselves perceive that they are positive instruments of change. An encouraging aspect is that students within this subject get to see the Black and white point of view from their lecturers, and to realise the willingness of both to meet in the middle.

Andrew believes that a discipline such as Indigenous Australian Studies requires substantial reflection concerning teaching approaches and practices. Several issues need to be closely considered, including the positioning of himself as a non-Indigenous lecturer in the learning and teaching process, the subject material (including but not only his positioning relative to it), the delivery of the material and the positioning of students. Cultural safety needs to be closely addressed in all teaching, but particularly in disciplines like Indigenous Australian Studies where emotions and opinions are often significant influences upon learning. He is constantly evaluating his 'whiteness' in his teaching. He continues to see himself as a developing teacher and is regularly questioning his approaches and practices in teaching and teaching-related activities (see Gunstone (2006) for a discussion on his reflections on culture, identity, power, knowledge and authority in teaching Indigenous Australian Studies; see also Gair & Pagliano, 2008; McGloin, 2009).

We argue that 'whiteness' plays a critical role in the teaching of Indigenous Australian Studies. Gunstone (2009, p.1) states:

Whiteness involves the marginalisation, discrimination and oppression of non-white groups and individuals and the privileging of white groups and individuals ... In Australian universities, as in all other institutions in this country, systemic individual and institutional practices of whiteness are prevalent and impact significantly upon Indigenous peoples, whether as students, staff or community members (see also Moreton-Robinson 2004; Nicoll, 2004).

The assumption among many non-Indigenous people that the nation is a 'white' possession is evident in the relationship between non-Indigenous people, property and the law which manifested itself upon arrival in 1788, and was entrenched by the latter part of the nineteenth century in the form of comprehensive discriminatory legislation tied to national citizenship (Markus 1995, p.238, cited in Moreton-Robinson, 2005, p.27). Unfortunately, this 'white' way of looking at Australia has been reinforced in contemporary decision-making and national governance, which gives little regard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives. In the past this particularly pernicious form of 'imperial whiteness' segregated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from public schools (see Fletcher, 1989) and all forms of education, particularly universities. Of our Grannies' generation (Heckenberg 2004, p.104), a primary school education was all that was provided. In these racialised circumstances, non-Indigenous families wanted servants/slaves not educated people. In those times, they even tried to own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies. Today 'whiteness' is still a mindset in terms of who has the right to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge ('Intellectual Property'). It is a sad thing that this is a mind-set carried through even into higher education today. Quietly, we have had to inform students of the *privilege* they have in being in a space and time where that knowledge is shared. However, this sharing has to happen in ways that are regarded as ethical and appropriate by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders. Many non-Indigenous people want the noble savage story, but do not want to confront their own privileged place in this country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Country: stolen not given away.

We have confronted a number of obstacles over the years spent in teaching this subject that relate to issues of ‘whiteness’. One of the most significant of these obstacles has been the inability of some non-Indigenous students to understand that approaches to teaching and learning subjects in the discipline of Indigenous Australian Studies can be different to teaching and learning approaches in other subjects. For example, we have not audio-recorded our lectures in any of our Indigenous Studies subjects, including the first-year subject. This approach is different from many other subjects from other disciplines that do audio-record their lectures, as they have no concerns surrounding student privilege issues. We have not recorded the lectures as much of the discussions in our subjects have involved discussing personal issues, including racism, and we have been acutely aware of the need to ensure the cultural safety of all our students. We have received some complaints from a number of non-Indigenous students, studying in the off-campus mode, who have been upset that the lectures are not audio-recorded. These complaints were obtained from anonymous teaching evaluations. Interestingly, nearly all the complaints regarding the lack of audio-recording lectures have come from students studying the first-year subject, with very few, if any, complaints coming from students studying later-year subjects. This is likely due to later-year students recognising that their learning is not hindered by the lectures not being audio-recorded. The main reason stated by those first-year off-campus students about their concern regarding our policy of audio-recordings is that they will receive less information about the subject than will on-campus students. Some examples of these complaints from the first-year students regarding the audio recording include:

I’m sure it is possible to do a subject without ever listening to a lecture or going to a tutorial however these are provided to some students and not to others. It does feel a little like being penalised for being a distance student. I can see it from the tutors side as well though, if there is very sensitive material being discussed people may not feel free to open up as much. Not sure what the answer is, but the situation does seem less than ideal.

I also feel disadvantaged and that simply because I am a distance student that I will not get as much out of this subject.

To address this issue, we have used the webpages of the Indigenous Studies subjects, including the first-year subject, to facilitate on-line learning through practices such as posting the lecture notes, posting weekly discussion questions on key issues, and posting links to useful resources. We also have regularly included statements advising of our practice to not audio-record lectures in our subject guides and also have posted these statements on the subjects’ webpages. These practices of facilitating on-line learning and posting statements regarding our audio-recording posting have seemed to alleviate most student concerns. The statement on the non-recording of lectures reads:

Please note that the lectures and tutorials are not recorded for any Indigenous Studies subjects for cultural reasons. Indigenous Studies is a very sensitive subject, with discussions often involving deeply personal conversations concerning issues such as racism, violence and discrimination. Consequently, we do not want these sensitive and personal conversations recorded. This ensures that the teaching and learning of Indigenous Studies is culturally safe for Indigenous and non-

Indigenous staff and students. Please note that assessment in Indigenous Studies is only based on the reading materials and not on these personal discussions. Further, there are also intellectual property issues with the teaching of Indigenous Studies (Monash University 2012a).

With Monash University updating their web delivery system in the past year, most of these issues have been remedied as the new updated system has allowed greater capacity for engaging with social media, such as 'you-tube', and video work with Indigenous content. The new pedagogy has demanded greater interaction with media, which reflect the same, interfaces used in social media engagement. This new generation of teaching platforms have encouraged greater interaction with students and the Aboriginal voice in ways we could have only dreamed of a few years ago. When we have discussed two way learning (Harris, 1990) or Reconciliation (Gunstone, 2007), we have been able to guide students directly to links which will help them understand Indigenous voices and grasp our way of viewing the world, perhaps for the first time. It is exciting times for improving cultural understanding.

Another significant and related obstacle that we have encountered in teaching this subject over the past eight years has been the significantly poor level of knowledge of Indigenous Australian Studies that has been held by the vast majority of the students enrolled in the first-year subject. This characteristic within our student cohort has reflected the demonstrable gaps in curriculum for primary and high-school learners. Optimistically, the generation of young student teachers we have welcomed in recent years to our Indigenous Studies subjects will improve primary and secondary learners' knowledge through a more culturally inclusive vantage point into the future. However, at present, the vast majority of our students have never previously studied Indigenous Studies, either at school or at university. Consequently, the students that have enrolled in the first-year subject have often been anxious about their lack of knowledge of Indigenous Studies, their perceptions that they will need to be 'politically correct' to pass the subject and the emotions that many of them experience when confronted with the history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations for the first time. Some comments that the first-year students have posted on the subject's webpage illustrate these issues:

I wonder if some of our worries come from emotional responses to the content being somewhat confronting!!?

It's all bit overwhelming at the moment!

... my concerns at the time about the 'sensitive minefield' it [the first-year subject] could possibly be ...

We have endeavoured to address these concerns held by some students by encouraging them to genuinely engage with the subject, to read widely, to participate in tutorials (in regard to the on-campus students) and to actively contribute to the discussion forum that is hosted on the subject's webpage. We have reassured the students that the subject material can be very confronting, particularly to those who have never previously studied Indigenous Studies. We have also encouraged students to undertake



self-directed research. This pedagogy has been confronting for some students who insist on cookie cutter curriculum, which at times amounts to spoon-feeding. These students have been reluctant to genuinely engage and challenge their 'common-sense' views on issues such as the British invasion, massacres and genocide. When students have realised extra reading and research is encouraged (instead of being just expected to regurgitate the lecturer's ideas), this can engender fear of being loose on the sea without a rudder. After the initial panic students have realised the other option, and part of an Indigenous way: thinking for yourself. Again, these kinds of challenges will be given greater leverage from solutions which come from the very structures we as educators are still finding our way in: the new pedagogy based on teaching modes reflecting contemporary online media. We will begin to explore how Indigenous Studies students can participate in closed and open forums under discreet and culturally safe parameters to begin to explore some of the questions they have found difficult to resolve, by engaging with us directly. We will engage with students about cultural engagement, as outlined by Sinclair and Wilson (1999, p.55), "Cross-cultural research has demonstrated that individuals, organisations and nations are all culturally encoded. Our thinking and action is culturally programmed in ways that are largely invisible to us. Intercultural awareness takes effort".

On a broader level, there are also a number of substantial institutional practices of 'whiteness' that impact on the teaching of Indigenous Australian Studies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to non-Indigenous students. These institutional practices are prevalent, in varying degrees, in all Australian Universities, and include: the lack of Indigenous governance and self-determination in key University structures, such as University Councils and Academic Boards; the extremely low numbers of Indigenous academic and professional staff employed at Universities, and the almost non-existent numbers of Indigenous staff employed at Universities outside the Indigenous Centres; the lack of genuinely appropriate research ethics and acknowledgement of Indigenous research methodologies; the high levels of racism and ignorance that exist among many non-Indigenous staff and students at Universities, with few effective anti-racist training approaches to address this racism and ignorance; the substantial lack of appropriate Indigenous Australian Studies curriculum, with far too many students graduating who have not studied Indigenous Australian Studies at University, which then significantly limits the capacity of these graduates to genuinely engage with Indigenous peoples and issues; the appalling levels of access, success, retention and completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and the assumption, by many in the University community, that these above-mentioned issues are the responsibility of the Indigenous Centres and not also the responsibility of University management, staff and students. Both government reports (such as Anderson, Singh, Stehbens & Ryerson, 1998; Behrendt, 2011; Bourke, 1996) and the academic literature (such as Gunstone, 2008; Hart & Lampert, 2002; Phillips, 2005; Smith, 2004; Trudgett, 2009) have long identified these institutional practices and have, without significant success, long argued that Universities need to address these institutional practices.

Although there have been some obstacles and challenges in teaching the first-year subject, we have also had some very successful outcomes. There are students who continue to communicate with us sometimes years after they have finished their studies in Indigenous Australian Studies as they wish to continue to engage with us regarding Indigenous Australian Studies and are seeking support in dealing with various inter-cultural challenges. We have also seen a number of students whose opinions and ideas have substantially changed because they have engaged with ourselves and the subject content in self-reflective ways. For some the light turns on and will never again be extinguished, their lives are literally changed. For others, it is the assurance that their own inhospitable young lives from war torn countries and minority groups has validation. For our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, it is realising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, philosophy on life and ways of being are to be respected and valued and that they are as good as anybody else. Students have posted a number of messages on the first-year subject's discussion webpage that relate to these issues:

- I'm finding the education of myself in tackling this subject just as challenging and interesting as the subject itself! That's the whole point, right?
- It's been an enlightening subject for me and personally challenging as I reflected on my own ignorance and lack of knowledge. Sorry Day on campus this year at work ... was different to the last one, as I certainly looked at it with new eyes.
- Thoroughly enjoyed this subject. I found it challenging, enlightening and extremely interesting not just for myself as a student but as a member of Australian community.
- It has been really challenging and fascinating subject!
- I look forward to further subjects throughout my SW [social work] degree on similar topics. And really hope I can make a difference in the world towards encouragement for growing reconciliation and understanding.
- I have learnt stuff in this unit that I will remember vividly (and with grief might I had [sic]) for the rest of my life! I am now teaching my children. And when we go on holidays I intend to make it a new family tradition to learn about the indigenous people of the region and teach this to my kids too.
- I have learnt more about Indigenous issues, history, racism and discrimination in Australia via this subject than I have throughout my life (and I have the big 50 coming next month! I feel I have been living under a rock). I thank you for providing the insight, although I know this is just the tip of the iceberg. I look forward to my next study in Semester 2.

The value of the first-year Indigenous Australian Studies subject is that it has prepared students to successfully engage and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities because it has provided an Aboriginal cultural perspective (Robyn) and it acknowledged through the insights and role-modelling of a 'white-guy'

(Andrew) that positive social change and working together is possible. This first-year subject has had similar outcomes to those discussed by Heckenberg (2012a, p.35) in referring to her Indigenous education subject as being:

...about creating spaces within a university teaching practice at Monash University, Gippsland that has outcomes characterised by a shift in the worldview of non-Indigenous students, so they become more squarely placed as advocates for Aboriginal community development opportunities, culturally responsive classrooms and capacity building of communities ... This method of teaching is also more culturally relevant for Indigenous students studying in this area (see also Heckenberg, 2012b).

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have reflected upon our experiences of teaching a first-year subject in Indigenous Australian Studies at the Gippsland campus of Monash University. After discussing some background issues related to the teaching of this subject, including student cohort and curriculum, we have explored our experiences in teaching this subject. We have discussed our teaching approaches and philosophies. We have also discussed both the obstacles, particularly in relation to issues of 'whiteness', and the successes of teaching this first-year subject. One of the most prominent successes has been the capacity of the subject to assist in preparing students to successfully engage and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Optimistically this will lead to increased participation by Indigenous Australians in the higher education sector as the work by our graduates, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, filters down into greater support for Indigenous people to find achievable outcomes in education and employment themselves.

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