

# SOPHI Magazine



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

The School of Philosophical and  
Historical Inquiry Magazine

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Brewarrina**  
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# Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the **School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry Magazine**.



Julie–Ann Robson, our editor, has managed to put together a publication that not only gives a wonderful snapshot of some of the exciting and innovative work that our academics are engaged in, but also explores the range of our teaching and research. SOPHI is made up of different disciplines: Archaeology, Classics and Ancient History, Gender and Cultural Studies, History and Philosophy, and that diversity has created a lively and innovative intellectual community. It has a reputation of which we are proud, and its successes have recently been borne out by the fact that in 2015 members of SOPHI were the recipients of over 60% of the Australian Research Council awards across the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and over 10% of those awarded across the whole of the University of Sydney.

The articles in this magazine reflect that diversity, whether it is rediscovering long ignored aspects of the Aboriginal past, connecting the experiences of marginalised communities to the western philosophical tradition, or revealing how the humanities help us to better understand the ecological environment around us.

**Associate Professor Richard Miles**  
Head of the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

What these essays also highlight is how, despite this plethora of subject areas and approaches, as a School we coalesce around a passionate interest in humanity.

Our hope is that this magazine also underlines the importance of inclusiveness in our community both in our research and teaching activities. For instance, the project to examine the scientific and medical investigation of Aboriginal communities in the twentieth century brought together an ARC Laureate, an early career lecturer and a student currently finishing his BA, with each bringing distinct insights and value to the collaboration.

Lastly, new initiatives such as ArtSS Career-Ready and the Department of History's Social Inclusion project reflect our commitment to reaching out beyond the walls of this University into the communities that we serve and that sustain us. It seems to me that if this magazine proves one thing, it is that the humanities have never been as relevant as they are today.

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# Tracking the history of science in Brewarrina

## Researchers: Warwick Anderson and Miranda Johnson

**Warwick Anderson** is an ARC Laureate Fellow at the University of Sydney. He is Professor of History and Centre for Values, Ethics and Law in Medicine. He is also Director of the Race and Ethnicity in the Global South project (REGS) funded by the ARC.

**Miranda Johnson** is a Lecturer in the Department of History and a Research Fellow at REGS.



HP99.1.80 "Native fisheries at Brewarrina, Darling River" [Baiaime's Ngunnhu]  
Photo: Henry King, 1880-1900.  
Courtesy of the Macleay Museum, University of Sydney

“After the war, race mixing ceased to be of much biological interest — it became a sociological phenomenon, not a biological problem.”

**Warwick Anderson and Miranda Johnson**

Much thought and preparation goes into creating a successful research proposal—but even so, once the research gets underway, it can follow surprising and unexpected paths.

Last year, for example, we received a generous grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC) to enable us to study the history of scientific investigation and medical enquiry in Aboriginal Australian communities in the twentieth century.

One of us — Warwick Anderson — is primarily an historian of medicine interested in the encounters of scientists and Indigenous peoples. The other collaborator — Miranda Johnson — is an early-career researcher, now a lecturer in comparative Indigenous history at the University of Sydney, whose studies are closely attuned to the dynamics of Indigenous communities. We thought our interests and expertise would be complementary, allowing us to shed some light on the patterns and perils of “research” on, or with, Indigenous people. In a sense, we hoped to blend the history of science, so often concerned with the production of supposed universals, with local Aboriginal histories—to look at the history of scientific investigation from Aboriginal perspectives, to reveal the Indigenous situations of science.

After consulting widely, we decided to focus on a number of case studies, sampling the sites and peoples that had been subject to particularly strong scientific curiosity in the twentieth century. Therefore we felt we had to include Brewarrina, Palm Island, Groote Eylandt, Elcho Island, and the Tiwi Islands.

We began with Brewarrina, significant in Aboriginal history, and an intriguing spot for social scientists, especially anthropologists. Because of the ancient fish traps on the Barwon River there, this had long been a place where Aboriginal people congregated and mixed. In the early-twentieth century, the Aboriginal settlement, or mission as it was called, forcibly assembled people from across New South Wales, bringing them together in tough conditions. From 1914, physical anthropologists came to Brewarrina to study the descendants of white and Aboriginal liaisons, which sometimes were consensual, but often were not. They wanted to classify these people as “half-caste”, “quadroon”, and “octoroon”, and so on; to assess whether they might be degenerate or show hybrid vigour; and work out whether they might eventually be absorbed into white Australia.



Research Assistant Adrian Atkins “transformed the project”

“Using his skills in Aboriginal and family history, Adrian has been reconstructing the life stories and relations of the erstwhile ‘research subjects’, adding flesh and bones and social identities to the anthropological measurements taken by the pre-war anthropologists.”

**Warwick Anderson  
and Miranda Johnson**

It is almost beyond belief that the first such investigator was Charles B. Davenport, the infamous American eugenicist and director of the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York. What a peculiar figure he must have cut in Brewarrina in 1914. In the mid-1920s, Sydney geographer Griffith Taylor also wandered around nearby, evaluating mixed-race populations rather more favourably than Davenport had done.

Then in 1938, Joseph B. Birdsell and Norman B. Tindale stopped by while on the Harvard-Adelaide Anthropological Expedition, assessing the suitability of Aboriginal and European “hybrids” for incorporation into national whiteness. After the war, race mixing ceased to be of much biological interest – it became a sociological phenomenon, not a biological problem— so young anthropologist Ruth Fink (later Latukefu) ventured out from the University of Sydney to Brewarrina in 1954 to study race prejudice and discrimination as they affected the local Aboriginal community, assuming biology would look after itself.

Now, as experienced historians we were confident that with appropriate attention to the published reports and the investigators’ archives, we would find in this case study an interesting and perhaps even instructive story about encounters between Aboriginal people and social scientists, a story telling us something important about the changing ethics of research with Indigenous “subjects”.

But we were in for a surprise. We appointed Adrian Atkins, a Goorie man (Anaiwan, Thungutti, Wonoruan, and Kamilaroi) who had just completed his B.A. at the University of Sydney, as a research assistant – and suddenly he transformed the project, making it even more interesting than we had surmised.

Using his skills in Aboriginal and family history, Adrian has been reconstructing the life stories and relations of the erstwhile “research subjects”, adding flesh and bones and social identities to the anthropological measurements taken by the pre-war anthropologists.



HP99.1.587 "Aboriginal fisheries, Darling River" [Baiame's Ngunnhu]. Photo: attributed to Henry King, 1880-1900. Courtesy of the Macleay Museum, University of Sydney.

With the assistance of local Aboriginal historian Brad Steadman, Adrian has made the Aboriginal people of Brewarrina at least as alive to us as the scientists who came to study them. Early on, Brad suggested that we pay attention not only to those who were measured, but also to those who escaped measurement—and why. Accordingly, Adrian has managed to reconstruct the whole community at Brewarrina, not just those subject to science. We now are getting a much better sense of how scientists and other visiting “experts” could be incorporated into Aboriginal life worlds, and a much stronger impression of Aboriginal agency and resistance in these encounters.

As chief investigators of the ARC project, we are delighted by this turn of events, and equally intrigued by how it happened. So we asked Adrian where he had picked up these skills in following obscure historical tracks and traces. He first told us about the history and archaeology subjects he had studied for his Sydney B.A. which, in his words, “opened my eyes to research design, data collection and analysis, and how to coordinate disparate sources of information”. In his studies, he learned how to find and use an enormous variety of published and unpublished sources—and how to draw this information together to make a coherent case. In particular, he gained expertise in compiling detailed annotated bibliographies, carefully sorting out primary and secondary texts. The current ARC research project has given him the chance to employ such skills. “The Brewarrina research”, he says, “offers me the first formal opportunity to research

Aboriginal history in New South Wales. Family history in the New England and Moree regions to the east has enabled me to acquire some familiarity with the movement of Aboriginal people.” Adrian relishes “the opportunity to be involved with a project of this significance and facilitate the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge.... We all have different research interests and find different interpretations of historical scientific materials.”

As for his historical methodology, Adrian says: “I am reminded of that wonderful scene in *The Tracker*, where David Gulpilil’s character explains to the rookie constable, ‘That one boss, that’s all I need’, as the camera pans from a single upturned stone, disturbed by the fugitive they’re pursuing, to a stone field containing a constellation of similar stones.”

It is rewarding to know that even seasoned historians can still learn from recent Sydney undergraduates how to discern such traces of the past.

– [raceandethnicityintheglobalsouth.wordpress.com](http://raceandethnicityintheglobalsouth.wordpress.com)

“The Brewarrina research offers me the first formal opportunity to research Aboriginal history in New South Wales.”

**Adrian Atkins**  
Research Assistant,  
Aboriginal Communities as Sites of Experiment:  
Making Research Subjects



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# Philosophy remixed: when a philosopher takes to the streets

## An interview with Omid Tofghian

**Omid Tofghian** is an Associate in the Department of Philosophy and Research Assistant for an ARC funded project headed by Professor Rick Benitez.

Interview by Rick Benitez and Julie-Ann Robson

He might be steeped in a Western philosophical tradition that reaches back to Plato, but Iranian born philosopher Omid Tofghian's approach to philosophy is... a little different. Having escaped the Iranian Revolution in 1979, he brings experiences of conflict, displacement and upheaval with him – experiences he shares with many migrants to Australia – and that help inform his approach to philosophy.

With an Honours degree from the University of Sydney and a PhD from Leiden University in the Netherlands, Omid is currently working on an ARC funded project on inspired voices in the myths of Plato. But he also keeps an ear attuned for the inspired voices that have been marginalised in the present.

### Re-embroidering the Western Tradition

The Western philosophical tradition is a rich tapestry of ideas that reaches back through millennia: from ancient Greece to postmodernism the Western philosophical tradition has informed ideas about how to live and the society we live in. It influences our ethical decisions, our political systems, the art we live with and the buildings we inhabit. The philosophical perspective that influences our day to day lives is richly informed by our past history.

Omid seeks to enrich this tapestry further by seeking out the voices that have been sidelined: he looks between the cracks to uncover lost identities and lost histories. He is keen to locate the voices of the marginalised. “Our presuppositions, our own socio-political context, shapes the way that we interpret the past” he says, and unless we seek to include the voices of the marginalised and those who have experienced oppression, colonialism and Western expansion, we fail to see the human condition in its complexity.

He points for instance to African-American thinkers like W. E. B. Du Bois, who recognised his own experience of “double-consciousness”, the challenge of reconsidering an African heritage with a European upbringing. He also cites refugee scholars from World War II whose identities

had been shattered by the Holocaust. These scholars have much to teach us about identity and history, yet their writings remain on the margins.

“It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”

**W.E.B. Du Bois**  
*The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)





### Minorities and Philosophy (MAP)

Omid's approach to philosophy isn't just theoretical; it's practical. He is keen to facilitate conversations that engage marginalised voices within our own community. He works with the worldwide organisation "Minorities and Philosophy", tapping into a network of students and staff who examine and address issues of minority participation in academic philosophy. He is founding member of the University of Sydney's Chapter which provides peer support, particularly for students from minority backgrounds, and addresses theoretical issues regarding philosophy of gender, race, sexual orientation, class, disability and language, as well as looking at philosophy from minority perspectives.

### Street University – Culture, language and transformation

It's this last point, looking at philosophy from the perspective of minorities, that brings Omid to the streets. The Ted Noffs Foundation's Street University, established about eight years ago to engage young, sometimes disaffected youth, interested him. The project works with young people by engaging with them through popular culture. Having grown up listening to hip hop, he was aware of its influence.

"I grew up in the 80s here in Sydney and Hip Hop was an emerging genre back then. It shaped my identity; it shaped so many other people around me... So I look at the way hip hop is transforming identities."

Watching the events in the Middle East and North Africa in 2010, Omid realised the importance of hip hop in the lead-up to the Arab Spring: "I noticed that hip hop was a driving force behind the youth culture and the youth movements." Hip hop, he says, is a form of political expression. It influences the way these young people "see tradition, history, politics religion, family life – all sorts of things".

"Hip Hop culture is transforming identities. The very practice of hip hop, and that includes MC-ing, DJ-ing, producing, graffiti art, breakdancing and the lingo street-style – all of these things play a role. So Hip Hop's a whole culture. It's not just a particular kind of music".

### SOPHI Street: Where hip hop meets philosophy

Working with the Street University, Omid ran some one-off workshops and seminars – so successful were they he was asked to devise a course. He happily volunteered, and called the course "SOPHI Street: Where Hip Hop Meets Philosophy" – an acknowledgment of Street University, but also a tribute to the University of Sydney's School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry. "It was a way to teach really difficult concepts and theories to people who have been disenfranchised".



"So for example one week I talked about gender in hip hop. Through examples of hip hop, looking at film clips, looking at artists, looking at controversies I started talking about gender equality and women's rights, and the importance of women's voices... I taught a class on historical injustice and hip hop where I addressed issues like colonialism and slavery. I had another on class, so economic inequality and hip hop – using examples from hip hop culture and hip hop history. I raise these very difficult issues and absorb the young people into the conversation. Framing it in the way I do speaks to them in a familiar language".

By teaching in this way Omid makes the young people themselves – their problems, their identities, their histories – central to the conversation in a way that teaching the traditional philosophical canon would not. "I can teach them about Foucault, for instance, by looking at power and oppression in hip hop, and the way hip hop has challenged power and oppression. I can teach them about critical philosophy of race and introduce Du Bois's theory of double consciousness by looking at Public Enemy. Another successful class was teaching them about globalisation – critiques of globalisation – looking at hip hop as a global phenomenon".

Omid Tofighian continues his work, not only on Plato's inspired voices, but on the voices that come from the street. His work reaches beyond the classroom and helps inform curious minds through conversation, music, art, dance and storytelling.

# Getting our students ArtSS Career-Ready



sydney.edu.au/arts/sophi

School of Philosophical

and Historical Studies

The University of Sydney

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## Business and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences: a collaborative initiative

In the UK and the USA, Humanities graduates are recruited into a large range of government, commercial and financial organisations. Why then in Australia do employers so often overlook Humanities graduates, selecting students with “professional” degrees such as Business or Finance for their Graduate Programs? This was the question posed by Associate Professor Richard Miles when John Curtis, Chairman of Allianz, and Gail Kelly, then CEO of Westpac, visited the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney in 2013. The question resonated with Curtis and Kelly, both of whom hold Arts degrees, and the seeds were sown for a new program: ArtSS Career-Ready.

In early 2014 Associate Richard Miles, then Chair of Classics and Ancient History and now Head of SOPHI and Director of ArtSS Career-Ready, spoke about the advantages of employing Humanities graduates at a series of events hosted by Curtis and Kelly. These events were attended by CEOs and senior managers from various corporations who realised they were missing out on a cohort of highly articulate, curious, critical thinkers who are innovative and enthusiastic, and keen for the opportunity to demonstrate their talent. By the end of the year ArtSS Career-Ready had been formed and our first placements at Allianz and Telstra were underway.

“My whole future has changed in the last six months based on what I’ve learned in the ArtSS Career-Ready Program and accepting this role at KPMG”.

**Hannah Saville**  
KPMG Placement

## How it works

The first thing we have to do is to get Humanities students thinking about their career beyond university – something we start before our students even enrol with a strong ArtSS Career-Ready presence at Open Days.

### Career Planning

Once enrolled, we encourage students to register with ArtSS Career-Ready, so we can keep them up-to-date with our events, which include briefings sessions where they learn from their peers that a Humanities degree is a springboard to great career opportunities.

Students usually don’t study History, Philosophy, Anthropology, Art Theory or Languages so they can work for a multinational corporation – they do it because they love what they’re studying! What ArtSS Career-Ready does is apprise students of the valuable skills they acquire while studying what they love – the ability to think critically; to research and synthesise information; the capacity to formulate a clear and logical argument; the power that comes with communicating idea to others; and the capacity to think laterally – invaluable skills in a world where the only real constant is rapid change.



We work with the University's Careers Centre to run workshops specifically tailored to Humanities students. These include resume writing; cover-letters; interview skills, and a range of other career-related workshops.

### Career Placement

The ArtSS Career-Ready team is continually building partnerships with employers – many in the corporate world, but also in the government and not-for-profit sectors, and students are invited to participate in competitive application processes, usually in their penultimate year. Our successful candidates go in to paid placements in the University's Summer or Winter breaks.

So successful have these placements been that the majority of our placement students have been offered on-going work while they finish their degree, or a place in their host organisation's graduate program.

### Inspiration

ArtSS Career-Ready also runs a series of events and networking opportunities for students. For example we run "Women, Stories, Opportunities" in Semester 1, and "Seeing the Bigger Picture" in Semester 2. Here students join with successful Alumni and Humanities graduates to talk about ways to forge a career.

Open yourself up to a world of possibilities. Get ArtSS Career-Ready!

– [sydney.edu.au/arts/careers](https://sydney.edu.au/arts/careers)

“The world's changing so much at the moment. We're really looking for people who are able to be innovative — think laterally.”

**Tracy Driver**  
KPMG Partner

# Doing time in the desert

Peter Hiscock

Department of Archaeology

Peter Hiscock is the Tom Austen Brown Chair of Australian Archaeology

“During my time in this desert patch I have recorded more than 15,000 sites of human occupation, some containing many millions of preserved artefacts.”

Peter Hiscock

## Thirty years. I have done my time in the desert!

I started as a graduate student and for three decades I have been drawn back to the same patch of the Australian desert, located in South Australia near Lake Eyre South. My desert is stark and breath-taking. Vivid orange sand dunes are draped over an eroded surface of broken rocks coloured muted khaki and brown. These rocks formed in an ancient ocean, were lifted up to become land, hidden under glaciers in a distant ice-age, covered by a massive lake, and eventually baked in the sun as Australia dried out. They have seen the geological history of the continent, and during the last ice-age became covered in sand when vegetation died in cold, dry conditions and strong winds blew sand across the land.

Today this patch of desert is the driest part of Australia; it receives little winter rain and is too far south to get regular monsoonal rains. Water ponds in depressions such as clay pans for a few days after local rain but often this is a waterless land. This desert has low biodiversity and few native plants suitable for human consumption. It is a tough place to live.

And yet this desert has also witnessed the human history of the continent, as the ancestors of Aboriginal people occupied it. Archaeological evidence for ancient human activities is almost everywhere in the deserts of Australia. Very little preserves in the harsh, hot, acidic sands and I have found almost no bones to show what people ate. But the tools made of stone are preserved and are plentiful. During my time in this desert patch I have recorded more than 15,000 sites of human occupation, some containing many millions of preserved artefacts. These places are camping grounds, locations for tool manufacturing, butchering and cooking as well as social activities. As a young researcher interested in ancient technology it was a thrill to find the artefacts made by people long dead and to ponder what their lives had been like. As a more mature researcher I have had the opportunity to begin to solve the puzzles of this desert archaeology.

Time has been a missing piece in the puzzle of how people lived in the Australian deserts. When I started my research there was no way to establish the antiquity of human occupation. Charcoal and bone were not preserved and so the established techniques of radiocarbon dating could not be employed. I could not tell whether the rich archaeological record had gradually accumulated from low levels of human occupation over nearly fifty thousand years



or whether it resulted from shorter intense phases of human activity. Over the least few years, and with the expertise of talented colleagues, we have established what the timeline of desert life was.

**The harsh sunlight that pierces and creates the desert also allows archaeologists to date the human past. New techniques allow us to measure how many years have passed since sand grains were exposed to light, and so we can determine how long artefacts have been buried in the sand dunes. It turns out that all of the cultural debris in this desert was created in two main and intensive pulses of occupation, each a few thousand years in duration. Outside those pulses people may rarely have visited the region.**

This story emerges rather ironically from the dynamism of desert environments. It is the constant erosion of the dunes that stabilises and preserves evidence of past human lives. Sand is blown eastwards, exposing artefacts at the western end of each dune and burying artefacts and associated sand from sunlight further east. The result are places with old land surfaces that have been covered

by sand, protecting the evidence of past human activities. We excavate slowly into the dunes to expose and study the stone artefacts that were dropped and to reconstruct the activities of their makers.

These wind-swept landscapes have been the scene of sweeping cultural changes over the last ten millennia. New languages, technologies and symbols (all originating in northeastern Australia) spread into this desert and may be associated with one of the great pulses of human occupation of the area. Identifying the age and direction of these dispersing ideas and words is the goal of my project recently funded by the ARC, titled "Traditions, transformations and technology in Aboriginal Australia". This project will take our observations of the ancient artefacts and map the spread of the technology that created them by using statistical methods from evolutionary biology. Three PhD students will help with this task which represents a new phase in developing an understanding of human history in these arid lands. Even after three decades it seems there is still time for a new history to be written in the Australian desert.



# Navigating global waters

## Astrida Neimanis – New staff profile

### Department of Gender and Cultural Studies

**Environmental Humanities is quite a new field of research. Can you define “Environmental Humanities”?**

This name “Environmental Humanities” is new, but the take-up of environmental questions by disciplines like art, philosophy, and history has been around a long time – think of poet Walt Whitman, or famous philosopher of environmental biology Jakob von Uexkuell.

I think the fact that this field has finally been given its own name reflects the growing understanding – within scientific, policy-making, and academic communities – that the “wicked problems” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century need more than just science. The humanities (including creative arts) engage in crucial research about values, worldviews, ethics, and imaginative alternatives to some of the environmentally dangerous paths we’re currently on. If we take climate change as an example, it is pretty hard to engage regular people with talk of carbon emissions, cap-and-trade, or scenario-modeling for times and places that seem to have little to do with their everyday lives. We need stories, art, ideas and research at a palpable human

level to figure out our place in all this and what we might do better. While scientific research is irreplaceable, the environmental humanities are able to map the vital connections between how we understand and imagine nature and how we treat it.

We also have to remember that the human “we” in this equation is hardly uniform; vulnerability to and responsibility for things like pollution, biodiversity loss, toxic exposure and drought vary tremendously across geographical location, but also gender, age, class and race. Fields like gender and cultural studies – which is my own entry point to the environmental humanities – have given us amazing methods and tools for understanding and responding to environmental challenges in specific ways that still account for social justice.

In short, the environmental humanities’ job is to remind us that “nature” and “culture” have never been separate. In today’s context, seriously grappling with this is really about planetary survival.

**Your work on water is cross-disciplinary. Can give us a sense of what that involves?**

If there is anything really “new” about environmental humanities today it’s the embrace of really radically cross-disciplinary work.

This week I’m off to northern Europe (thanks to an Australian Academy of Humanities travelling grant) to work with a cultural studies professor, an archaeologist, a wildlife pathologist, an environmental biologist, a biochemist, an indigenous cultural researcher, and a digital media studies professor to look at a host of questions pertaining to the ecologies of the Baltic Sea. The ostensible focus of our research is the thousands of tons of chemical weapons that were dumped in the sea after World War II because no one could think of anything else to do with them. But the project is also

“I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars.”

**Walt Whitman**





Cape Arkona, Putgarten (Germany) on the Baltic Sea.

asking much larger questions about human relationships to water. The important questions here are not only about “real” chemical and biological consequences of toxic contamination; we also need to think about how we collectively imagine aquatic environments – too often a kind of “out of sight, out of mind” phenomenon – that leads to treating them in corresponding ways.

Here in Australia I’ve recently made contact with a leading scientist at the Museum of Western Australian to begin some research on groundwater ecologies; Australia is home to some of the “oldest” water in the world (often contained in underground cave environments), which itself is home to various threatened animal species called stygofauna. These little critters have exceptional value not only for their own sake, but for the important environmental services they provide in a bigger hydrogeological picture. But how do you get anybody to care about animals that you can’t even see, because they live underground and are barely perceptible to the human eye anyways (not to mention that they’re really quite ugly)? Add mining licenses and indigenous land justice into the picture, as well as constant pressure on freshwater sources in this dry land, and it’s a heady jumble of problems – environmental, yes, but also social, economic and cultural. With inspiration from our scientist collaborator, I will be working with a Western Australian artist to explore these entanglements. Again, this is a

perfect example of how the science itself is not enough; environmental humanities can raise these questions with different methods, for different publics. Sciences and humanities need each other, now more than ever.

**Water-related issues vary tremendously across the world. How do you approach water with a global perspective?**

Water itself teaches me a lot! I think in many ways I’ve modelled my research path after water’s movements – as something both extremely localised, but also totally global (water travels everywhere!). My work has led me into many exciting research collaborations, not only across disciplines, but internationally as well. I grew up in Canada, but I’ve spent a lot of time working in Europe, and in Sweden particularly. I am part of a major international consortium on Environmental Humanities based at Linköping University (Sweden) that links a number of universities worldwide, including, now, the University of Sydney.

Canada and Sweden have very different waterscapes than Australia – so it has been an interesting challenge for me to ground my research in a place that’s hot and dry, rather than cold and wet! But I feel exceptionally lucky to be here – Australia is a world-leading hub for cutting-edge research in the environmental humanities and this uni and my department are gaining an impressive reputation for gender and cultural studies expertise in this area. Where else would I want to be?

# What picture does “Arts” conjure in your mind?

## We ask a student of Classics and Ancient History

Simon Hill, BA (Advanced) 2012



Simon Hill

To be completely honest with you, I find this a difficult question to answer in so few words. In order to understand my perspective, it is necessary to fill you in on some context.

From 2010-11 I studied a Bachelor of Arts (Advanced), majoring in Ancient History and Archaeology, finishing with first class honours in 2012. Since then I have gone on to study Law, undertaking a Juris Doctor as a postgraduate, again at the University of Sydney. Early next year I will be working full-time as a lawyer, having completed these studies.

This transition has been enlightening. I saw first-hand a range of responses by others to my change in study. What “Arts” means to people is very different to the “Law”, and some of these meanings were quite at odds with my lived experience.

What picture does “Arts” conjure in your mind? I want to add in some more detail, correct some omissions, and render the artwork in colour.

“You feel the force of the truth that life is always changing, people are always different, and that power always moves. Because you feel its force, this truth becomes yours.”

**Simon Hill**

For some of you, a degree like this is a bit like a really bad former hairstyle. It is something you can enjoy having, even rejoice in, at the time you’re attaining it. You will defend it rigorously for a few years of adolescent rebellion. However, you then will begin to realise it must be put off to enter adulthood. In the end, the only evidence which remains is perhaps contained in an old photograph of you in funny clothes, or a piece of paper buried somewhere in a desk drawer.

Others of you might be a bit different. Like many people I have encountered over the years, you approve of the discipline, at least with what you say. You are able to state honestly that you think knowledge of the past is essential for leadership, or that philosophy produces the analytical and argumentative skills needed by modern professionals. But that’s it. It ends up being like a beard grown for Movember: something which could be done, and could be useful but is far from mandatory, would be inconvenient to do, and (you assume) you would only be able to produce results in a patchy and incomplete way. You can honestly say history or philosophy has value, but you do not really have the heart to follow it through.

That is understandable. As the playwright Arnold Bennet once wrote, “We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours”. In some ways, you cannot really know the true value of studying things like history, archaeology or philosophy until you have thrown yourself headlong into their mass and emerged slightly dazed on the other side. Let me try and give you some idea what this is like. I will focus upon ancient history.



We might think history always repeats. Various catchy quotes from famous people assert as much. But although this idea certainly appears with frequency, the emphasis is quite misleading: history is actually complicated, messy, problematic and volatile. In this milieu, historians must learn how to use recorded words, often written in an ancient language, as a conduit to the mind of a person born into a completely alien world thousands of years earlier. What results is not a glib assertion of cyclic history, but rather an appreciation for the great value and diversity of people at all times and places. This degree is about travel. You learn not only how to stand in these alien shoes but also how to walk many treacherous miles beyond the well-known “facts” and tropes of history, journeying into uncharted historical and philosophical territory. You learn to love the process of historical navigation and the exotic places it leads you. You feel the force of the truth that life is always changing, people are always different, and that power always moves. Because you feel its force, this truth becomes yours. And what does that mean?

First, if I can enter the mind of an ancient person through just their words, how much easier is it for me to grasp the commercial, emotional and practical concerns of a living person I can directly speak to? This interpersonal insight is a highly sought-after skill. It has, for example, led to success in local, national and international competitions in client consultation and legal negotiation. Now you are welcome to think that was all natural ability, but I highly doubt it. When you consider that my partner for the International Client Consultation Competition was a Sydney Arts graduate with a major in Ancient History, *and we reached the semi-finals*, I think the significance of this connection is hard to miss. Of course, these qualities have had other practical uses, from securing employment to achieving election to the University of Sydney Senate.



Second, the forensic mind of an ancient historian on the meaning and implication of words is well honed for legal study. As the importance and reach of parliamentary legislation increases, the need for lawyers to excel at close textual analysis grows. However, while a fundamental task, only one law subject (an elective) is dedicated exclusively to this process. Broad historical study certainly appears to offer a significant leg up. Entire cases depend on arguing persuasively for the meaning of a particular word or cluster of words. Skilful use of the legislative intent behind the text, complete with reference to previous versions of the Act, parliamentary speeches and the historical context, are also critical. Areas of law like this are firmly within the skillset of the historian.

Third, the subject matter, those otherwise inaccessible realms of study accessed through history, actually have great significance themselves. Many fundamental building blocks of our society, whether major religions or schools of philosophy, can be critiqued and explored properly through the insights that history brings. There are few things which people find so divisive, but in my own opinion the cure for conflict is not found in silence but in respectful discussion. You may disagree. But if you wish to comment accurately or persuasively on religion, arguing it is necessary or irrelevant, loving or intolerant, peaceful or violent, the evidence, context and lessons of history must be considered. Many matters in history are thoroughly contemporary. As Joe Murray once wrote: “More and more I read history. I often find it more up to date than the daily newspapers”.

Maybe it's time to start trying to grow that moustache. The results may surprise you.

## Alumni: Arts and careers

“I was looking for a degree that was general enough that it could be universally applied, while offering a diverse enough range of subjects to be intellectually stimulating... Studying a Bachelor of Arts helped foster my natural curiosity which is a key skill for a journalist!”

**Chloe Flynn**

BA/LLB (History and English) 2001

Producer, Channel 7's "The Morning Show" and "The Daily Edition"

“Spreading yourself across such a wide variety of subjects, meeting so many different people, and opening yourself to learning all these new and diverse things, for many people starts at university... but continues throughout life. A BA is about so much more than just filling the credit points quota. It really gives you the practical skills that you'll take into the workplace and beyond.”

**Laura Collins**

BA (History and English) 2012

Features and Culture Editor at ELLE Magazine

“The part of my degree that has been the most valuable is the ability to make connections. It's those critical thinking skills — that's really what an Arts degree does. Arts degrees teach you not to be afraid to express yourself.”

**Julia Wood**

BA Hons (History) 2008

Australian Financial Review Multimedia Producer/Reporter

“Even when I was at high school I yearned to join the ranks of the sandstone quad and the rich learning experience it offered. I can honestly say that I don't think I'd have the competency or wisdom to do what I'm doing now without my learning experience at the University of Sydney.”

**Adam Jacobs**

BCom/BA (Philosophy) 2007

The Iconic



Adam Jacobs

# China: Culture and experience

## An interview with Meaghan Morris

### Department of Gender and Cultural Studies

**Meaghan Morris** is Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies and Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Cultural Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Interview by Tess Lea and Julie-Ann Robson



Yu Kan Hing Memorial Pavilion, Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong. Photo by Baycrest.

“I had to become much less text-dependent and use the theatrical and performance arts at which Cantonese people excel just to make things work in the classroom. And because few Hong Kongers are equally fluent in all three languages spoken in their daily environment I learned to be comfortable living in a condition of partial understanding.”

**Meaghan Morris**

TL&JR You took up role of Chair Professor of Cultural Studies at Hong Kong’s Lingnan University in 2000, just three years after the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People’s Republic of China. That transfer coincided with momentous economic and cultural reforms, and the world now finds itself in what’s being called “the Asian century”. As someone who specialises in Cultural Studies and who lived and worked there for twelve years, can you remember what surprised you most? What rules did you have to learn about everyday life?

MM: Well, I’d never been to Hong Kong before the Handover so I was surprised by a lot! Most of my early shocks were to do with common Australian ideas about Hong Kong that turned out to be mistaken. Language, for example: unless you are in the small, elite zones of Central on Hong Kong Island and Tsim Tsa Tsui in Kowloon, or dealing only with professionals, it’s not true that “most people speak English”. Cantonese is overwhelmingly dominant, 97%. When I went there, 5% of Hong Kongers really knew English and 3% spoke Mandarin. There has officially been a big increase in the use of both over the years, partly from migration from the mainland where English is taught well as a language of economic success and carries no intimate colonial memory. The Internet has been enormous, too; some of my students could barely speak English but wrote fluently on-line. This tells you something about the segregation that prevailed in British Hong Kong, with the mass of Cantonese living in their own society run by Chinese institutions and customs but adapting British bits and pieces. Some of which have come to matter greatly to local people, like belief in free speech and the rule of law.

The language gaps shaped everyday life directly. I lived for years in Tuen Mun, in the far western new Territories where there were few foreigners in 2000. Buying food, furnishing a flat, organising deliveries ... all these things were very hard work in the days before on-line shopping and apps. So was teaching undergraduate classes, but that taught me wonderful new ways of interacting with students. I had to become much less text-dependent and use the theatrical and performance arts at which Cantonese people excel just to make things work in the classroom. And because few Hong Kongers are equally fluent in all three languages spoken in their daily environment I learned to be comfortable living in a condition of partial understanding.



Fishing boats in Aberdeen Harbour

That can be hard for academics. Some foreigners become paranoid, feeling excluded when people switch to Cantonese during a meeting held mostly in English. I learned to be trustful, assuming that people were gossiping or talking about the weather rather than about me, and that served me very well. I enjoyed not feeling obliged to understand everything going on around me; it was restful.

Among the rules I had to learn I'd say the most important was politeness in public behaviour. Hong Kong Cantonese courtesy rules are complex, and Australians tend to blow in with cartoonish ideas of "face" and assume that's all a myth anyway. It's not, but learning what rules of politeness govern which situations could take an outsider a lifetime, especially when the popular culture can be joyously vulgar and obscenity-loving in ways that seem familiar to Australians. The best advice I was given as a new arrival was that "inefficiency here is not a vice but discourtesy is unforgivable". You should never humiliate anybody, especially not a professional subordinate. It rebounds on you very badly. You also have to consult everybody in person to make sure that a decision is acceptable to all before it is announced. Consensus matters. If you do these things trustfully, Hong Kong is a wonderful place to work. The casual brusqueness that Australians take for granted these days in our institutional dealings with each other does not travel well in Asia.

TL&JR: Australia sees itself geographically and strategically well-placed to ride the coat-tails of the Asian century and the rise of China, but institutionally Australians themselves remain intrinsically and implacably Anglocentric. Can you see a way out of this seemingly paradoxical position?

MM: That's a tough one. We would be foolish to mistake that "riding the coat-tails" fantasy of being a resource-rich backyard and an elite academic finishing school for a long-term guarantee of a beneficial relationship with China, let alone with other countries in our region where people have their own anxieties about the "return" (as they see it) of China as a global power. Neither of those roles that we play now will last. Like other Western English-speaking countries we seem to have lost the capacity to plan for the long term, and this affects our educational policies.

For example, the collapse of language learning over the past 40 years has been disabling for us. It's not that people need to learn an Asian language to communicate but rather that the process of learning another language, any language, gives us entry at the level of experience to the ordinary cultural pluralism that shapes the realities of life in our region. Monolingual people are disadvantaged in business and professional life because it is harder for them to imagine the cultural differences that are not on the surface of a given social situation and thus to find ways of dealing with them.

Two other things could make a big difference to Australia's future. One is to ramp up the quality of our general knowledge about Asian societies, to develop in young people the same broad familiarity with the history, social issues and contemporary politics of the countries they deal with in the region that we expect educated people to have of Europe or the USA. It's not a matter of learning the Chinese dynasties off by heart or giving up your own background. The point is that if you don't know about the historical events that people refer to or recognise the names of political leaders or understand the conflicts of the day, you can't hold an intelligent conversation. This is self-exclusion: your interactions will be limited to routine business and you won't be able to develop any new opportunities that come up.

The other thing is to encourage young people to spend time living, studying and working in an Asian environment so as to grasp everyday life from the inside in a way that you can't as a tourist. This is one area where things are improving and young Australians have more literacy about Asian popular cultures than previous generations did. The rich mix of international students at a University like ours is also influential for developing friendships and conversations that shape the future.

Basically, we need to understand that the professionals influential in Asian societies have been doing these things for decades now — gaining general knowledge about Western societies, learning our languages, and living with us for the duration of a course or degree. They add that to the cultural knowledge needed for life in their own societies. We need to do the same thing if we are not to be left behind.

“... the process of learning another language, any language, gives us entry at the level of experience to the ordinary cultural pluralism that shapes the realities of life in our region.”

**Meaghan Morris**

TL&JR: In an earlier conversation you said that when you applied for your position at Lingnan University you were interviewed by twelve men in Armani suits. You also said that you were the first woman to hold a Chair Professor at the University, which was established in 1889. What advice would you give to women whose professional careers, like yours, take them to China?

MM: Well, I can't honestly swear that there were exactly twelve men or that they all wore Armani but that's the impression I got when I walked in the door! It was quite intimidating, a long row of men stretching along a table and one little chair opposite for the candidate. And yes, Lingnan began as a non-denominational Christian college in Guangzhou and has a proud history as one of the first modern institutions in China to train and employ Chinese scholars in a college setting.

But how I would cope as a senior woman at that time was actually an interview question. There was some anxiety that I would find the university too sexist. As it happens, I had worked for Australian newspaper editors and taught in Australian universities in the 1980s where the sheer crassness of the treatment of women in workplace culture far exceeded anything I ever had to deal with in Hong Kong! And while Chinese universities are a bit special as traditional patriarchal reserves, public life in China is bristling with strong, vocal businesswomen, political leaders, teachers and social activists, in many respects far in advance of here.

Like most things in Hong Kong there have been great changes in recent years and Lingnan now has many senior women. What I found important, though, was that as a white woman of a certain age I had two things going for me that outweighed my gender. One was seniority, and the other was relative exemption from racism. Age is still respected in Hong Kong institutions, and for older women coming from a throwaway society like ours that is a source of great pleasure and, ultimately, confidence. However I think that race is the most difficult area of discrimination in Hong Kong, not least because in the Chinese world there is much less hypocrisy about prejudice and little reluctance to express it. There's also a toxic combination of old Confucian hierarchies with the late nineteenth century Western language of "colour" that came in with the Chinese modernist movements. So for women going to work in China, I would simply say, be aware that racial privilege or disadvantage may be an important factor in your everyday work environment, and do some work on the Chinese history of these issues and on Chinese feminism before you go!

# Making history

Michael A. McDonnell  
Department of History

Mike McDonnell is an Associate Professor in the Department of History.



Adelaide Welling's project on the Willoughby Old Girls' 50th reunion transformed into an investigation into the Pallister Girls' Home: "the local corrective institution".

**In 2015 the History Department introduced three new senior units designed to get our History Majors making history themselves. It has been an exhilarating experience for all of us.**

We wanted to give History Majors a taste of independent research, even if they weren't sure about going on to Honours – although we've already seen a rise in interest in Honours, because of these new units.

### History in the Making

In this unit students research and write original essays based on primary sources that draw on their knowledge of any period, place or culture from history units they've completed. Tutor James Findlay notes that the research clusters students formed over the semester led to a "level of investment in each other's work" that was "unique to my experience in teaching".

### History and Historians

In this unit, students get a chance to undertake an historiographical essay, analysing how historians have written about the past. They choosing a topic based on an issue, approach, or debate they may have encountered in their previous units of study.

Coordinator John Gagne is surprised and energised by the results. The questions students address "were excitingly diverse; they dug into the construction of histories on at least five continents and over 10 centuries".

John was also caught up in the experience: "We had to learn how to 'talk history' across those spaces and times while still addressing central questions about the craft of interpreting the past".

One student concludes that the unit "was a great opportunity to place history and historians in their own historical contexts".

### History Beyond the Classroom

In this unit – that I have had the privilege of teaching – students come up with an independently framed public history project that builds an engagement with a community or local organisation. The unit grew out of the Department's Social Inclusion program, where students and staff work with low SES schools across Sydney and in regional areas.

History Beyond the Classroom introduces students to history as a lived and lifelong practice. They come to appreciate history as a vital individual, community, and organisational practice and experience.

"I enjoyed seeing students emerging as independent scholars, both in their specific skills and more generally in their attitude towards their work.... The result has been truly original and inspiring scholarship."

**Kirsten McKenzie**  
Coordinator, History in the Making



"History Beyond the Classroom": Miguel Alzona, Jacob Mark, Stephanie Barahona and Molly Clarke after their final presentation at Q Station. Behind them are some of the rock carvings being documented and analysed by the University of Sydney's own "Quarantine Project", directed by Annie Clarke.

### Experiment and adaptation

Recognising that most of our students don't go on to do Honours or postgraduate work, we wanted to push students to see how they might use their skills "beyond the classroom". It was a confronting experience for us all. We asked students to spend at least ten hours with a community or local organisation doing work of use to them, effectively as "background reading". Then, students were asked to frame a research question that emerged from that experience, and think about experimenting with the format of the presentation of that work.

We all had to feel our way forward slowly, but the students stunned me with their engagement, the diversity of their projects, and their ultimate enthusiasm for the work. They also pushed me to move "beyond the classroom", joining the "twittersphere" (@HstyMattersSyd) and starting a blog, which I hope will be embraced more generally by the department in the months to come.

### Students documenting history

In total, thirty-eight students made history together with thirty-four different organisations across Sydney and even in regional areas. You can read about some of their extraordinary work and the valuable lessons learned via their own – often humorous and always insightful – blogposts. There are so many great posts but one of my favourites, if I can have favourites, is "The Shady Origins of our Suburbs" by Sarah Simic:

"My project is to find the OFFICIAL date of establishment of each of the 27 suburbs under Fairfield Council... I have to go find primary sources showing the 'real' dates and give the the info to Fairfield Council (which is also my final project).

Historians love dates. They are our little comfort pillows; they slip complex situations into simple time frames. Ah, how lovely! How sweet! How romantic!

But I never imagined it would be so hard to find a single date... I feel like the gods of history have been toying with me. I feel like a mouse being cruelly chucked around by a cat: lulled into a false sense of security, only to be once again snapped up in its deceiving paws".

The major projects are only now just rolling in for assessment, but they include photo-essays, podcasts, websites, historic recipe books, public presentations, and even a play!

"I would like to commend you and the University of Sydney for providing a subject with practical experience of history in action as well as making a real difference to communities such as the Parramatta Female Factory Friends."

**Gay Hendrickson**  
Parramatta Female Factory Friends

### Engaging with the community and doing public history

While most students took the opportunity to eschew the traditional research essay and embraced public history as the best way to present their work, the origins of the class in our social inclusion efforts has meant that engagement has been central to what the students have been doing. In turn, this has meant the students are all doing local or community-engaged history as much as they are doing public history. The two do not necessarily always go together, but the students have convinced me that in combination, community-engaged public history makes for a more grounded, meaningful, and accountable approach to the past; one that challenges the hierarchies of academic history in many different ways – and often in ways that I did not foresee happening.

The blog posts written by students throughout this semester testify to the meaningfulness and transformative effect of doing community-engaged public history. This was reinforced when we asked students how their work this semester has enriched their sense of history, or made them think differently about the place of history in the world.

#### History is everywhere

Students immediately said that working with “real people” demonstrated how personal history could be, and how important it is to so many different kinds of people. They could also see how many different ways people use history, and just how different those ways could be from “academic history”.

**Indeed, many students said they understood now in a more tangible way the different roles of history and how it works in practice. One or two noted that they could now see history as a career – they could finally answer that question “what will you do with a history degree?”!**

Some of the students working with organisations that didn’t have a specific historical focus also said they felt they were doing important work documenting these organisations and their activities, and that history could be about history in the making, not just preserving sources or telling stories about the past. One noted how important it was to do this, because she felt that no one else would do so, and it could be lost. And even while it was frustrating at times, and not always historical in nature, students could see how our historical skills could be useful in non-historical settings, and with non-historical organisations.

The students’ work with different kinds of organisations also seemed to democratise their view of history. “History is everywhere,” they declared, and not just where historians (or archivists) say it is. One student said that his work made him realise that this was a great opportunity to reclassify what constitutes history – to query what we normally value. Working with community groups helps us “decentralise historical importance and what we should consider important. Local history shows us what is important to generations of residents and how important their history is as well.”

Significantly, some students said that they realised for different individuals and groups, history could be “therapeutic,” and they could see how people used history to “reshape themselves and their world”. One student said her community-engaged work made her feel like the course was helping her to help other people.

In the end, because they saw how seriously others took history, the students said they learned to take it seriously too. Indeed, many noted they had spent far more time on their work for this class than any others they had ever taken, that they “got involved more”, because they saw just how important their work was to other people – that it “mattered”. Students realised that people were interested in what they were doing, both inside and outside the University, and that (unusually) they were keen to talk about what they were doing in their history class! Suddenly, their work was not just about getting a good mark, “going through the motions” of writing an essay, or even developing skills. There was much more at stake, and students came to realise that the history they were doing was about much more than themselves.

Keep an eye on our blogsite for updates about these projects and links to the final results, too, most of which will be publicly available. We’ll also be using the blog to showcase the work of all of our undergraduates, Honours students, postgraduates, and staff alike. And feel free to join in the conversation via the comments feature (just click on the title of individual posts and you’ll see a place to add your opinion and suggestions).

We’re keen to continue making history together

– [blogs.usyd.edu.au/historymatters](https://blogs.usyd.edu.au/historymatters)





# 2015 SOPHI research grants



Sydney.edu.au/arts/sophi  
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

## Dr Peter Hobbins **Black Box Re-order: Aviation safety and Australian airspace, 1938–68**

Australian Research Council (ARC)  
Discovery Early Career Researcher Award

I plan to trace pivotal developments in air safety through the three decades preceding Australia's last major airliner crash in 1968. Modern Australia has an admirable aviation safety record, shaping national patterns of commerce, leisure and defence. This project aims to advance understanding of our contributions to global aviation safety. Historical research helps us understand how key human, technological and environmental factors changed local and international ideas about airspace, and how the complex systems governing our airways grew to function so effectively. The project promises a new understanding of how Australians came to rely upon technological black boxes and large-scale infrastructure.

## Dr Tamson Pietsch Associate Professor Julia Horne Professor Stephen Garton **Beyond 1914: knowledge, war, peace, and nation**

Australian Research Council (ARC)  
Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)

We will investigate how Australian university graduates with World War One experience contributed to the formation of the post-war Australian nation. It theorises the relationship between Australia's participation in World War One, and the production and dissemination of expert knowledge, including the creation of new professions in the 1920s and 1930s. This project plans to shift the focus of analysis from the ANZACs as a generic category, towards specific groups of ANZACs and their education and training and impact on the development of Australia, placing knowledge and expertise at the heart of the national story in the interwar years.



Eric Mortley Fisher (1889-1967) graduated in medicine from the University of Sydney in 1913 enlisted in the AIF March 1915 and by November was a medical officer working at a beach dressing station at Gallipoli. He returned to the University of Sydney and gained his Masters of Surgery.

The University of Sydney



Dr Dalia Nassar

### **Representing Nature: Romantic Empiricism and Environmental Philosophy**

Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project

This project aims to investigate a distinctive tradition of empiricism that emerged in Germany during the Romantic period; illustrate important parallels between this tradition and contemporary environmental philosophy; and articulate the ways in which the methodological innovations of Romantic empiricism can address the key challenges facing current environmental thought. The expected outcomes of the project will be a richer and more nuanced understanding of one of the most crucial periods in the history of German philosophy; important insights into the central concerns of environmental philosophy; and new conceptual and methodological tools for thinking about the natural world and the human relation to it.

This is just a selection of the research grants awarded to SOPHI staff in 2015.

For more information go to:  
- [sydney.edu.au/arts/sophi](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/sophi)

Professor Iain McCalman

### **Understanding Australia in The Age of Humans: Localising the Anthropocene**

Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project

The project aims to undertake a comprehensive investigation of Australia as a distinctive locality within the global idea of the new epoch of humanity known as the Anthropocene. It aims to analyse and narrate how human interventions have come to transform Australian environments in fundamental and enduring ways, showing the history, impact and implications of human-influenced biophysical planetary change within our distinctive and vulnerable continental and ocean environments. It also plans to use both print and museum environments to develop new understandings of the cultural dimensions of the “Age of Humans”.



# Selected publications

Professor Shane White  
**Prince of Darkness: The Untold Story of Jeremiah G. Hamilton, Wall Street's First Black Millionaire**  
St Martin's Press, 2015.

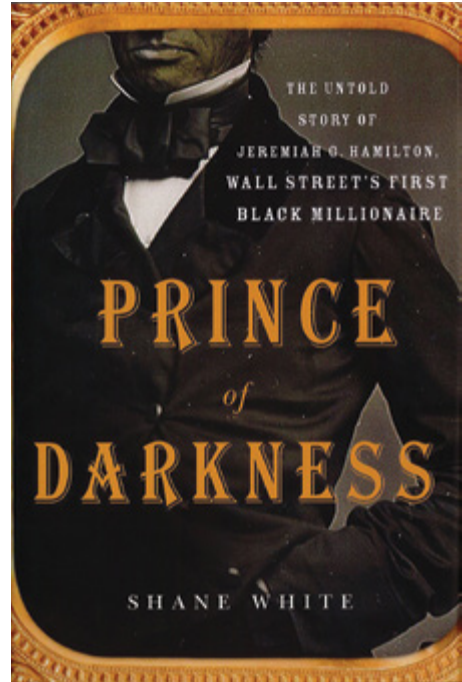
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In the middle decades of the nineteenth century Jeremiah G. Hamilton was a well-known figure on Wall Street. Cornelius Vanderbilt, America's first tycoon, came to respect, grudgingly, his one-time opponent. The day after Vanderbilt's death on January 4, 1877, an almost full-page obituary on the front of the National Republican acknowledged that, in the context of his Wall Street share transactions, "There was only one man who ever fought the Commodore to the end, and that was Jeremiah Hamilton".

What Vanderbilt's obituary failed to mention, perhaps as contemporaries already knew it well, was that Hamilton was African American. Hamilton, although his origins were lowly, possibly slave, was reportedly the richest coloured man in the United States, possessing a fortune of \$2 million, or in excess of \$250 million in today's currency.

In *Prince of Darkness*, a groundbreaking and vivid account, eminent historian Shane White reveals the larger than life story of a man who defied every convention of his time. He wheeled and dealt in the lily white business world, he married a white woman, he bought a mansion in rural New Jersey, he owned railroad stock on trains he was not legally allowed to ride, and generally set his white contemporaries teeth on edge when he wasn't just plain outsmarting them.

– [www.jeremiahhamilton.org](http://www.jeremiahhamilton.org)



“If this Hamilton were around today, he might have his own reality TV show or be a candidate for president... An interesting look at old New York, race relations and high finance.”

*New York Post*

“Alexander wasn't the only controversial Hamilton from New York. After prodigious research, Professor Shane White rescues Jeremiah G. Hamilton from oblivion”

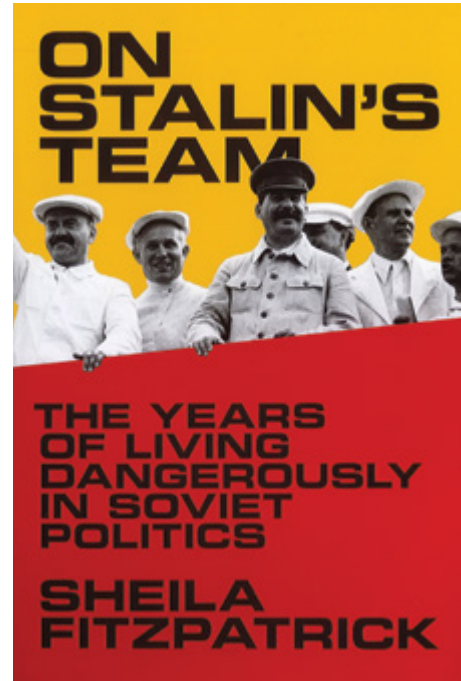
*The New York Times*

Professor Sheila Fitzpatrick  
**On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living  
 Dangerously in Soviet Politics**  
 Melbourne University Press, 2015

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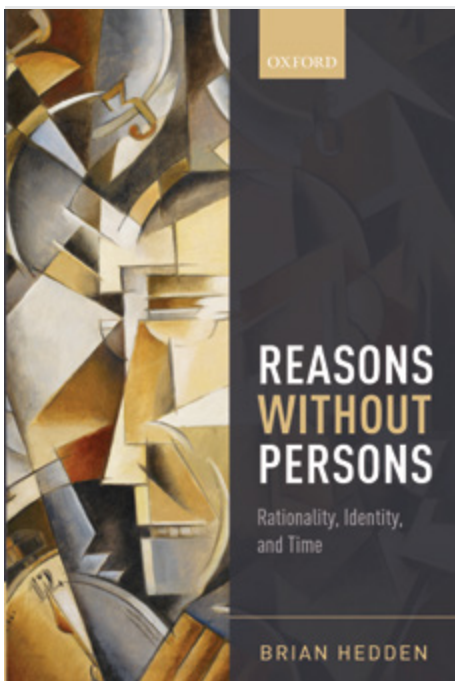
Joseph Stalin was the unchallenged dictator of the Soviet Union for so long that most historians have dismissed the officials surrounding him as mere yes-men. *On Stalin's Team* overturns this view, revealing that behind Stalin were a dozen or so loyal and competent men who formed a remarkably effective team from the late 1920s until his death in 1953, when they accomplished a brilliant transition as a reforming "collective leadership".

Drawing on extensive original research, Sheila Fitzpatrick provides the first in-depth account of Stalin's dedicated comrades-in-arms, who not only worked closely with their leader, but constituted his social circle. Key team members were Stalin's number-two man, Molotov; the military leader Voroshilov, the charismatic and entrepreneurial Ordzhonikidze; the wily security chief Beria; and the deceptively simple Khrushchev, who finally disbanded the team in 1957 to become sole leader of the Soviet Union.



Dr Brian Hedden  
**Reasons without Persons:  
 Rationality, Identity, and Time**  
 Oxford University Press, 2015

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Brian Hedden defends a radical view about the relationship between rationality, personal identity, and time. On the standard view, personal identity over time plays a central role in thinking about rationality. This is because, on the standard view, there are rational norms for how a person's attitudes and actions at one time should fit with her attitudes and actions at other times, norms that apply within a person but not across persons. But these norms are problematic. They make what you rationally ought to believe or do depend on facts about your past that aren't part of your current perspective on the world, and they make rationality depend on controversial, murky metaphysical facts about what binds different instantaneous snapshots (or "time-slices") into a single person extended in time.

Hedden takes a different approach, treating the relationship between different time-slices of the same person as no different from the relationship between different people. For purposes of rational evaluation, a temporally extended person is akin to a group of people. The locus of rationality is the time-slice rather than the temporally extended agent. Taking an impersonal, time-slice-centric approach to rationality yields a unified approach to the rationality of beliefs, preferences, and actions where what rationality demands of you is solely determined by your evidence, with no special weight given to your past beliefs or actions.

# News and events

Archaeology?  
Classics and Ancient History?  
Gender and Cultural Studies?  
History?  
Philosophy?

Whatever your interest there's always something happening at SOPHI. Our staff are in the news, on the airwaves, at the festivals and in the media. We have all sorts of events – everything from Sydney Ideas to Summer Schools in Greece and Rome.

As part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, SOPHI has a vibrant culture, and we look forward to meeting you. Keep up to date at our website, or follow us on Facebook!

– [sydney.edu.au/arts/sophi](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/sophi)



## Sydney Ideas Think again

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History graduate Noel Pearson and philosopher Jonathan Lear in conversation at a Sydney Ideas event.



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