Dr Wayne Atkinson is an elder of the Yorta Yorta/ Dja Dja Wurrung Indigenous Nations of the Murray-Goulburn and Central Victoria region, Australia. For most of his life he has worked extensively in Indigenous Affairs, specialising in research, writing, teaching Indigenous studies, and in land and heritage reform. For the last three decades Wayne has worked on Yorta Yorta land and heritage matters and was a principle claimant in the Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim (1994-2002). He was responsible for researching and preparing the previous claim of 1984, which formed the basis of the Yorta Yorta v State of Victoria and Ors (1994-2002).

The Yorta Yorta case was dismissed on appeal to the High Court in December 2002, but the Yorta Yorta bounced back as the Traditional Owners and negotiated land justice and land management rights to their ancestral lands. This was successfully achieved through the political campaign for National Parks and Joint Management Agreements of the Barmah-Millewa Forest Wetlands, 2008-9, which is the heartland of traditional Yorta Yorta territory. This remarkable story is a key feature of this site-see Yorta Yorta Struggle for Land Justice.
Academic Background:

Wayne completed his academic studies with LaTrobe University and was selected as Indigenous scholar of the year in 1996. His studies are in the disciplines of Archaeology, History, Politics and Legal Studies, which he used to complete a PhD on the Yorta Yorta Struggle for Land Justice in 2000. The thesis analyses the extent to which the Yorta Yorta have gained land justice on the basis of their inherent rights. In the words of his great Uncle William Cooper, the thesis argues that ‘Not One Iota’ has been delivered to his people. Whether the creation of National Parks, Joint Management and the option of a hand back leaseback agreement, delivers the land justice that the Yorta Yorta have waited patiently for, is now back on the front of the political agenda.

Teaching Profile

Dr Atkinson is a Senior Lecturer and Fellow at the University of Melbourne. He continues to teach Indigenous Studies at the University and many other Education Institutions in Australia and overseas. His course: POLS30028: Oncountry Learning: Indigenous Studies, is taught in Yorta Yorta country with Yorta Yorta achievers, Lou Bennett, Andrea James, and Shane Charles. It has been running for nearly 14 years and has achieved outstanding quality of teaching results—see Quality of teaching results. As a Senior Fellow and Yorta Yorta elder, Dr Atkinson also mentors other Indigenous students and is currently working on participatory action based research with his people including research on the current Barmah-Millewa National Parks, Joint Management and Traditional Owner land management issues see Paper on Joint Management

Teaching Outcomes

Dr Atkinson was awarded the prestigious Australian Government Teaching Award for Teaching Excellence, and the University of Melbourne Award for Excellence and Innovation in Indigenous Higher Education, 2013.

He has also been awarded the highly acclaimed University of Melbourne’s Thomas George Tucker medal, for Outstanding Achievement, 2017. The award is in recognition of ‘his outstanding achievements, excellence in scholarship and substantial academic contributions to the University, the Faculty of Arts and to public life’—see other ‘Awards for Teaching and Indigenous Scholarship achievements’, 1996-2019.
The main impetus to these awards is the overwhelming and positive teaching results that Dr Atkinson has achieved in his Indigenous Studies teaching and the Oncountry Learning course, POLS30028. Indeed the concept of Oncountry Learning is an exceptional and innovative initiative that Dr Atkinson has designed and taught over for 15 years in 2018. It is a unique teaching and culturally grounded education program that has attracted much interest from other courses within the University of Melbourne.

The overall results for teaching the course can be seen from the assessment of the Quality of Teaching Results QOT, and Student Evaluations over the last 15 years. As can be seen from these outstanding and consistent teaching outcomes achieved the course has gained high acclaim within the Academic world and is regarded as a ‘Maximum in Australian Indigenous Studies teaching and student learning’.

Dr Atkinson also created the Oncountry4Health program designed for Medical Students at the University of Melbourne which he has taught for the last 5 years. The course is similar to POLS30028 in its structure and teaching pedagogy. It is taught as a community based education program that allows students studying to be Doctors to visit the major Indigenous health delivery programs in the Murray Goulburn region of Yorta Yorta country. It has produced equally outstanding results and Quality of Teaching Outcomes.

Another course is now being planned for 2018 in the Law Faculty. Dr Atkinson has been invited to develop and deliver this course which will focus on a range of legal and Indigenous rights based issues being studied in the Law Faculty. Like the other courses, it will allow students studying law to visit communities to examine and discuss issues of land justice, cultural heritage and broader Human Rights issues at the community level. This course will complement the successful bridges that have been built between the University and the Indigenous community in line with the concept of ‘Transformative Learning’ and ‘Knowledge Transfer’.

International Studies and Research

In his pursuit of knowledge and cross cultural understanding, Dr Atkinson has travelled extensively. He has built bridges between, local and Indigenous groups throughout the world. His journeys of learning have included North America, Europe, the South Pacific and Asia where he has conducted research and presented papers on comparative Indigenous issues. He has spent time giving lectures and talks in London, Leicester, Ireland, Japan, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Amsterdam, New Zealand, and has visited China to study water and cultural heritage issues and the construction of the Three Gauges Dam project.
on the Yangzi River. He has written extensively on British Colonial policy and practice in former British colonies, and has established a research base at the National University of Ireland in Galway to where he likes to return whenever the opportunity arises.

His most recent visit was to Indo-China where he visited sites in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia to gain a broader understanding of south east Asian history, culture and economic development, which included a visit to the Hill Tribes of Thailand and a stay in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. He has recently visited western Europe including Spain and Portugal where he conducted lectures and completed research on European colonisation from the 15th-17th Century and its impact on Indigenous Australia in the 18th Century. Whilst in Spain he took special interest in the ‘Treaty of Tordesillas’ signed between the Portuguese and the Spanish at Tordesillas, Spain on the 7 June 1494, which divided the newly discovered lands outside Europe between Spain and Portugal. Research materials from this visit were used for a lecture series on Colonisation, at the University of Melbourne, Victorian University, and the Monash Centre, Prato, Italy, 2011-2017.

In his role as a Senior Fellow, Wayne continues to enjoy his worldly travels focusing on Archaeological sites and history of the Altamira Rock Art site in Northern Spain and some of the political history of the Catalonia and Bask Region of Spain. This visit attracted him to listen to a 4 hour lecture on the Spanish Civil war in Barcelona after reading George Orwell’s epic version of the war in his ‘Homage to Catalonia’ book, 1938. On return to Australia he spent some time in Eastern Europe familiarising himself with the pre and post war political history of Slovenia in the former Balkans region, under the former Hungarian-Austrian Empire, 1867-1918. Wayne completed studies in Sri Lanka in 2016 on the last leg of the Family History project discussed. Plans for further studies and travels are underway for this year, 2017, after teaching the Oncountry Learning course now in its 14th year.

At the moment Wayne and his wife Catherine Guinness have returned to Ireland for the Summer in Galway to do some travel in the Western region in County Mayo, Clare and Galway. Some of this time will be spent at the National University of Ireland Galway where Wayne has been a Visiting Fellow since the International Conference on Settler Colonialism was held in 2007.

Family History Research, 2012-2017

Dr Atkinson completed a family history project on his great grandfather Thomas Shadrach James who studied at the University of Melbourne before the turn of the 19th Century-see tracing the Footsteps of Granpa James: A Journey of
The project followed the footsteps of his great grandfather to his birthplace in Mauritius, in 1859. It then traces his heritage connections to his parent's birthplace in Madras and India. The journey of discovery then took him to Sri Lanka, where Thomas James cousins emigrated to after they left Mauritius before the turn of the 19th Century. It was Thomas Shadrach James studies in medicine and education at the University of Melbourne, his marriage into the Yorta Yorta people, and his outstanding visionary leadership that inspired many Yorta Yorta scholars to achieve in higher education. Examples of his leadership can be seen through the number of his descendants who have achieved academic success at the University of Melbourne—see images of Yorta Yorta scholars: Murrup Barak, Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development, University of Melbourne.

The following data provides an update of Dr. Atkinson’s CV for the continuation of the Senior Fellowship within the School of Social and Political Science.

Curriculum Vitae

Educational Qualifications:

- Doctorate of Philosophy, Faculty of Law and Legal Studies, LaTrobe University, 2001, in disciplines of Archaeology, History, Politics, Legal Studies and Indigenous Studies.

- Bachelor of Arts (Honors First Class) LaTrobe University, 1996.


Career History:

1959-1974: Worked in a wide range of employment including shearing, seasonal work, factory work, truck driving, builder’s laborer and concreting.

1975-1977: Studied with the Aboriginal Education Program at the South Australian Institute of Technology, North Terrace Adelaide.
1977-1978: Research Assistant with the Aboriginal Research Centre
Monash University. Coordinated Indigenous Studies program.

1978-1980: Received research grant from the Australian Institute of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, to conduct an Oral History
Project on Cummeragunja and Coranderrk reserves. Manuscript completed

1981-1982: Awarded an Aboriginal Overseas Study Grant to visit North
American Indian Education and Cultural Programs in Canada and the
United States.

- Published booklet ‘A Look at American Indian History Programs’ 1982-
  see Written Work.

- Established connections with North American Indian communities and
  studied Native American Indian Studies programs at Universities: Berkley,
  UCLA, South Dakota, Minneapolis, Arizona, Manitoba, Saskatchewan,

- Conducted research on British-Australia history in the Public Records
  Office, London; House of Lords Library, Westminster, and University
  Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University.

1982-1984: Full time studies, LaTrobe University and Researcher with
Yorta Yorta Tribal Council on land and cultural heritage matters.

- Prepared land and compensation claim which was presented to the State
  and Commonwealth Governments in 1984-5. Claim became basis of the

- President of the Koori Heritage Working Group, KHWG that achieved
  major cultural heritage reforms in the mid 1980’s including the

1985-1989: Employed as Koori Historian by State Government to consult
with the Koori Community and relevant Government agencies on the
establishment of a Koori Oral History Program.

- Developed ‘Conditions Agreement’ for the protection of Intellectual
  Cultural Property Rights ICPR and oral knowledge- the first of its kind
  in Victoria and Australia.
1989-1996: Manager of Koori Oral History Program and adviser to Victorian Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs on cultural matters. Took study leave from Koori Oral History Program, 1993 to continue academic studies and to work with community on the Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim.

- Completed Bachelor of Arts with Honors majoring in Archaeology, History and Indigenous Studies. Awarded Indigenous Scholar of the year, 1996.


- Conducted and supervised major information retrieval project on Yorta Yorta history and culture in Archives and Museums in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

- Participated in Mediation process and Federal Court Trial as claimant and researcher and assisted with coordination of claim hearing on site and in Melbourne 1996-2000.

- Member of Yorta Yorta Nations Elders Council; Truganini Scholarships Committee, University of Melbourne; Indigenous Sub- Committee of Academic Board, University of Melbourne; School of Social & Political Science Committees.

- Advisor, mentor: Indigenous studies students, University of Melbourne and Cultural advisor for the creation and presentation of Play: Yanagai Yanagai premiered at Playbox Theater, and performed in Wales and New York, 2003-5.

2004-2008: Produced Yorta Yorta Management Plan for the claim area with recommendations on structural arrangements for land management and the protection of natural and cultural features.

- Attended conferences in Australia, UK and Ireland presented papers and lectures at Leicester University, England and the National University of Ireland, Galway.


- Visiting Fellow National University of Ireland, County Galway and Monash Centre, Prato University, Italy. Presented paper on Indigenous
Human Rights in Australia, 2012—see written work.

- Cultural Adviser and Mentor: Indigenous students studying at University of Melbourne and other related academic institutions, including the Academy of Sport Health and Education and the Department of Rural Health Shepparton.

- Visiting Fellow University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Teaching Positions & Experience:


- 1993: Designed curriculum for course on Land Management for Aboriginal and European students doing Koori Gardening Apprenticeship Scheme, sponsored by DEET.

- 1996: Coordinator and Senior Lecturer in the Koori and Non Koori History course, History Department, Melbourne University.


- Sessional lecturer in ‘Aborigines and the Law’ course, Legal Studies Department, LaTrobe University.

- Freelance lecturer in Indigenous Studies courses at Deakin and Monash Universities, Catholic Education and Victorian Outdoor Education Program.


- Lecturer and adviser to Yorta Yorta Nations on land cultural matters and the establishment of National Parks and Joint Management structures for
the Barmah-Millewa National Park wetlands - see written materials on land and land management issues

2007-15: Coordinator, lecturer, cultural advisor and guest speaker: School of Social & Political Science, University of Melbourne; Victorian College of Arts, Summer School, Barmah Forest; Department of History, University of Melbourne, Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group; LaTrobe University, Bendigo.

- Guest lectures and research in Europe, London and Ireland and family research project in Mauritius, India.

- Visiting Fellow to South America and guest of Kichwa community in Ecuador and Peru including Archaeological research and studies of Inca culture at Machu Pichu Cusco and Manaus, Amazonia, Brazil.


- Senior Lecturer: Oncoutry4Health course, Melbourne Medical School, 2-5 March, 2015.

- Visiting Fellow, University of Copenhagen, Denmark and guest of Australian Ambassador, Denmark.

- Guest Speaker, Indigenous Health Conference, Department of Rural Health, University of Melbourne, Shepparton.

- Guest Speaker, Indigenous Studies courses, University of Melbourne

- Research, Family History, British Library and Archives, London

- Visiting Fellow, National University of Ireland, Galway, June-July, 2015.

2016-19: Coordinator of Oncountry Learning and Sessional Lecturer, Indigenous Studies program, University of Melbourne.

- Mentoring Indigenous students, University of Melbourne.

- Coordinator of Oncountry4Health course: School of Medicine, University of Melbourne.

- Sessional Lecturer in Indigenous Studies program.

• Visiting Fellow Bachelor College, Bachelor Northern Territory and Charles Darwin University.

• Research on National Park Management, Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks, Northern Territory-see Paper on *National Parks and Joint Management*.

• Adviser on Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board-see Discussion Paper: *Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Joint Management Board*.

• Visiting Fellow, National University of Ireland, Galway.

• Visiting Indigenous Scholar: International Conference on Indigenous Traditional music, Limerick University, Ireland.

• Indigenous elder and participant in Treaty and Recognition Forums, Melbourne.

• Research and documentation of Indigenous Sovereignty and Self Determination issues, University of Melbourne.

• Guest Speaker and participant: Aboriginal Victoria Forum Statewide Meeting on Treaty Discussions with the Victorian State Government, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

• Guest Lecture: Law School Students on Land Justice.

• Developing Oncountry Course for Law Faculty for 2018.

• Overseas Study and research in Spain, Morocco and National University of Ireland, Galway. Returning to Australia at the end of August, 2017.
Yorta Yorta to mark Oncountry success

By DARREN COYNE

An Indigenous education program taught in Yorta Yorta country in Victoria will celebrate a decade as a community-based program in February. The Oncountry learning course, which is fully accredited by the University of Melbourne, caters to Indigenous, non-Indigenous and international students.

Created and coordinated by Dr Wayne Atkinson, a Yorta Yorta Elder and senior lecturer at the university, the course is taught by Yorta Yorta people on their country.

Dr Atkinson told the Koori Mail that he was very proud of the course and the success it had in raising awareness of Yorta Yorta culture among students. “After ten years it’s a good time to reflect on the good results we have had, and that’s because of the continued contribution of Yorta Yorta people,” he said.

“The feedback from students has been fantastic, with some saying it’s the best course they’ve ever done, which is overwhelming.”

Dr Atkinson said the success of the course was largely due to Yorta Yorta people using the storyline approach. “This method of learning is further exemplified by linking the stories with the tangible evidence of Yorta Yorta occupation, and historic places like the old Cummeragunga school, which was featured in the famous Sapphire film production by Tony Briggs, who is a Yorta Yorta playwright,” he said.

I coordinate the course and have other Yorta Yorta teachers who are all trained in education, music, arts and theatre.” Teachers include Lou Bennett, who teaches and performs music she has penned during her music career with Trudie, and Shane Charles, who specialises in Yorta Yorta history and culture, and is a talented artist.

I’m told the course would be run from 2 to 9 February in the ancestral lands of the Yorta Yorta, which include the Borromine-Millewa Forest National Park.

The course, which has 35 students, is based at a camping resort on the Murray River near Cummeragunga, and is fully hosted by the Yorta Yorta community.
Written Work


Atkinson, W.R. *Searching the origins of Aboriginal Reserves through the lenses of Cummeragunja*, Paper, presented at 5th Annual Conference on Settler Colonialism, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2007.


Teaching Results for 15 Years of Oncountry Learning subject, 2003-2018:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLS30028 Oncountry Learning Year of Course</th>
<th>03</th>
<th>04</th>
<th>05</th>
<th>*06</th>
<th>07</th>
<th>08</th>
<th>09</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject was well taught</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject was Intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction With the quality of learning.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These are the Academic Board’s key criteria for the evaluation of education courses, and for identifying whether key elements of an effective educational environment are present or not. The ratings the subject gets is also included in the subject guide for students doing the course.
Percentage Achieved for Core Questions:

- Subject was well taught: 98.6%
- Subject was intellectually: 98.5%
- Overall satisfaction with quality of learning: 98.5%

As can be seen the course achieved 100% for a significant part of its duration. With the replacement of former Quality of Teaching (QoT) by the SES in 2011 with a stronger focus on ‘students learning experiences’, the course has performed consistently high in the key learning criteria.

Summary of Results:

- Now the scores are on the board, the relevant questions to be asked are: how do they rate with other subjects being taught across the University spectrum? Are they comparative with other subjects being taught? Or are they producing culturally different results?

- Given that the results consistently achieved over the period of teaching are grounded in an Indigenous epistemology and teaching framework, are they unprecedented within the University context?

These are important questions that will benefit the future consolidation, innovation and development of the concept of Oncountry Learning and Indigenous Studies teaching generally.

Dr Wayne Atkinson-Yorta Yorta/Dja Dja Wurrung
Senior Lecturer & Fellow
School of Social & Political Science,
University of Melbourne
waynera@unimelb.edu.au

http://waynera.wordpress.com/