Student Reflections are a sample of 7 years and other reflections can be accessed on the data base. The sample should be sufficient to give a clear and consistent indication of the quality of Student experience and Learning from the OCL process.

- ‘Spending one week OC has inspired me, empowered me, and changed me irrevocably’
- ‘One of the most profound and illuminating experiences I’ve had not only as an educational experience but on a personal level as well’.
- ‘It was the most eyes opening week of my life’.
• ‘I don’t feel that I’ve been introduced to information. I feel like I’ve been introduced to a person, to a people, to [Yorta Yorta] Country’.

• ‘OCL is an experience that shook me to the core, challenged my worldview, and at one point, left me without words’.

• ‘OCL has been an amazing experience that I will carry with me for the duration of my studies and beyond’.

• Easily the most engaging, rewarding and enjoyable subject I have ever taken. Amazing speakers, excellently organised and impossible to criticise.

• Best uni subject I have ever done, hands down. Invaluable experiences, learned more than any indigenous studies subject in the space of 5 days. Wayne Atkinson and the other teaching staff were brilliant.

• Learning as a group and getting out of the classroom. Also learning from elders in the community added a powerful component to the content.

• It is truly a testament to a brilliant course, fascinating epistemology and Yorta Yorta pedagogies- Liam Niam, PhD student, Monash University.

• ‘Tales of how great the course is even reach me in England’, Daniel Guinness, Australian Rhodes Scholar, Oxford University England, 16 April, 2014.

• ‘The course is stimulating; challenging and is truly multidisciplinary, spanning history, politics, health, and ecology from an Indigenous viewpoint.

2014: Student Reflections

• OCL is a subject like no other available at University. Being OC offers a new level and dimension of learning that cannot be realised from the classroom (Miranda Clark: 2014, 587421).

• The learning experience I had OC was more real than any other study I’ve done (Nadine Rudkine, 2014, 588325).

• The subject (OCL, 2014) offered me a chance to experience … and doubt whether I ever will again (Jacob Rodrigo, 2014, 585699).

• OCL has been the beginning of a new journey for me in so many ways that I had anticipated and has finally brought me back to the real world (Olivia Aitken, 2014, 583768).

• ‘On Country, has honestly been the highlight of my degree...it has given me such a greater understanding of the story of the Aboriginal people which I feel like I never
would have grasped without being on the land where it all happened’ (Alison Boast, Medical Student, Uni Melb, 5 March, 2014).

- ‘The subject (POLS30028: Oncountry Learning: Indigenous Studies) is regarded by our colleagues as one of the most imaginative programs in the country. Dr Atkinson has taken the teaching of Indigenous Studies to a new level and provided a role model for the new generation of academics working in the field.’ He also has provided an inspiring model for teaching that can be applied to other contexts and subject areas’ (Dean, Faculty of Arts, 28 February, 2014).

2016 Student Reflections

- Having interesting group discussions at the Yenbena centre and in our cabins. It really allowed us to reflect on our learning and develop ideas

- Alternative learning and teaching practices that facilitated a deeper understanding of indigenous issues and experience.

- It was amazing being on country, and learning in a more grassroots environment as opposed to within the classroom. Wayne, Shane and Andrea were amazingly patient with us, and the stories told were so important in that they were told on their country, through their eyes!

- Bridging the gap between theory and reality.

- Being able to hear the story of the Yorta Yorta people from their own mouths. Shane was a fantastic facilitator.”

- The holistic learning

- The truth conveyed and the connectivity of the subject matters to reality. Standing in a place and learning about was a truly immersive style of study that meant full absorption of material as well. Having the chance to reflect throughout the day and particularly hearing such a variety of esteemed people, directors of the centres we were visiting as well and extremely experienced teachers on the course

- The best aspects of the On Country Learning was how it gently and gradually exposes how there are many forms of learning that can leave a massive impact on us as students.

- One way of learning is standing on the country you are talking about, listening to the people from this country, seeing country, hearing country and sleeping on country. I also found myself being captivated by the stories of people and how they were told to us. The beauty of an oral tradition is something that I don't often have the privilege of being exposed to in University.
• On Country Learning really showed me how much more I respond, react and remember from this kind of listening and learning.

• I also found that connecting the dots between the river systems, the land, the people, the culture, the national park and its role, joint management and the continuing struggle for Indigenous rights recognised in the river was an important way to learn about Yorta Yorta waka and wala.

• This visit really spoke volumes in how these aspects are all connected, and how the struggle to keep this community together means keeping the land, water, culture and nature within Indigenous management.

• So there were a lot of great aspects to this subject but I also found it very special to spend time with you Wayne, Shane, Andrea and all the special guests who spoke to us and brought the present day Yorta Yorta land alive with stories!

• Being on country and seeing the significant sights

• Hearing first hand feedback

• I really enjoyed the collaborative nature of the subject and the ongoing guests who provided specific insights into the subject. I learnt so much and I was horrified by how little I did know. I am very glad I took this subject as a student but also for my own personal growth.

• The multitude of stories and perspectives that were offered. as well as the open and safe learning environment that was created that asked us to challenge ourselves but also made it ok to ask questions.

• This was the best subject I've ever done it was practical, challenging and the teaching was of an extremely high standard."

• Being Oncountry and learning directly from Yorta Yorta people on their waka - land was invaluable and provided us with tangible, feeling experiences to flesh out and make real what we've read in books. A different type of learning. so valuable.

2017 Student Reflections

• A really phenomenal experience. Very special and unique way to learn outside of the University context. Especially being around so many dedicated students and teaching staff.

• It was such a personal way of learning, I wish all subjects could be taught similar to this one
Being on Country, outside the walls of the classroom allowed me to learn more and in a deeper, more personal, more honest and more mind shifting way, then I have in any of my other subjects.

The tutors Wayne, Shane and Andrea and others we met along the way are incredible people. People with great depths of knowledge, a real dedication to teaching, generous, patient and welcoming.

I can't stress enough how important this subject is for giving students the opportunity to be open to new paradigms of knowledge, to uncovering and recognising privilege, to learning the truth of Australian history and to hearing the stories of amazing people.

The past week on Country has changed many things in me and taught me things I will carry with me perhaps for the rest of my life.

Having discussions with those I was sharing a villa with at the conclusion of the day

Learning from people who really cared about the subject and being on country and learning by doing and going rather than trying to comprehend subjects in a classroom which did not relate.

Also the amazing people involved in the learning and teaching of this subject made it the most enjoyable subject I have ever studied at the university.

The style of learning. Being On Country definitely made my experience much richer. I felt more connected to what I was learning.

I loved being able to learn about land rights while being on country, and being able to see and feel and walk through the country. I think it’s difficult to fully understand the issue without this.

The structure of the subject was really fantastic, going onto country to learn from elders instead of reading from a text book or hearing from a lecturer in a classroom was much more effective.

2018: Student Reflections:

Learning on country from Yorta Yorta elders was a once in a lifetime experience. Uncle Wayne is passionate, intelligent, kind and experienced. I am so thankful they welcomed us to their home and gave us this experience. I have never experienced a better team of educators, including Uncle Shane. It was the best subject I have ever taken during my degree and was life changing.

Locating complicated theory related to indigenous studies in a specific region and through the experience of the Yorta Yorta. Critically engaging with the spaces and
people that hold the natural and cultural heritage of place, as well as being sites of modern resistance and fluid identity was unique and enjoyable. I particularly preferred sessions within the national park and in community centres surrounding Shepparton.

- Being able to understand the course content better due to being off campus; the knowledge of the teaching staff; every student was eager to learn.

- This subject providing an exceptional experience and facilitated learning perfectly. It was enjoyable and challenging.

- The staff and students are incredibly supportive. The way this subject is taught has also enhanced my understanding and changed how I approach certain problems.

- Fantastic subject, with little to anything to improve on. Stimulating content and delivery that kept you thinking for the 6 days it ran.

- The subject is run as an experience, allowing the student to see, feel, hear, smell and touch the knowledge or history.

- That type of learning is essential to the subject and its purpose. It was moving and engaging.

- True, direct storytelling/teaching on land, and by the people most qualified to do so. Such a privilege to have been part of Oncountry Learning. I’ve been able to bolster my resolve in incorporating this knowledge and these passions into my career.

- I felt honoured, trusted, humbled. We were enveloped into this story, this ongoing story of Australia, Indigeneity and land, but Wayne, Shayne, Leon, Damian and Cathy with so much generosity. Their leadership, wisdom and kindness were invaluable.

- Being on country. Relaxed learning environment. Teaching staff were fantastic.

- Everything! I had an amazing week and learnt so much, OCL is the best subject I've done at university.

- Everything about this subject was phenomenal. The teachers, my peers, the elders that helped us along the way, our awesome bus driver Ellen, the spaces we were taken to create an immediate connection between the information and the meaning of it to the Yorta Yorta people.

- Never in my life have I learnt and experienced as much as I did in this subject and I will be forever grateful at being able to be involved in something as life changing as this.

- I sincerely hope more subjects like this will become available in more disciplines as this Uni and others because I really think every student should become involved in an experience like this.
• This was the best subject that I have ever done! Getting out of the classroom was refreshing, Wayne and his co teachers were engaging, and the social aspect of the course was a really nice way to begin the semester and make a few new friends. Learning about Yorta Yorta people from Yorta Yorta people is the best way to go about gaining a stronger understanding of Victoria's Aboriginal people.

• Wayne did an excellent job of looking after us, teaching us and making us feel welcome. I hope this subject continues to be available to students into the future, and must be taught by Yorta Yorta people if Wayne ever retires.

• This subject was the best subject I’ve ever done at Unimelb. The best aspects were being out on Yorta Yorta Country, being taught by a wide variety of Yorta Yorta community members. But everything else about the subject (the group barbecues, watching The Sapphire, getting to know Uncle Wayne and Uncle Shane, Cathy and Ellen) were also incredible and add so much to the experience.

• How can the course be improved? Question 12. Subject Report, 2018

  • None. There should be more subjects like this.
  
  • The scope from which students are selected provides interesting and varying opinions and discussion. However the differential in fundamental cultural competencies and related practice became frustrating for some students, myself included.
  • N/A
  • None
  • Nothing
  • Maybe 2 further sessions spread throughout the semester. One as a debrief and one as a check in for assignments, although it seems we can call on Wayne for this anyway.

  • I have no complaints.

  • Nothing! (This is very minor but my only suggestion would be to sort out keys before we go to the supermarket so people can shop together if they know they'll be staying in the same apartment)

  • I honestly couldn't fault, an amazing experience

  • None.

  • In a word - nothing. It was an amazingly generous and hugely intellectually stimulating subject.

• 2019: Reflections:
• I loved the fact that we were out On Country. I have never learnt more from a subject that from this one. Wayne and Shane have a way with words that helped me understand the history and cultural connections to the land. They also gave each of us all the time in the world to ask questions and helped us on our learning journey.

• It’s the best subject I have taken at Melbourne University.

• Being welcomed to hear about the struggles and triumphs within the Yorta Yorta community on their land was an invaluable experience.

• This was one of the best and most authentic learning experiences I have ever had. The variation in places we visited each day was terrific.

• I wish that this subject was a capstone for every uni student - we would like in a much better society if it was. I can’t thank Shane and Wayne enough for giving me this opportunity.

• This subject changed my whole outlook and trajectory.

• Being on country - the experiential element of the subject

• Learning from Indigenous people, rather than simply about them

• Accommodation was better than I expected it to be and the location was great.

• Teaching staff were lovely and very approachable, as was our bus driver Ellen

• Got to hear from lots of Yorta Yorta elders at various different community organizations

• Our classroom varied in location regularly - from the bush to a boat to the conference rooms at community organizations

• Got to know fellow students well thanks to spending six days with them

• Being on Country and learning directly from Yorta Yorta people about their land and experiences

• Hearing from community members about diverse projects, down time to process and chat with other students, emphasis on reflection.

• Different type of environment for learning, many different voices to learn from, beautiful sense of community.
• This subject has changed the way I look at my indigenous studies course and reignited inspiration to pursue these issues after uni.

• Shane and Wayne's teaching was incredibly engaging and real, the ability to be on Yorta Yorta land as well.

• The deep knowledge and personal teaching style of the coordinators, the Indigenous autonomy over the way the subject is run, the field trip aspect, the student autonomy around assessment.