



MIGRATION COURSEWORK IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

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One in four Australian's were born overseas, with nearly one in two having a parent born overseas. The economic impact of migration is increasing, and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Given the prominence of migration in economics, public policy, and social cohesion, there is a lack of coursework at a tertiary level to explore and understand migration in Australia. There needs to a better understanding about migration, which can begin at university.

Looking at 20 universities across Australia,¹ focusing on the Group of Eight, there are few undergraduate courses concerning migration in Australia. There is focus on international studies, which considers migration primarily as a subtopic.

¹ Australian National University ('ANU'), Curtin University, Deakin University, Griffith University, James Cook University, Macquarie University, Monash University ('Monash'), RMIT, University of Adelaide, University of Melbourne, University of Newcastle, University of Queensland ('UQ'), University of South Australia, University of Sydney ('USyd'), University of Tasmania, University of Technology Sydney, University of Western Australia ('UWA'), University of Wollongong, and UNSW.

The courses offered by institutions change each year. This report is based on information provided on universities websites as to courses offered in 2015 and 2016.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

There are a variety of disciplines that consider migration. Areas include Anthropology, Demography, Economics, Geography, History, International Relations, Languages, Law, Politics, and Sociology. Emphasis appears to be on the international aspect of this topic, with a deficit concerning domestic issues.

Courses on Australian Migration

Australian Law Schools are consistent in course choices. The majority of universities offer variations of Migration Law, Refugee Law, or both. Migration Law primarily concerns the Migration Act, focusing on the legal framework regulating migration to Australia. Similarly, Refugee Law is concerned with international obligations within domestic policy. Both are on an elective basis, and do not explore topics outside the current legal framework, thus avoiding any consideration of social policy and integration. Administrative Law is a compulsory unit offered at all Law Schools. While this considers a wide scope of law, it

has become a prominent part of migration law, regulating authorities in charge of migration to Australia.

There are few courses that specifically consider Australia's migration history. Only two could be identified; 'Migrant Nation: Culture and Identity' at University of Melbourne, and 'Migrants, Refugees and the Making of Modern Australia' at University of Adelaide. The latter course offered at University of Adelaide course had an enrolment of 145 students in 2014, and will be offered again in 2016. The course guide provides a more comprehensive history of Australian migration than that offered at most universities. It spans from the formation of the White Australia Policy through to detention in the last decade, exploring a number of historical and contemporary sources, and asking students to think and explain the motivations behind these issues. This provides a good example of the type of course that is missing in other institutions.

ANU houses a School of Demography, though this is targeted towards higher studies. It currently facilitates over 20 PhD candidates, including one focused exclusively on an issue within Australian migration. The University of Adelaide houses the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre, though, similarly, is concerned with higher studies and research projects. UQ houses the Queensland Centre for Population Research. It appears there is a broad knowledge base provided by professionals within this institutions with which to facilitate coursework. It is interesting that this is yet to translate to an undergraduate level.

Courses considering Australian Migration

A number of universities have a broad 'History of Australia' course, which flag migration as an underlying concept. Similarly, a few Schools of Economics offer a variation of Labour Economics, which consider the effect of migration on the labour market as a subtopic. These units tend not to be compulsory. The University of Adelaide facilitates a School of Geography, Environment and Population, which provide undergraduate courses relating to Australia's population. Migration, as a consequence, is considered, though is not the central focus.

Courses on International Migration

The majority of courses considering migration are concerned with an international perspective. This includes 'Mobile worlds: Migrants, Refugees and the Politics of Belonging' at Monash, 'Global International Migration' at University of Adelaide, 'Human Mobility and Migration' at UQ, and 'Cities, Migration and Globalisation' at UWA.

General international units are covered comprehensively. Each university within the Group of Eight has an international relations / international studies area, with some facilitating a specific Bachelor of International Relations (or similar). Courses within this field consider global migration to an extent. For example, USyd offers a compulsory first year unit titled 'Global Culture and Society', which explores topics such as population movements, global identities and diasporas. Similarly, ANU has a compulsory first year unit titled 'Introduction to International Relations: Contemporary Global Issues.' These

courses are only offered to students undertaking specific degrees. These courses are useful to provide an overview and contextualise global migration, though do not consider migration as an independent topic. Later year electives are more narrowly focused, considering global migration in greater depth. This includes 'People and Place' offered at UNSW, which looks at colonisation, migration and globalisation, and 'Globalism and the Politics of Identity' at ANU.

WHAT IS MISSING?

At an undergraduate level, there are a number of courses that consider migration as a underlying theme. All universities within the Group of Eight have a course that is related to migration in some sense, through a variety of disciplines. Exploring the idea at a domestic level is more difficult. Only two universities offer courses that concern Australia's migration history. What is missing in undergraduate coursework are units providing a coherent understanding of migration within Australia, and why this is important to understand.

There appears to be interest in courses considering migration on an international scale. This is evidenced by the continuation of courses offered by at least four of the Group of Eight universities. Given the popularity, it is odd that this is not reflected across a greater number of institutions. For example, the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences offered hundreds of courses in 2015, yet none involved migration within Australia. The most relevant course offered at ANU is 'Refugee Politics: Displacement and Exclusion in the Twentieth and Twenty-

First Centuries', which had an enrolment of 135 students in 2015. This reflects an interest in the topic, perhaps one that could be better explored if there was greater choice of units. No course specifically considering migration is compulsory for students to undertake at any institution. This creates a high chance that students will graduate having had no interaction with the topic.

At a graduate level, there is a greater selection of courses across universities. This includes universities offering Graduate Certificates in Migration Practice, leading to registration as a migration agent, as well as specific research schools as mentioned above. This points to the potential for more coursework at the undergraduate level. For example, USyd runs a course titled 'Comparative Migration Policy' at a postgraduate level; however, this is not replicated at an undergraduate level. Outside the Group of Eight, most universities offer a single course related to migration at an international level. Others offer nothing on the topic.

On 31 October 2014, there were over 400,000 student visa holders in Australia, constituting a significant percentage of the university cohort. Students are learning within a migrant society, though they are taught little of the history surrounding it. Migration has become an important part of the economy and of public policy, areas that are popular and well facilitated by universities. Migration has developed contemporary society, yet there remains a disconnect between what is happening, and what is being taught by universities. A greater appreciation of the importance of understanding migration would benefit both students and universities.