



The end of history...

in Australian universities

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Executive Summary

Undergraduate history degrees in Australia fail to teach fundamental aspects of Australia's history and how Australian liberal democracy came to be. Instead, they offer a range of disconnected subjects on narrow themes and issues—focusing on imperialism, popular culture, film studies, and ethnic/race history.

This report contains the results of a systematic review of the 739 history subjects offered across 34 Australian tertiary institutions in 2014, including 34 history programs and 10 separate ancient history programs.

Only 15 subjects out of 739 subjects surveyed covered British history, and of these, 6 were principally concerned with twentieth century British history—that is, the history of Britain after the colonisation of Australia.

Only 10 of the 34 universities surveyed offered subjects on the history of Britain as part of their history programs, even though Australian society is founded on British institutions. By contrast, 13 offered film studies subjects as part of their history programs

More universities offered subjects on the history of popular culture (8) than offered subjects on intellectual history (6).

The report also ranks universities depending on how closely they adhere to the Oxbridge model of historical comprehensiveness. Only the University of Sydney, Macquarie University and Monash University come close to the Oxbridge model. Some very small and new institutions—such as Champion College—rank as well on this measure as large and well-established universities like the University of Melbourne.

There is also a tendency for many smaller universities to offer subjects exclusively on Australian and twentieth century history, thus promoting a narrow and short-sighted view of history.

Undergraduate history informs the next generation of historians, the next generation of history teachers, and their future students. This report raises concerns that a new generation of Australians will have a narrow and fragmented grasp of our heritage, and lack an understanding of the institutions that have made Australia free and prosperous.

Introduction

It has long been recognised that history is a discipline with enormous social importance. More than two millennia ago, Cicero warned that a lack of understanding of history can lead to ignorance: ‘Not to know what happened before you were born is to be forever a child’.¹ More recently, Winston Churchill advised ‘Study history, study history. In history lie all the secrets of statecraft.’²

While there has been much public debate about the state of history programs in schools, comparatively little attention has been given to the composition of history courses at Australia’s at the tertiary level.

The composition of undergraduate history courses in Australia should be a major concern—not only for those who are currently studying or are intending to study history at university, but also for the general public. Since there is a strong link between academic trends and what is taught on campus, the composition of university history courses is a strong reflection of the state and health of the history discipline at large and the culture of Australia’s campuses.

These trends will also be passed to history teachers in secondary schools, thus ensuring that the ideas and perspectives embedded in an undergraduate history course have broader significance. There is a deep interaction between secondary and tertiary history education. Due to weaknesses in the secondary teaching of history, undergraduate history now has to take a larger burden of the basic introduction to historical knowledge, as one academic wrote in 2004:

We are now able to take less for granted about students’ knowledge of the past, or understanding of the nature of the discipline than we could even five years ago. First year is far more ‘introductory’ now—and is becoming more so—than it was even fairly recently.³

This report is the first comprehensive evaluation of the state of undergraduate history in Australia. It contains the results of a systematic review of 739 subjects offered across 34 Australian tertiary institutions. A total of 34 history programs were considered, in addition to a further 10 separate ancient history programs.

This is not the first attempt to have been made to catalogue the state of undergraduate history courses. The Australian Historical Association conducted three ‘State of History’ surveys between 1994 and 2002. In 2004, it commissioned and published a more comprehensive review of all undergraduate history offerings in Australia, compiled by Carly Millar and Mark Peel (hereafter referred to as ‘Millar and Peel’). Millar and Peel surveyed every history program in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Papua New Guinea, surveying a total of 57 separate tertiary institutions. The report concluded that very few institutions at the time offered ‘the canon’ of historical learning, a finding which we confirm in our study ten years later.⁴

¹ Cicero, *Orator Ad. M. Brutum*, 120.

² J. C. Humes, *Churchill: The Prophetic Statesman*, (Regnery History, 2012), 8.

³ C. Millar and M. Peel, ‘Canons Old and New? The Undergraduate History Curriculum in 2004’, *History Australia*, Vol 2 No 1 (2004)

⁴ C Millar and M Peel, *Australian Historical Association 2003-4 History Curriculum Review*

In order to assure the comparability of the 2004 study with our new findings, we have adopted many of the assumptions and cataloguing conventions used in the Millar and Peel survey. Our study extends their analysis and includes for the first time a complete database of all undergraduate history subjects taught in Australia in 2014. We have endeavoured to impose a more transparent methodology and to achieve greater consistency in the classifications adopted from Millar and Peel.

Furthermore, this paper also provides an assessment of individual history courses in Australia. While overall trends in history teaching are important, an assessment of the breadth and interests of undergraduate history course is relevant for students at the level of universities. Our data allows us to assess whether individual universities offer students the ability to study the origins of Australian society and the broader scope of history.

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Findings

Trends in undergraduate history

This review draws attention to a number of trends occurring in Australian history programs, particularly over the last decade since Millar and Peel's report. These changes reflect changes in the history profession, student demand, university and department resources, and broader social attitudes towards history.

Today, many institutions across Australia provide history programs that are very narrow in scope, sometimes in a chronological sense, sometimes in a geographical one, and occasionally in both senses. General history subjects are giving way to more specialised, disconnected, thematically-based subjects on narrow issues such as imperialism, film studies, and ethnic and gender perspectives, making it possible for students to graduate with a history major with extremely little knowledge of history beyond a few nuanced areas.

A substantial number of Australian institutions only offer subjects on Australian history and the twentieth century. While both of these areas should be key components of any present-day Australian undergraduate course, subjects on these areas are now drastically over-represented. Indeed, some programs do not offering subjects on other geographic regions and do not examine developments over the longer-term, neglecting several substantial areas of history.

Just as many of the programs currently offered across Australia are fragmented and parochial, many areas of history that are particularly important to Australia's heritage are severely under-represented. This is particularly clear in the case of British history.

Although modern Australia has essentially evolved out of British institutions, culture, and language, and although British history was a key component of most Australian history programs as recently as the 1980s, Millar and Peel noted a significant decline in the number of institutions offering British history in 2003-4. Already at that stage, only a small majority of institutions offered nineteenth century British history, and a minority offered early modern British history.⁵ In 2014-5, we see the natural consequences of the continuation of this trend. Of the 34 institutions surveyed, only ten offered British history in 2014, and even fewer offered subjects on early modern British history. Only one general history subject, at Australian National University, was offered on the history of England under the Tudors and Stuarts in 2014.

There are other areas that are also given less attention than is deserved, although the lack of British history remains the most glaring deficiency. There is a surprising lack of subjects offered on the European Middle Ages, which is no longer offered at the majority of Australia's universities. Also under-represented are subjects on early modern Europe in general, US history prior to the Civil War, and subjects on other significant nations and geographic regions, including Russia and the Middle East.

⁵ See *Ibid*, 8.

Ranking history programs

This survey includes a ranking scheme of all 34 institutions included in this survey. This ranking scheme was concerned exclusively with the range of subjects offered as part of the programs. The methodology used to develop this index is outlined in detail in the Appendix. Using Millar and Peel as a guide, 16 areas were identified for the purpose of this survey as key components of the history canon.

Table 1: The Historical 'Canon'

- Ancient Greece
- Ancient Rome
- Medieval Europe
- Renaissance/Reformation Europe
- Early Modern British (c. 1488-1688)
- Later Modern British (1688-1900 or 1914)
- Early Modern Europe (c. 1400-1789)
- Later Modern Europe (1789-1900 or 1914)
- US history
- Asian history (India, China, Japan, Southeast Asia or Asia at large)
- Australian colonial history (1788-1901)
- Twentieth Century Australia (1901-2000)
- Twentieth century world history
- Religious History
- Intellectual history
- Economic history

All institutions included in this survey were awarded a score out of sixteen, reflecting the number of the above areas offered as part of the history course. Note that only subjects available for enrolment in 2014 were considered. The institutions, therefore, did not obtain scores for listing subjects in these areas that were unavailable in 2014.

As a comparison, this survey also considered two leading international universities and ranked them according to the index developed here, with some minor alterations. The international institutions chosen were the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge—two universities which have strong reputations in the area of the humanities, which offer history programs that are in extremely high demand, and which obtained the highest scores worldwide in the 2014 QS World University Rankings for History.⁶

These institutions were ranked by the same criteria as the Australian universities, with some minor modifications. The requirement to offer colonial and Federal Australian history was removed, and so these universities were marked out of a total score of 14 instead of 16. Using this modified index, both received the highest possible scores of 14.

Table 2: Index of History and Ancient History Programs—international comparisons, 2014 (scored out of 14)⁷

University of Oxford (UK)	14	University of Cambridge (UK)	14
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⁶ QS Top Universities, 'QS World University Rankings by Subject 2014—History', accessed 5 January 2015, [http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/university-subject-rankings/2014/history-archaeology#sorting=rank+region="+country="+faculty="+stars=false+search="](http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/university-subject-rankings/2014/history-archaeology#sorting=rank+region=).

⁷ Australian universities have been awarded a score out of sixteen, which includes all of the criteria outlined above. International comparisons have been awarded a score out of fourteen, which includes all of the same criteria with the exclusion of Australian colonial and Federal history

None of the Australian institutions included in this survey met all criteria. The highest score (13) was achieved by the University of Sydney, followed closely by Macquarie University and Monash University (12). Australian Catholic University, Campion College, the University of New England, the University of New South Wales, and the University of Melbourne all followed with scores of 11. A majority of the institutions surveyed (18 out of 34) met less than half of the criteria specified in this index.

The results of the index are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Index of Australian History and Ancient History Programs, 2014 (scored out of 16)

University of Sydney	13	University of Notre Dame Australia	7
Macquarie University	12	Flinders University	6
Monash University	12	University of Wollongong	6
Australian Catholic University	11	Murdoch University	5
Campion College	11	Victoria University	5
University of New England	11	Curtin University	5
University of New South Wales	11	Central Queensland University	4
University of Melbourne	11	Charles Sturt University	4
Australian National University	10	Deakin University	4
Edith Cowan University	10	James Cook University	4
University of Adelaide	10	University of Southern Queensland	4
University of Queensland	10	Avondale College of Higher Education	3
University of Tasmania	9	Charles Darwin University	3
University of Western Australia	9	University of South Australia	3
La Trobe University	8	University of the Sunshine Coast	3
University of Western Sydney	8	Griffith University	2
University of Newcastle	7	Southern Cross University	1

Why history?

History is the storehouse of human experience. It provides evidence for how humans and their institutions, with all their faults and strengths, perform under a wide range of circumstances.

In a more general sense, history allows us to see the larger picture of what is happening to our society. In the words of the great philosopher Edmund Burke, ‘People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors.’ It is impossible to understand the traditions and institutions—both the good and bad—that we have inherited from previous generations in our society, whether they our literal ‘ancestors’ or not, if we do not understand how and why they have developed in that way over an extended period of time.

In the twenty-first century, the study of history is no less relevant or important than it has been at any time in the past. In some areas it continues to flourish. A 2013 survey, for example, found that ‘History’ was the tenth most popular undergraduate degree in the United Kingdom, based on the statistics from its *University Course Finder*.⁸ This is supported by the entrance statistics from the most prestigious universities in the United Kingdom—namely, the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. In 2014, Cambridge received 607 applications to study undergraduate history, while Oxford received 1029 applications—both far in excess of their actual intake of around two hundred students each year. At Oxford, ‘History’ was one of the most popular degrees in terms of the number of applicants in 2014, and it received around the same number of applications as ‘Physics’ (1011), ‘English’ (1142), and ‘Mathematics’ (917).⁹ The drive to study history remains very strong in the United Kingdom, at least at its oldest and most prestigious institutions.

In Australia the state of history as an academic discipline remains much less clear. In many institutions, history has been merged with other disciplines, including archaeology, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, and film studies. Though it would once have been considered a major academic discipline independently, it has of late become the norm for history to be shoved under the broad and ambiguous umbrella term ‘Studies of Society and Culture’, meaning that the precise number of students currently enrolled in history subjects and courses in Australia’s universities is not always reported.

Although history is clearly a major discipline of the humanities which enjoys widespread popularity outside of academia, its status as an academic discipline within academia in Australia is not secure.

The state of undergraduate history in Australia

This section of the report evaluates the subject offerings offered across all undergraduate history courses in 2014. The data in this report has been produced following a review all 739 subjects

⁸ “University rankings: the 10 most popular degree courses,” *The Telegraph*, 15 January 2013, accessed 5 January 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/9474443/University-rankings-the-10-most-popular-degree-courses.html>.

⁹ For Cambridge statistics, see The University of Cambridge, “Application statistics,” accessed 5 January 2015, <http://www.study.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/statistics/>; for Oxford statistics, see The University of Oxford, “Applications and acceptances by course, 2013 entry: all domiciles,” accessed 5 January 2015, <http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/admissions-statistics/undergraduate-admissions-statistics/admissions-statistics/courses>.

offered across Australia in 2014. Each subject has been evaluated separately and classified on the basis of its chronological coverage, geographic focus, topic, and the type of subject. For a detailed explanation of the methodology used in classifying the subjects, see the notes in Appendix A.

Table 4: Subject offerings in significant areas of history across all year levels, 2004 and 2014.

	Institutions offering topic, 2004	Institutions offering topic, 2014		Institutions offering topic, 2004	Institutions offering topic, 2014
Australian history	32	33	Race/Ethnic History	10	10
Twentieth century world history	27	27	Immigration	9	10
Imperialism/postcolonialism	15	21	Holocaust and Genocide	8	10
United States history	24	19	Nazism and Fascism	11	9
Asian history	26	21	Public History	16	8
War and Society	17	16	Popular Culture	15	8
Medieval Europe	16	14	History of Christianity	10	8
Indigenous Australia	14	14	Urban History	6	8
Film Studies	11	13	World War II	12	7
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	7	13	Sexuality	10	7
Early Modern Europe	14	13	Later Modern Britain	14	6
Place, Landscape and Human Memory	7	11	Environmental History	7	6
Later Modern Europe	25	11	Science/Medicine/Technology	14	3
Women/Feminism/Gender	17	10	Early Modern Britain/England	8	3

As we can see from this table:

- Australian history was the most commonly offered history subject at Australian universities. In 2014, all Australian universities with history courses with the exception of one (at Southern Cross University) offered at least one subject on Australian history.
- Twentieth Century World history was the second most commonly offered subject in Australian universities, and was offered by the majority of institutions surveyed. This was followed by subjects on imperialism/postcolonialism, post-Civil War United States history, Asian history, and the theme 'War and Society'.
- In general, there has been an increase in the number of twentieth century and Australian history subjects on offer over the last ten years. Subjects on these topics now form the bulk of the offerings at many smaller universities. There has also been an increase in the number of subjects offered on imperialism/postcolonialism, film studies, and Renaissance/Reformation Europe.
- The above areas aside, most other topics appear to have experienced declines in offerings over the last decade. The most significant declines occurred in the areas of Later Modern European history, Women/Feminism/Gender history, public history, popular culture, Later Modern Britain, Science/Medicine/Technology history, World War II, Sexuality, Early Modern Britain/England, Sport history, and Labour history.

This data and the changes over time are further illustrated in Appendix B, with comparisons drawn from the 2004 AHA study. The following discussion will focus on two specific issues that can be drawn from these results—namely:

- 1) the specialisation of history courses; and
- 2) trends in specific areas of history, including the twentieth century, Australian, and British history.

The Fragmentation of History

In their 2003-4 review, Millar and Peel noted a decline—mostly attributed to changing student demands and funding constraints—in subjects on the areas of history traditionally taught as part of history degrees in Australia, the so-called ‘historical canon’. This included subjects on all periods of Western history, British history, Ancient Greece and Rome, US history, and Australian national history. Instead, due to a perceived decline in demand in some areas—for example, British history and Early Modern history—there was an increasing tendency for departments to cancel subjects in these areas and to replace them with other, more specialised subjects on specific themes, intended to capture the interests of students.¹⁰

The data from this survey indicates that this trend towards specialisation has continued over the last decade. Table 4 shows that with the notable exceptions of the two most prominent areas (Australian history and twentieth century history) there have been substantial declines in offerings in most other areas of history. This is particularly the case for more ‘canonical’ areas such as United States history, medieval history, and Asian history.

Some of the more specialised areas, identified as ‘new histories’ in the Millar and Peel report, have also declined over the last decade. Subjects on women’s history and feminism have declined, as have subjects on sexuality. Some areas of ‘new history’, such as ‘food history’, have for the most part disappeared. Nevertheless, this has been countered by increases in the numbers of subjects on other thematic areas, including imperialism/postcolonialism, film studies, and subjects that loosely fit the ambiguous category that Millar and Peel labelled ‘Place, Landscape and Human Memory’. In general, traditional chronology-based subjects have given way to subjects on specific historical themes or abstract concepts, such as Holocaust and Genocide studies, international relations, urban history, and immigration.

Examples of subjects on specialised themes and topics include ‘Frida Kahlo: Performing Passion and Pain’ (University of New South Wales), ‘Myth and Fairytale’ (University of Newcastle), ‘Witchcraft & Demonology in Early Modern Europe & Its Colonies’ (University of Queensland), ‘Villains and rogues: A history of ideas about gangsters’, ‘The Renaissance Codes: Arts, magic, and belief’ (Monash University), ‘Pirates and their Enemies’ (University of Melbourne), ‘Tango, Samba, Salsa and Society: Latin America through Music, Food and Drugs’ (La Trobe University), and ‘The World’s Most Dangerous Places: Politics and History through Documentary’ (Edith Cowan University).

¹⁰ See Millar and Peel, *Australian Historical Association 2003-4 History Curriculum Review*, passim.

Table 5: Tally of subject offerings on key themes, across all year levels, 2014.

	Universities offering topic	Number of subjects		Universities offering topic	Number of subjects
Imperialism/ Postcolonialism	21	31	Mythology	9	15
International Relations	17	32	Nazism and Fascism	9	10
War and Society	16	20	Art History	8	11
Indigenous Australia	14	26	History of Christianity	8	11
Revolutions	14	17	Public History	8	11
Film Studies	13	15	Urban History	8	11
World History	12	14	Popular Culture	8	8
Place, Landscape and Human Memory	11	15	Sexuality	7	12
Holocaust and Genocide	10	15	Crime and Punishment	7	9
Literature and Culture	10	14	World War II	7	8
Women/Feminism/ Gender	10	14	Environmental History	6	6
World War I	10	13	Human Rights	6	6
Immigration	10	12	Terrorism and Conflict	6	6
Race/Ethnic History	10	10	History of Islam	5	9

Table 6: Offerings of significant areas of history (a 'historical canon') at Australian universities.

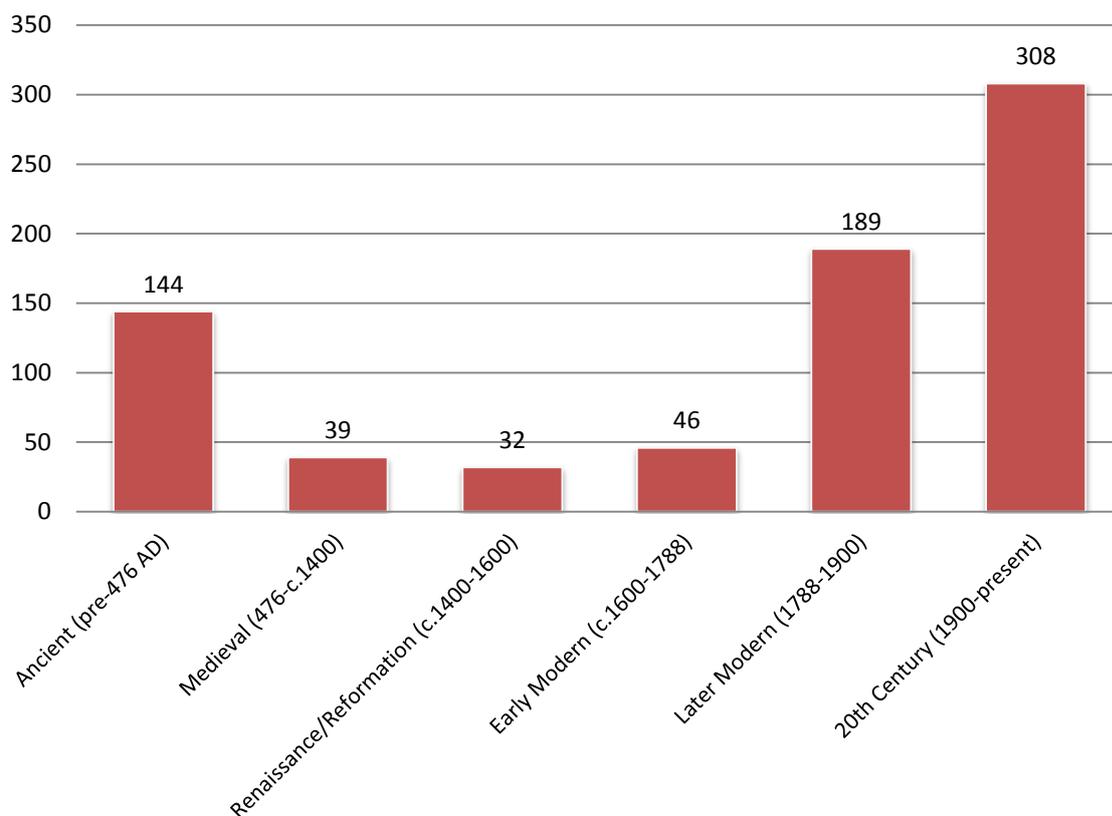
	Universities offering topic	Number of subjects		Universities offering topic	Number of subjects
Ancient Greece	17	66	Later Modern Europe	11	17
Ancient Rome	16	68	US History	19	37
Medieval Europe	14	22	Asian History	21	59
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	13	17	Colonial Australia	33	75
Early Modern Europe	11	15	Twentieth century Australia	32	102
Later Modern Britain	6	6	Twentieth century world history	27	78
Early Modern England/Britain	3	3			

The offering of such specialised options would be more acceptable if they were offered alongside more traditional introductory history subjects designed to give a grounding in broad historical periods. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case, and many broad historical periods are no longer taught as part of history courses. As Table 6 demonstrates, only 14 institutions offered subjects on medieval Western Europe, and only 11 offered subjects on later modern Europe. Very few universities offered subjects on nineteenth century British history, and only three offered subjects with substantial content on early modern Britain and England. For this reason, the fragmentation of history courses should be of great concern.

Historical periods

This survey found that the history of the twentieth century is by far the most frequently offered period of history covered in subjects at the institutions included in this survey. In fact, there were estimated to be some 308 subjects that included substantial content on the twentieth century, across all 34 institutions. 102 subjects were offered on twentieth century Australian history specifically, and 78 were offered in twentieth century world history.

Chart 1: Total history subject offerings by historical period, across all year levels, 2014.



While there is no cause for concern about this on its own, far more concerning is that subjects on the twentieth century form such a large portion of all the subjects offered. It is estimated that 40 per cent of all the subjects offered in 2014 included substantial content on the twentieth century. Many smaller universities—such as the University of South Australia, the University of the Sunshine Coast, Charles Darwin University, James Cook University, and Flinders University—offer courses that are chronologically constrained to the twentieth and nineteenth centuries. This development should be concerning, as it promotes a very short-sighted view of history.

The focus on Australian and twentieth century history results in earlier periods being neglected. This is particularly obvious in the case of medieval and early modern history, but is also true to an extent for ancient history.

Where it is offered, ancient history is a relatively strong area. Ten of the universities surveyed offered a separate Ancient History programs (or equivalent), and at some of these—particularly Macquarie University and the University of Sydney—it is flourishing. It is estimated that there were 144 subjects on ancient history offered across Australia in 2014, across 21 different institutions. 17 of these institutions offered subjects that cover ancient Greek history, and 16 offered subjects that cover Roman history. Most universities with ancient history majors offer broad surveys on Classical Greece, on the one hand, and the Roman Republic and early Empire, on the other. A handful—including the University of Melbourne and Macquarie University—also offer subjects that extend to the later Roman Empire and late antiquity.

Medieval history is not a thriving area of study, although it has never been so in Australia. Only 19 of the institutions surveyed offered subjects on periods that correspond with the medieval period of Western history, and only 14 of these offered subjects specifically on medieval Western Europe/Western Christendom. There has therefore been a very slight, though not substantial, decline in the number of universities offering Western medieval history since 2004, from 16 to 14. 39 subjects on medieval history were offered overall, and 22 of these were specifically about medieval Western Europe.

Table 7: Selected period/region combinations for pre-twentieth century history

	Universities offering topic	Number of subjects		Universities offering topic	Number of subjects
Ancient Near East	7	17	Early Modern Europe	13	15
Ancient Egypt	4	16	Early Modern England/Britain	3	3
Ancient Greece	17	66	Pre-Civil War United States History	7	7
Ancient Rome	16	68	Later Modern Asia	14	24
Medieval Western Europe	14	22	Later Modern Europe	11	17
Medieval England	1	1	Later Modern Britain	6	6
Medieval Islamic World	2	2	Later Modern Middle East	4	4
Byzantium	3	3	Later Modern Russia and Eastern Europe	1	1
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	13	17	Nineteenth century United States history	15	20
Reformation England	1	1	Colonial Australia	33	75

The majority of institutions offering medieval history only offered only one or two medieval history subjects, usually of the broad survey variety—like Monash University’s first-year subject ‘Medieval Europe’ and the University of Sydney’s first-year subject ‘The Middle Ages’.

Also notable is that most broad, non-thematic surveys of the medieval period—including the first-year subjects offered at Monash University and the University of Sydney—are generally more concerned with socio-cultural developments than political and institutional developments. This is perhaps because most medieval European history subjects are concerned with the entire Western half of Christendom rather than a specific dominion. Since the Western half of Christendom was

not part of a single secular political entity after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, it is nearly impossible to cover a millennium of its political and institutional history in a single subject, unless that subject is largely concerned with the history of the Papacy or geopolitics. This could easily have been resolved if these universities had chosen to focus largely on the medieval history of England, which is most directly relevant to the Australian context. It is unfortunate, therefore, that there are no subjects specifically about medieval England in the Middle Ages offered as part of any history majors in Australia, with the exception of a first-year subject at La Trobe University which includes substantial content on medieval English folklore. As such, it is safe to conclude that the political and institutional history of England in the Middle Ages is neglected at the vast majority of Australian universities.

In general, the Renaissance/Reformation period and the early modern period are faring no better than medieval history, although the number of institutions offering subjects on the Renaissance and early modern exploration has actually increased since Millar and Peel. There remain, however, very few subjects available on the Reformation, and only one has a major focus on the English Reformation specifically. In 2014, 19 institutions offered subjects on the Renaissance/Reformation era in general, and 13 offered subjects on Renaissance/Reformation Europe. This is an increase from 7 in 2014. The early modern period was slightly better represented than the Renaissance and Reformation. 24 institutions offered subjects that cover the early modern period in 2014, and 13 of these offered subjects that cover the history of early modern Europe specifically. 46 subjects were offered on early modern history in general, and 15 subjects were offered on early modern Europe.

Australian history

Much concern has been raised in recent times about the lack of popularity of Australian national history, both at school level and university level. An ARC-commissioned study by Dr. Anna Clark, the results of which were published in 2006 as *History's Children: History Wars in the Classroom* by the University of New South Wales, painted a grim picture of attitudes towards Australian history among school-age students.¹¹ According to Clark, school-age students find Australian history boring, although most also acknowledged that it was important and should be taught in schools.¹² Clark reported being surprised that the only topic moderately popular among students was the World Wars.¹³

The decline of interest in Australian history appears to be reflected in the number of students choosing to take history subjects at VCE level. In the space of two decades, the number of enrolments in Unit 3 Australian history declined from 2,504 in 1995 to 1,242 in 2013, although it should be noted that—by contrast—enrolments in Unit 3 of the international history subject 'Revolutions' climbed from 1,779 to 5,665 in the same period.¹⁴ At a tertiary level, numerous

¹¹ A. Clark, *History's Children: History Wars in the Classroom* (University of New South Wales Press, 2008), *passim*.

¹² *Ibid*, 5-6.

¹³ See *Ibid*, 43.

¹⁴ For these statistics, see Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, "VCE Unit Enrolments and Completions 1995-2012," accessed 5 January 2015, https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.vcaa.vic.edu.au%2FDocuments%2Fstatistics%2F2012%2Fsection2%2FVCE_Uni

opinion pieces and reports have similarly raised alarm over declining numbers of students enrolled in undergraduate Australian history courses—particularly at the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University.¹⁵

However, Australian history not only continues to be offered at almost all of the institutions, but is singularly the most common national history offered, by a considerable margin. This survey found that there were 137 Australian history subjects offered across Australia in 2014, including 75 subjects with content on colonial Australia and 102 subjects with content on Federated Australia. While a large number of these subjects tend to take strongly thematic approaches to Australian history—for example, viewed through the lens of international relations or indigenous-settler relationships—there is clearly a strong commitment to offering Australian national history in almost all of the institutions with history programs.

Some small institutions—such as Charles Darwin University and James Cook University—offer programs that focus almost exclusively on Australian history. A history course that focuses mostly or exclusively on the continent of Australia risks neglecting elements of history that have been fundamental to Australian culture and have shaped the world at large.

Table 8: Breakdown of Australian history offerings across all year levels, 2014

	Universities offering topic	Number of subjects		Universities offering topic	Number of subjects
Australian history subjects—all inclusive	33	137	Indigenous Australian history	14	26
Australian colonial history	33	75	Australia and war	8	8
Twentieth century Australian history	32	102	Australian international relations	10	12

English and British history

English and British history should be a core part of the majority of Australia’s history degrees, for the simple reason that, until quite recently in the broad scope of history, Australia’s own institutional history could not be separated from it. Although this would not have been questioned by the majority of academics forty years ago, nor perhaps even twenty years ago, there has been a trend in recent years that has seen a dramatic shift away from the study of Australia’s British roots. All too frequently, Australian history is detached from the British narrative. Instead, it has become fashionable either to view the history of the Australian continent—as a geographic entity—in isolation, or else to view it in the context of its non-Western geographic neighbours, with whom it shares very little institutional heritage.

t_Enrolments_and_Completions_1995-2012.xls&ei=FyGqVJeXHYKtmAWU5YHQcw&usg=AFQjCNE42C9Mqk0SOYAaUbwSVPctTiaM_Q.

¹⁵ For example, see Andrew Trounson, “Why our history’s losing its lustre,” *The Australian*, 7 March 2012, accessed 5 January 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/opinion/why-our-historys-losing-its-lustre/story-e6frgcko-1226291036958>.

Table 9: 1971 course list, the University of Melbourne¹⁶

<p>First year:</p> <p>British History 1485-1700 Modern History 1750-1850 Classical Studies</p> <p>Second year:</p> <p>Australian History 1788-1960 American History 1789-1941 European History since 1950 Modern Britain 1815-1940 Ancient History</p> <p>Third year:</p> <p>Australian History 1788-1960 (repeat) American History 1789-1941 (repeat) Earlier European History (primarily renaissance Italy and reformation Germany) Far Eastern 1600-1945 (with emphasis on Japan)</p>

Table 9 illustrates the full history course offered at the University of Melbourne in 1971. The course offered comprehensive treatment of various aspects of modern history, and from a predominantly 'British' perspective. One of the first year subjects offered was a British history subject which covered its history from the end of the Wars of the Roses, through the Reformation period, the Civil Wars, and ending shortly after the Glorious Revolution—a sequence of events that concluded with the establishment of England's parliamentary monarchy. A second subject continued this narrative with a slightly broader European focus up to the mid-nineteenth century. Australian history, American history, and British history since 1815 were only available at second and third year level. Early modern British history was virtually a prerequisite to all of these subjects.

There was evidently no dispute at the time that British history was a particularly important part of the major. Its historical importance at the University of Melbourne is further testified by the number of awards that were established for high-achieving students of British history towards the end of the twentieth century. These included the Laurie R. Gardiner Prize, established in 1993 for the undergraduate student who submits the best essay on early modern British history;¹⁷ the Donald Mackay Prize for British History, established in 1979 for the student who attains the highest mark in a second year British history subject;¹⁸ and the Marion Boothby Exhibition, which was re-established as a monetary prize from a pre-existing award in 1996 for the student with the highest

¹⁶ Course list derived from J. Salmond, "Adapting to Change: The History Department, 1970-2004," in *The Life of the Past: The discipline of history at the University of Melbourne*, ed. F. Anderson and S. Macintyre (Melbourne: Department of History, the University of Melbourne, 2006), 96-97.

¹⁷ See The University of Melbourne, "Laurie R. Gardiner Prize," accessed 6 January 2015, <http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/award/laurie-r-gardiner-prize>.

¹⁸ See The University of Melbourne, "The Donald Mackay History Prizes (British History)," accessed 6 January 2015, <http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/award/donald-mackay-history-prizes-british-history>.

mark in undergraduate British history subjects.¹⁹ Clearly, until very recently, British history was considered to be a fundamental element of the history course at the University of Melbourne.

Despite this, British history has become less fashionable in mainstream academia over the last thirty years. This was noted by Millar and Peel in 2003-4, who noted that early modern British history in particular was already disappearing from many of Australia’s universities. There has been an even more dramatic decline since then.

As Table 10 shows, only 15 subjects offered as part of history degrees across Australia in 2014, across only ten universities, included content on British history. The majority of the subjects are strongly thematically-based. Some, though offered as part of a history or ancient history major, are not history subjects at all.

Table 10: Breakdown of British history offerings across all year levels, 2014.

	Universities offering topic	Number of subjects		Universities offering topic	Number of subjects
British history—all inclusive	10	15	Stuart period, Civil Wars, and Georgian period up to c. 1800	3	3
Medieval England	1	1	Nineteenth century British history	6	6
Tudor period	1	1	Twentieth century British history	7	9

Table 11: A list of all 15 British history subjects offered in Australian universities in 2014.

ENGL2074	Jane Austen History and Fiction (Australian National University)
HIST2219	Tudor-Stuart England, c. 1485-1714: Politics, Society and Culture (Australian National University)
HST303	Literature and Society (Charles Sturt University)
HIST2002	The Rise of Britannia’s Empire and the Colonial Experience (Flinders University)
HIST3004	The Fall of Britannia’s Empire and the Postcolonial Experience (Flinders University)
HIS1MLH	Myth, Legend and History (La Trobe University)
HIS2LBR	Little Britain: Culture, Society and the end of the Empire (La Trobe University)
ATS2590	Twentieth-century Britain: Rule Britannia to cool Britannia (Monash University)
HIST2078	Britain 1700-1830: Power, Sex and Money (University of Adelaide)
HIST368	The Swinging Sixties: The 1960s in America, Britain and Australia (University of New England)
HIST2405	Churchill’s Britain: Crisis and Conflict (1875-1945) (University of Queensland)
CLAN3008	Roman Britain (University of Western Australia)
HIST3004	Twentieth-century Britain (University of Western Australia)
HIST3007	Crime and Punishment in Britain 1600-1900 (University of Western Australia)
102079.1	Britain in the Age of Botany Bay, 1760-1815

The period of British history with the most offerings was the twentieth century, even though this would seem less directly important from an Australian perspective than the earlier periods. Nine

¹⁹ See The University of Melbourne, “The Marion Boothby Exhibition,” accessed 6 January 2015, <http://shaps.unimelb.edu.au/award/marion-boothby-exhibition>.

subjects were offered with substantial content on twentieth century Britain. By contrast, there were six subjects on later modern British history offered across Australia in 2014, across six different universities. Only three subjects were offered on early modern Britain. Of these, one—at Australian National University—was a general history of the Tudor and Stuart era, one—at the University of Adelaide—focused primarily on the eighteenth century, and the other—at the University of Western Australia—was a specialised subject on the history of crime and punishment. In other words, the only British history subject offered in 2014 that appears to detail the turbulent events of the seventeenth century in context is the Australian National University subject. Of the remaining British history subjects, one focused on Roman Britain (at the University of Western Australia), six were about the twentieth century exclusively, and one—at La Trobe—included content on the folklore of medieval England.

According to Millar and Peel, eight universities still offered early modern British history in 2003-4, and fourteen offered later modern British history (two of which were offered at a first-year level, and thus were major parts of the degrees). There has therefore been a substantial decline in offerings for British history over the ten-year period.

Ranking history programs

As part of the present survey, an index has been developed to rank history programs offered at the institutions included in the present survey. This assessment has been undertaken on the basis of two major assumptions on the kind of content that students of history should—at the very least—have the *option* to study.

The first assumption is that a history course should offer as much historical breadth as possible. Most historians will doubtlessly have their own opinions as to which periods are the most significant and worthy of study. However, strong arguments can be advanced that every major period of recent human history has been ‘game-changing’ in its own way, and that the scene for any given event was set in the centuries that preceded it. For the purposes of this report, therefore, it is maintained that an ideal history program should offer its students the opportunity to study the broad sweep of human history, including all periods of Western history since at least the birth of Classical historiography and the emergence of written sources.

The second assumption is that geographic scope of the history degree should be relevant to Australia’s cultural, political and regional situation. Of course, it can only be a good thing if the university can afford to offer subjects on the history on regions that are somewhat more peripheral to present-day Australia—such as Africa and Latin America—but priority should be given to regions that are particularly significant to Australia’s political and cultural heritage and contemporary international affairs.

Millar and Peel identified a number of key regions that were sought at a first-year level, which the compilers of the report had evidently singled out as being of particular relevance to the Australian situation at the time. These included: Britain; Europe; America; Australia; Asia; Africa; the Pacific; New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea.²⁰ We will broadly follow Millar and Peel in identifying most of these areas, with the exclusion of the Pacific, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea—which were included because the 2004 survey also included universities from these areas—and Africa—which is somewhat peripheral and is seldom covered in Australian history courses. Millar and Peel established that history degrees in Australia should offer subjects on Britain, and we follow their lead. Sixteen key areas of history were therefore identified—namely:

- Ancient Greece*
- Ancient Rome*
- Medieval Europe
- Renaissance/Reformation Europe
- Early Modern British (c. 1488-1688)
- Later Modern British (1688-1900 or 1914)
- Early Modern Europe (c. 1400-1789)
- Later Modern Europe (1789-1900 or 1914)
- US history
- Asian history (India, China, Japan, Southeast Asia or Asia at large)
- Australian colonial history (1788-1901)*
- Twentieth century Australian history (1901-2000)*
- Twentieth century world history
- Religious History
- Intellectual history*
- Economic history*

²⁰ Millar and Peel, *Australian Historical Association 2003-4 History Curriculum Review*, 18-21.

Most of the above key areas—including the two periods of British history—were also identified as key components of the first year in Millar and Peel.²¹ The areas which have been added or altered for the purposes of the present report are indicated with an asterisk in the above list. Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome are an addition to the list since Millar and Peel—despite supposedly including ancient history subjects in their study—did not include any data for ancient history. The broader category of Australian history has been divided into colonial and Federal Australian history. The additional topics ‘Intellectual History’ and ‘Economic History’ have also been added to the list as they are considered to be of particular importance. Religious history includes Jewish and Islamic history, in addition to the history of Christianity.

Using the classifications described in the above section, the data was searched to determine whether each institution offered subjects on the specific topics used in the index. Institutions were then given a score out of sixteen, reflection of the number of key areas offered in the course.

This index does not take into account the relative size of the history departments, the quality of the teaching, the total number of subjects offered, or even the structure of the degree; it is purely intended to be a measure of the scope of each program and the content of the subjects that are offered. The results are tabulated in Table 12, followed by the scoring system for each individual university.

Table 12: Index of History and Ancient History Programs, 2014

University of Sydney	13	University of Notre Dame Australia	7
Macquarie University	12	Flinders University	6
Monash University	12	University of Wollongong	6
Australian Catholic University	11	Murdoch University	5
Campion College	11	Victoria University	5
University of New England	11	Curtin University	5
University of New South Wales	11	Central Queensland University	4
University of Melbourne	11	Charles Sturt University	4
Australian National University	10	Deakin University	4
Edith Cowan University	10	James Cook University	4
University of Adelaide	10	University of Southern Queensland	4
University of Queensland	10	Avondale College of Higher Education	3
University of Tasmania	9	Charles Darwin University	3
University of Western Australia	9	University of South Australia	3
La Trobe University	8	University of the Sunshine Coast	3
University of Western Sydney	8	Griffith University	2
University of Newcastle	7	Southern Cross University	1

²¹ See Millar and Peel, *Australian Historical Association 2003-4 History Curriculum Review*, 19-20.

Australian Catholic University

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			11/16

Australian National University

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	Yes	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	Yes	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			10/16

Avondale College of Higher Education

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			3/16

Campion College

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	No
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	Yes

Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			11/16

Central Queensland University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			4/16

Charles Darwin University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	No
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			3/16

Charles Sturt University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			4/16

Curtin University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes

Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			5/16

Deakin University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			4/16

Edith Cowan University

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			10/16

Flinders University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	Yes	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			6/16

Griffith University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	No

Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			2/16

James Cook University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			4/16

La Trobe University

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			8/16

Macquarie University

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			12/16

Monash University

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes

Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	Yes
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			12/16

Murdoch University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			5/16

Southern Cross University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	No
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	No
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	No
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			1/16

The University of Adelaide

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	No
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	Yes	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	Yes	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			10/16

The University of Melbourne

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes

Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	Yes
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			11/16

The University of Newcastle

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	No
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			7/16

The University of New England

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	No
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			11/16

The University of New South Wales

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	Yes	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			11/16

The University of Notre Dame Australia

Ancient Greece	No	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	No

Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			7/16

The University of Queensland

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	No
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	No
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	Yes	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			10/16

The University of South Australia

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			3/16

The University of Southern Queensland

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	Yes
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			4/16

The University of the Sunshine Coast

Ancient Greece	No	US History	No
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Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			3/16

The University of Sydney

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	Yes
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			13/16

The University of Tasmania

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	No
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	Yes
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	Yes
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			9/16

The University of Western Australia

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	Yes	Asian history	No
Medieval Europe	Yes	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	Yes	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	Yes	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			9/16

The University of Western Sydney

Ancient Greece	No	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	No
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	Yes	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	Yes	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	Yes	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			8/16

The University of Wollongong

Ancient Greece	Yes	US History	No
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	Yes	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			6/16

Victoria University

Ancient Greece	No	US History	Yes
Ancient Rome	No	Asian history	Yes
Medieval Europe	No	Australian colonial history	Yes
Renaissance/Reformation Europe	No	Twentieth century Australia	Yes
Early Modern British (c.1450-1688)	No	Twentieth century world history	Yes
Later Modern British (1688-1900)	No	Religious history	No
Early Modern Europe (1600-1789)	No	Intellectual history	No
Later Modern Europe (1789-1900)	No	Economic history	No
TOTAL:			5/16

Conclusion

This survey has illuminated some of the problems with many undergraduate history degrees offered across Australia. This survey has confirmed and extended the findings of the Millar and Peel review. The old 'historical canon' has been eroded, and at many institutions across Australia has ceased to be taught.

In general, the offerings in 2014 were more fragmented and parochial than ten years previously.

They were fragmented because the canon has given way to a plethora of subjects on specific historical themes—such as imperialism/postcolonialism and international relations—which do not generally provide a connected account of broader historical developments or give a sense of wider historical context.

Although many universities have ceased to offer early modern and medieval history, twentieth century history and Australian history now dominate the offerings across the board. Indeed, many smaller universities only offer Australian and twentieth century history, and therefore provide a very narrow and short-sighted view of the human historical record.

The consequences of this are twofold: first, the fragmented nature of many history degrees means that hard knowledge is being undermined, and students will not have the opportunity to gain an understanding of a full, connected account of history from their university studies. Second, the fragmented nature of many courses means that many important aspects of Australia's heritage are no longer taught at an undergraduate level.

Modern Australia has a rich and exciting heritage that extends back well beyond the late eighteenth century, and well beyond the continent of Australia itself. It is important that we recognise the aspects of our heritage that have allowed Australia to flourish as a prosperous and stable liberal democracy. Unless we look back at the long tradition of Australia's heritage—as it evolved not only in Australia itself, but also in Britain, the United States, continental Europe, and beyond— we as a society risk devaluing those aspects. For these reasons, the plight of undergraduate history in Australian institutions should be a major concern to all who value Australia's culture and society.

researchers did take ancient history courses into consideration and there certainly would have been a wide range on offer at the time.

To avoid these issues, therefore, the present survey has adopted similar classifications to the 2004 review, but approached the survey on a 'subject' level, rather than a 'program' level. In the course of this survey, all 739 subjects offered as part of history programs across Australia have been considered, independently assessed on the basis of the information available online, and categorised according to six criteria: 1) the institution at which the subject is offered; 2) the year-level of the subject; 3) the chronological period or periods covered in the subject; 4) the geographic scope or focus of the subject; 5) the topic or theme of the subject (if applicable); and 6) the type of subject (i.e. 'survey', 'specialist', or 'theory and skills'). We have also published the full list of subjects with our classifications online, for public consideration.

Classifications 3 to 6 used in this survey are broken down and explained in detail below.

Chronological Scope

The chronological classifications used in this survey are based on those used in the 2003-4 review.

The 2003-4 review made a point of identifying where subjects on the medieval period, the Renaissance and Reformation, early modern Britain and Europe, modern Britain and Europe, and the twentieth century world were offered. None of these periods were defined in detail, and so it is not apparent exactly which period was considered to encompass the 'Renaissance/Reformation', when the 'early modern' period ended, and when the 'modern' period began.

For the purposes of the present survey, each period has been loosely defined in the following way:

- Ancient (pre-476)
- Medieval (476-c.1400)
- Renaissance/Reformation (c.1400-c.1600)
- Early Modern (c.1600-1788)
- Later Modern (1788-c.1900)
- Twentieth Century (1900-2000)
- General history

Note that subjects which cover more than three of the above historical periods (for example, a subject that covers ancient, medieval, Renaissance/Reformation, and Early Modern history, or a subject that gives a general overview of all human history since prehistoric times) are classified as 'General History' subjects, as it is considered that subjects with such a broad scope are unlikely to give anything more than a surface account of these periods.

Equally, a subject that does not focus on any specific period but focuses on case studies from a number of different periods is also classified as 'General History'. Subjects such as the University of Melbourne's 'A History of Violence' and Australian National University's 'Colonialism, Sex, Race and Gender: Historical Episodes' fall into this category.

Geographic Scope

In addition to being classified by chronological period, all subjects have also been classified by geographic focus, either by nation or by broader region.

The classifications include all modern nations, regardless of relative importance. The extensive range of Australian history subjects excluded, regional—rather than national—histories appear to have been the norm. For example, medieval history subjects tend to focus on the entire region of Western Europe rather than a specific political entity, such as the Papacy or the kingdoms of England and France. Relatively few specific nations were therefore identified. They included:

- Australia
- Brazil
- China
- Great Britain/England
- France
- Germany
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Russia
- Tibet
- Turkey
- Vietnam
- United States of America

Note that ‘Great Britain/England’ may refer to a number of different historical states that have been geographically located in what is now England since antiquity, including the Roman province of Britannia, the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Danelaw of the early medieval period, the medieval kingdom of England, the British Empire, and the modern United Kingdom.

In addition, this survey also took into account various broader geographic regions. These include:

- **Western Europe:** Subjects concerning the history of Western Europe in general, with ‘Western’ generally being defined as all regions of Europe to the west of (and including) the modern-day nations of Denmark, Germany, Austria, and Italy.
- **Asia:** Subjects on the history of Asia at large. Asia here incorporates all nations to the east of Iran, including China, India, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam, in addition to Pacific Island nations. In addition, following the Millar and Peel review, we have also made note of the specific regions of **Southeast Asia** and **Pacific Asia**.
- **Middle East:** Subjects on the Middle East, which—for the purposes of this survey—broadly encompasses the predominantly Islamic regions of the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, and some North African nations such as Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria.
- **Latin America:** Subjects on the history of Latin America—that is, all nations in the Americas in which Spanish or Portuguese are the major languages. This includes most of the South American continent, including large nations such as Brazil, Argentina, and Columbia, and some North American nations such as Mexico and Cuba.
- **Africa:** Subjects on the history of Africa, which is here defined as the entire continent of Africa with the exception of nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea, which have been included under the ‘Middle East’ banner.

This survey also used specific geographic categorisations for states or civilisations which—unlike ancient China or the medieval kingdom of England—have no modern direct equivalent, and which encompassed a number of different modern nations, regions, and continents.

The historic states and civilisations identified in this survey were:

- **Ancient Egypt**—Includes subjects on the civilisation that flourished along the Nile River between the fourth and first millennia BC.
- **Ancient Greece**—Includes subjects on ancient Greek civilisation between the Archaic age and the Roman conquests in the second century BC. Greek civilisation was not constrained to the modern nation of Greece; it also extended to other areas such as Anatolia, Sicily, certain colonies in Western Europe, and—following the conquests of Alexander—across much of the Middle East.
- **Ancient Rome**—Includes subjects on ancient Rome. This includes subjects on all periods of Roman history prior to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD, including the Roman Kingdoms, the early Republic, the late Republic, and the Roman Empire. At its height in the first and second centuries AD, the Roman Empire incorporated much of Western Europe, Mediterranean Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Northern Africa.
- **Byzantium**—Includes subjects on the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD. Based in Constantinople (now Istanbul), at its height in the sixth century the Byzantine Empire controlled much of the Mediterranean world. Following the early Islamic conquests in the seventh century, the empire survived in a reduced form for centuries, and for much of the Middle Ages retained control over much of Anatolia, the Balkan Peninsula, and parts of Italy.

In addition to the above, subjects which do not focus on any specific region, nation, or civilisation, encompass the history of more than three of the above, or concern the history of the world at large have been classified ‘**Global/World**’ history subjects.

Topic and Theme

In 2014 AHA review, the researchers identified a number of different ‘topics’ or ‘themes’ that commonly recur among the history offerings. These included:

- Theory/Ideas/Philosophy
- Women/Feminism/Gender
- Aboriginal/TSI
- Crime & Punishment
- Pre-20th C World History
- 20th century World History
- World War Two
- Nazism/Fascism
- The Vietnam War
- War & Society/Conflict
- The Holocaust/Genocide
- Religious History
- History of Islam
- Race/Ethnic History
- Urban
- Labour
- History of the Family
- History of Sexuality
- Science/Medicine/Tech
- Environmental
- Imperialism/postcolonialism
- Nationalism
- History of Sport
- Film History
- Jewish
- Immigration

The present survey has used these thematic classifications as a basis to construct a more detailed list of topics and themes. Not all subjects have themes, but many of the more specialised subjects have strong thematic elements. A list of themes used in this survey is given below with short explanations of each topic and examples of subjects that fall into the category.

Theme/Topic	Explanation	Examples
American Civil War	Subjects on the history of the American Civil War.	Civil War Era America (FLINDERS); The American civil war (MONASH)
Archaeology	Includes archaeology subjects offered as part of a history or ancient history major.	Pompeii in Context (ACU); Practical Archaeology (UOM); Archaeological Field Work (MACQ)
Art History	Includes art history subjects offered as part of a history or ancient history major.	History and Theory of Art I (AVONDALE); Art of Byzantium (LA TROBE)
Communism	Subjects on the history of communism and communist states, particularly the Soviet Union.	Bread lines behind the Iron Curtain: Everyday life in communist Eastern Europe (MONASH—not offered 2014)
Crime and Punishment	Subjects on the history of crime and punishment.	Crime and Punishment since 1700 (MURD); Crime and Justice (ANU)
Drugs	Subjects on the history of drug trades, drug wars, and drugs in medicine.	On Drugs (UNSW); Drugs and Alcohol (CSU)
Economic history	Subjects on the history of economics, money, and financial systems.	Money and Society from late antiquity to the financial revolution (Cambridge, UK); British economic history since 1870 (Oxford, UK)
Environmental history	Subjects on the history of the environment and human interactions with the environment.	Australian Environmental History (CQU); Environmental History (UWA)
Exploration	Subjects on the history of (predominantly European) exploration.	Exploration: Columbus to the Moon (ANU); Exploration and Empire (WOLLONGONG)
Family and Daily Life	'Old Social History' subjects, or subjects on the history of daily life and family.	Australian Social History (ACU); Living in Modern Australia (USYD); Life in the Ancient World (AVONDALE)
Film Studies	Subjects that examine history through film or the interactions of film with history.	Film and History (CSU); The Ancient World through Film (UOA); European Film and History (USYD)
History of Christianity	Subjects on the history of Christianity, Christian thought and philosophy, and the Christian church	Early Christian Literature and Thought (MACQ); Medieval Heresy (UOQ); The Birth of Christianity (USYD)
History of Islam	Subjects on the history of Islam and Islamic Civilisation.	The First Centuries of Islam (UOM); Islam in Contemporary Asia (CURTIN)
Holocaust and Genocide	Subjects on the Holocaust and the history of genocide.	Genocide—Post 1945 (ANU); The Holocaust (FLINDERS)
Human Rights	Subjects on the history of human rights, theories of rights, and human rights movements.	The Origins of Human Rights (USYD); Human Rights in History (ACU)
Immigration	Subjects on the history of immigration, immigrant groups, and immigration experiences.	Populate or Perish: Australia's People (DEAKIN); Migration Stories in a Global Context (LA TROBE)
Imperialism/Postcolonialism	Subjects on imperialism, colonies, indigenous populations, and the dissolution of empires.	Indigenous Peoples in Settler Colonies (ACU); Colonial Latin America (UNSW)
Indigenous Australia	Subjects on the history of Indigenous Australia and Indigenous culture.	Aboriginal Cultures (UNISA); Indigenous Perspectives (USQ)
Intellectual History	Subjects on the history of ideas and intellectual movements.	Ancient Greek Philosophy (UTAS); History of Western Ideas (USQ)
International Relations	Subjects on the history of relations between states and regions.	US Foreign Policy Since 1945 (ACU); Australia in a globalising world (MONASH)

Jewish History	Subjects on the history of Jewish people and Judaism.	From Ur to Babylon: A History of Israel From Abraham to the Babylonian Exile (MACQ); The Jews in the Modern World (MONASH)
Labour History	Subjects on the history of labour movements and the working class.	Living Australia 1800-2000: An Autobiography of Working Class Australia (WOLLONGONG)
Literature and Culture	Subjects on literature, performing, and literary culture offered as part of a history or ancient history program.	Jane Austen History and Fiction (ANU); Greek Tragedy (NEWCASTLE)
Mythology	Subjects on ancient mythology, typically found in ancient history courses.	Classical Mythology (UOM); Myth, Magic and Religion in the Ancient World (UOQ)
Nationalism	Subjects on nationalism and history.	Comparative Nationalism (UWS)
National History	Subjects on the political, economic, or institutional history of a specific nation.	Germany 1866-1945 (ACU); Twentieth Century Australia (CSU); Modern Israel: History, politics and society (MONASH)
Nazism and Fascism	Subjects on the history of Nazism and Fascism, and particularly Nazi Germany.	Fascism and National Socialism (UOA); Understanding Nazi Germany (UNSW)
Pirates	Subjects on the history of pirates and piracy.	Pirates and their Enemies (UOM)
Place, Landscape and Human Memory	Subjects on the interaction between memory and history and concepts of place.	Visions of Australia: Time and Space from 1700 to 2010 (DEAKIN); Memory and the Politics of Difference: Sex, Race and Belonging (FLINDERS)
Popular Culture	Subjects on the history of popular culture in the later twentieth century.	Australian Popular Culture (ACU); From the Beats to Big Brother: Popular Culture Since the 1950s (MACQ)
Public History	Subjects on historic conservation, archives, oral history, museum curatorship, and related areas.	Introduction to Historical Cultural Heritage (JCU); Local and Community Histories (SCU); Cultural Heritage (USC)
Race/Ethnic History	Subjects on the history of race and ethnicity.	Race in America (UOM); The African American Experience from Martin Luther King to Barack Obama (NEWCASTLE)
Revolutions	Subjects on the history of revolutionaries and revolutions.	Protest and Revolution in Modern Europe (UOA); The French Revolution (UOM)
Science/Medicine/Tech nology	Subjects on the history of science, scientific method, and technology.	Tablet to iPad: A History of Information (USYD); The Scientific Revolution (WOLLONGONG)
Sexuality	Subjects on the history of sexuality.	Body Politics in Australian History (FLINDERS); History of Sexuality (UNSW)
Slavery	Subjects on the history and nature of slavery.	Slavery and Human Trafficking (LA TROBE); Human Trafficking: Atlantic Trade to Contemporary (UOA)
Spanish Civil War	Subjects on the Spanish Civil War.	European History 1 (VICTORIA)
Terrorism	Subjects on the history of terrorism.	Terror to Terrorism: A History (ANU); Religion War and Terror (CURTIN)
Urban History	Subjects on the history of cities and urban life and culture.	Urban History A: Early Modern Europe (LA TROBE); Life and Death in the City: From Settlement to Federation (USC)
Vietnam War	Subjects on the Vietnam War.	America's War in Vietnam (LA TROBE); The Vietnam War (UOQ)
War and Society	Subjects on ideas about war the impact of war on society.	War and Peace in World History (MACQ); Australians at War (UOQ)

Witchcraft	Subjects on the history of witches and witchcraft.	Heresy and Witchcraft in Medieval Europe (UOA); Witch Hunting, 1400-1700 (UNE)
Women/Feminism/Gen der	Subjects on the history of women, gender, and feminist movements.	Women and Gender in the Ancient World (MACQ); Global Feminisms: Competing Visions, Varying Histories (UNSW)
World History	A specific branch of history which focuses on the movement of peoples, globalisation, the world economy, and global cultural interactions.	Global Citizens: A History of Humanity (USC); World History Since 1900 (JCU)
World War I	Subjects on the history of the First World War.	The Great War, 1914-1918 (ANU); The First World War, 1914-1918: History and Memory (UNE)
World War II	Subjects on the history of the Second World War.	World at War, 1939-1945 (ANU); European History 2 (VICTORIA)