

Biography Workshop

Imogen Mathew: Anita Heiss: A Public Intellectual in the 21st Century

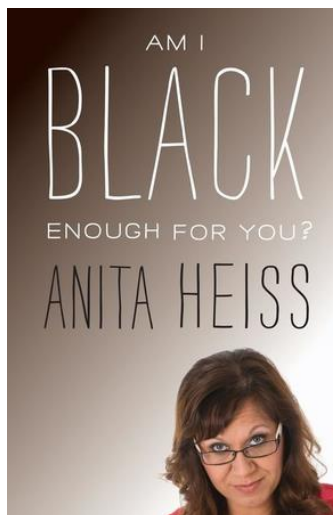
Date: Thursday 29 September 2016

Venue: Seminar Room A, Coombs Building, ANU

Time: 12 midday until about 1.30 p.m.

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Imogen Mathew, an HDR candidate at the ANU's School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, will speak about her research on Anita Heiss as a public intellectual. How does the public intellectual engage the public sphere and on what issues does Heiss choose to speak? Where does she sit in the contemporary Australian political landscape? Is there a specifically 21st Century Public Intellectual?



The research project responds to these questions through an extended case study of Heiss, an Aboriginal woman from Wiradjuri Country in central NSW. Imogen examines Heiss's most important interventions in the Australian public sphere; her commercial women's fiction, and her role in the 2011 court case Eatock vs Bolt.

Although not strictly a biographical project, her research owes a debt to biographical studies by using a life to tell a story about contemporary Australian public culture. This presentation unpacks some of the methodological problems associated with the research, asking why the category of 'not-biography' may be useful, and the various ways in which the interplay between the researcher and the research project can be conceptualised. In particular, Imogen is drawn to the question of what this project demands of her, and how she might situate herself in relation to it.