

Deepening the Time of History?

An IAS masterclass with Ann McGrath AM,
the Kathleen Fitzpatrick ARC Laureate Fellow and Distinguished
Professor, School of History, Australian National University.



Must 'History' commence with a clear date?

This interdisciplinary masterclass will explore why dates matter – or don't. We will consider the processes of periodization that take place in researching and writing histories. What is the power, if not the sovereignty of periodization? What is the difference between dating, chronologies and periodization, and how can such techniques be applied to the deep human past?

The study of Australian history is still dominated by studies that commence with the dates of European landings – such as 1616, 1770, 1788 and 1826. This reinforces the notion that 'history' begins with written records and European arrivals. Yet the idea of a people without history or that history only started with written text is surely impossible to sustain.

An expanding field of archaeology has focussed upon gaining the most reliable dates for evidence relating to the deep human past. Periodization, timelines, dates and chronologies are key tools which are generally understood as essential to the practice of scholarly history. But why are dates necessary, and what kind of 'history' work do they do? How do they become meaningful in rituals of nation, in the assertion of sovereignty, in denoting identity and political power?

Drawing upon the co-edited collection (with Mary-Anne Jebb) *Long History, Deep Time* and the film *Message from Mungo*, we will explore contrasting approaches to the temporality of the deep human past. Historian Daniel Smail, among others, has called for an end to the use of the term 'prehistory' (2005) and for an expanded historical discipline that goes beyond 'sacred history' to explore the full expanse of the human past. Others argue for transtemporal approaches. However, indigenous knowledge custodians, interpreters and narrators have raised the greatest challenges, having long questioned standardized notions of temporality. What kinds of methodologies might enable disciplinary growth beyond conventional and prescriptive temporal boundaries?

Ann McGrath AM is the Kathleen Fitzpatrick ARC Laureate Fellow in the School of History, Australian National University, where she holds the position of Distinguished Professor. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences and of the Academy of Humanities and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate at Linnaeus University, Sweden. Her first book, entitled *Born in the Cattle: Aborigines in Cattle Country* (1987) won the W.K. Hancock Prize. Recent works include *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (U Nebraska 2015) which was awarded the NSW Premiers History Prize, General Category 2016; *Long History, Deep Time* (with Mary Anne Jebb, ed., ANU Press 2015); and 'On the Sacred Clay of Botany Bay: Landings, National Memorialization and Multiple Sovereignities', *New Diversities*, Vol 19, no 2, 2017. She has also contributed as an expert witness in land claims, in the Gunner and Cubillo case and in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Her films include *A Frontier Conversation* (2006) and *Message from Mungo* (2014). Additionally, she has developed a digital history project on *Deepening Histories of Place* and has curated museum exhibitions. Her current Laureate program is entitled 'Rediscovering the Deep Human Past: Global Networks, Future Opportunities.'

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Event Details

When: Thursday 9 August 2018,
10am-1pm

Where: Institute of Advanced Studies, UWA

Cost: Free

RSVP is essential by 3 August as places are limited.

Register by completing the online form:

www.ias.uwa.edu.au/masterclass/annmcgrath



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