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Challenging Anzac myths in tertiary teaching: Engaging preservice teachers

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Challenging Anzac myths in tertiary teaching: Engaging preservice teachers

Abstract

Challenging the embedded mythologies that surround Anzac, especially as the centenary of First World War played out over the 2014 to 2018 commemoration period, can be confronting for tertiary students as well as a difficult space for tutors to navigate. This is especially the case for teacher education students who form the majority cohort taking a first-year course in Australian History as part of their teaching education degree programs at a large New South Wales university outside Sydney. Experiences of student disruptions, confrontations and occasional anger prompted tutors to question whether the topic of Anzac should be covered at all. An alternative was sought, where careful interrogation of teaching practices was undertaken. Three pedagogical approaches were examined; the traditional lecture format, using documentary film to glimpse at deeper historiographical problems within lectures and tutorials that allowed for more intense critical thinking and analysis of historical resources via focused questions.

The efficacy of these pedagogical approaches was systematically assessed through surveying students in the Australian History course prior and post teaching about Anzac. This paper examines the background of teaching Anzac in the tertiary space, the use of specific pedagogical approaches and the results of the survey. Students' main preference for teaching methods about Anzac was through documentaries in both surveys. However, the second most preferred method was the lecture format more generally and this preference increased in the post survey. There was also evidence of less resistance to the contested nature of Anzac mythologies.

Keywords

History Pedagogy: Teaching Anzac: Preservice Education

Introduction

Considerable research has been conducted on teaching history in the secondary-school context in Australia, and specifically teaching about the First World War (Clark 2008; Foster & Crawford 2006; Innes & Sharp 2018). There has now been an increase in the investigation of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) at the tertiary level; in the last decade that has included the teaching of history in Australia (Boucher & Arrow 2016; Clark 2009; Keirle & Morgan 2011; Kilmister, Bennett, Ford & Debenham 2017). In 2014, a conference in Sweden was devoted to the teaching and learning of history at the tertiary level. Its aim was to “embody a collective commitment to constructive dialogue about teaching and learning grounded in evidence and argument and with a practical emphasis” (Ludvigsson & Booth 2015, p. 7). Most scholarship has referred to the teaching of history within the discipline itself (Booth & Hyland 2000; Ludvigsson 2012), rather than teaching history to diverse cohorts where the vast majority of students were not going on to complete a history major. This context presents particular challenges and brings into sharp relief how the history method benefits all students, as well as how to convince the cohort of the importance of historical perspectives. This paper adds further layers of pedagogical complexity as it investigates the experiences of students from across a range of teacher-education degree programs in a first-year compulsory course that includes a small number of students majoring in history.

The course is overlaid with a tightly controlled set of requirements for teacher-education courses in Australia. This includes undergraduate education students in primary and primary/early childhood degree programs taking a series of foundation courses associated with the key learning areas (KLAs) of the Australian Curriculum. The New South Wales version of the National Curriculum includes Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) (NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA] 2017a). The new curriculum has divided the KLA into history and geography, so there is a greater delineation of these core subjects. It requires all primary teachers as well as high-school history teachers to be conversant with basic tenets of history; this component was introduced into primary schools at the beginning of 2016 (NESA 2017b).

Teacher-education students completing a course discussing Australian history likely attend the course with different expectations, indeed possibly a different set of skills and interests from their history-major counterparts. This requires lecturers and tutors to navigate multiple, if not competing, interests to maintain engagement and interest in the topic. Tutors’ experience in the first-year history course was that many teacher-education students did not see the relevance of the subject to their training. Evidence of the attitude of students in schools does suggest there is an ambivalence to history, with the possible exception of the Anzac tradition (Clark 2008). However, the new emphasis on history in the national curriculum means that all those teaching in primary schools will need to have some working knowledge of the topic.

The battle between memory and history that lies at the core of the Anzac tradition seems to be the most contentious topic in Australian history and generates the most interest in the Australian community (Kilmister et al. 2017). This was evident when Anna Clark travelled around Australia asking community groups about their attitudes towards Australian historiography. She found that there was a great deal of memory associated with the Anzacs, including personal stories of family members who fought at Gallipoli or in the First World War more broadly (Clark 2016). At a surface level, Australia shares much in common with other nations – particularly those of the New World – with respect to history and mythic themes. However, without a revolutionary past and related symbols and ceremonial practices, Australians have lacked an equivalent investment in their official national day and its obvious alternatives such as federation on 1 January (Davison 2000). While the

meaning of Australia's national day on 26 January – an act of European conquest – has become increasingly contested, the Anzac tradition functions as its de facto, commemorating the Gallipoli landings/invasion on 25 April, 1915. So much of the Australian psyche is invested in this moment in history because it has come to represent a national character in the eyes of many, spurred on by associated politicisation and myth-making. It is at the centre of a clarion call for a new kind of nationalism, and has therefore become sacrosanct. According to Twomey (2013, p. 87), “the traumatising effects of war, and sympathy for its victims, have become a central trope in the post 1980s incarnation of Anzac”. Indeed, as historian Macleod (2017) has noted, Australians – more than any of the other combatant nations – are guardians of the memory of Gallipoli.

This may be partly due to the central place of the Anzac legend in education initiatives in the mid-1990s by the then-Prime Minister, John Howard, and his Education Minister, Brendan Nelson. They insisted that every school in Australia, as well as having a flagpole with an Australian flag, display a poster that listed nine Australian values. The watermarked background of the poster was an iconic image of Simpson and his donkey (Ford 2009, p. 29). In the First World War, Simpson famously risked his own life to rescue a fellow “digger” (Australian soldier), hauling his limp body onto the back of a donkey and taking him from the battlefield. Tropes of nationalism, whiteness, maleness and mateship are all encapsulated in the image, thus rendering invisible a large part of the Australian population who would otherwise associate with Australian values. Consequently, this has led to suppression of other narratives, such as commemorating the war service of “black diggers” (Indigenous soldiers) and LGBT servicemen and women, which potentially some find discomfiting (Bennett 2014).

It is important for teacher-education students to understand the historical context of Australia that continues to inform the lived experiences of school students and their families, as well as being a requirement in teaching history throughout primary and secondary school. However, even more importantly, education students can benefit because of the explicit skills embedded in the discipline of history that are transferable to other discipline areas (Fallace 2007; Keirn & Luhr 2012; Salinas & Blevins 2013). To this end, it is the job of historians to provoke students into rethinking the familiar in new and more critical ways. Finally, the increased focus on SoTL in the tertiary sector, which includes history teaching, may also result in teacher-education students experiencing wider exposure to pedagogical approaches that they could adapt for use in classrooms.

This paper will outline the context for this research project and the challenges it presents as a contested site, particularly with reference to the Anzac tradition, as this topic and its cultural memory is such a highly contentious historical phenomenon. It will review the current literature in SoTL focusing on history, as well as examining some key concepts that connect the discipline of history to broader educational concepts.

Context

In the context of this study, it is worth noting that the first-year course discussed here includes teacher-education students undergoing a discipline foundation course, as well as first-year history students, in one of the largest student cohorts at a satellite university campus in Australia. Numbers in the course consistently range between 700 and 900 across three campuses. In the cohort for this study there were approximately 190 students enrolled at one of the campuses, 88% of whom were teacher-education students. This course is compulsory for teacher-education students from early childhood/primary and primary degree programs, with only a few selecting a history minor or major as part of their discipline depth studies. Confronting student cohorts of this magnitude has required

major rethinking, with implications for pedagogy that goes beyond the teaching of history at the tertiary level.

Complexities arise that present additional challenges in several ways. First, it may be difficult to engage many students due to their initial negative attitudes toward history. However, this can be a double-edged sword, because the familial memory and the powerful nationalistic narrative that influences attitudes towards the Anzac tradition can also make students resistant to alternative readings and interpretations. This seems to have been confirmed in a study of secondary teacher education students majoring in history, where students had an emotional investment in discussing Gallipoli and reiterated some of the myths surrounding the Gallipoli campaign (Sharp, Donnelly & Parkes 2017).

Second, as well as the requirement to complete foundational discipline subjects in all KLAs of the Australian School Curriculum, students in teacher-education degree programs also complete introductions to sociology of education, psychology and Indigenous studies, among others, and thus are exposed to many other discipline methods. A key component of foundational courses is to stay firm to a specific disciplinary approach, whilst at the same time acknowledging the students must learn the rudimentary concepts of several other approaches. One challenge then is to keep faith with history methods, whilst at the same time recognising that the majority of students do not intend to pursue history as a chosen career (Clark 2008). In this context “thinking historically” (Wineburg 2001) may be only a small part of the perceived requirements from a student in the course.

Third, the student cohort can enter the university with a lower tertiary entrance score than their “sandstone”, urban counterparts, so there is an imperative to support academic skills, especially in the first year of degree programs. Additional academic skills are therefore carefully scaffolded and explicitly embedded in the course. Finally, the university has one of the highest proportions of students from low socio-economic backgrounds in the country, with some education programs being as high as 37%. This means that students often face personal financial and social challenges that can have a high impact on their ability to focus solely on university studies.

Method

There was a range of issues that the teaching team in the first-year Australian history course considered worthy of investigation. A mixed-methods anonymous survey approved by the university ethics committee was completed prior to the lecture and tutorial session that dealt with the Anzac tradition and the Gallipoli campaign specifically, and again in the weeks after the topic. Mixed methods are appropriate because complex questions were asked (Creswell 2010). For example, some quantifiable demographic data was required, such as students’ age, gender and type of degree program, as well as an indication of whether they had family members who had served in the First or Second World War. Qualitative information allows for a more nuanced response (Flyvbjerg 2001). In this survey, current knowledge and attitudes about the Gallipoli campaign and the Anzac tradition were also sought. This was to establish if this cohort of students were engaged with the topic of the First World War and the development of the Anzac tradition, and would complement the work of Anna Clark (2016) in investigating historical consciousness and engagement across Australian communities. This section allowed for written comments and included the question: *Do you think it is the job of historians and educators to challenge the traditions of Anzac?*

There was also an opportunity to indicate which media events about the First World War the student had seen. This was deemed important because of the plethora of films, documentaries and general media coverage and other cultural productions the centennial commemoration of the First World

War had received since 2014 (Bennett 2017; Bennett 2019). To make responding easier, a list of titles was provided, with students being able to tick as many as they wished. These included Peter Weir's *Gallipoli* (1981) and *The Water Diviner* (2014); documentaries *Gallipoli: The Frontline Experience* (2006) and *Revealing Gallipoli* (2005); stage plays *Black Diggers* (2014) and *The One Day of the Year* (1958); and the TV series *Anzacs* (1985). There was space to indicate other productions, as of course this was not a definitive list.

Finally, there was a request to rank a preference for various teaching methods. The teaching team had made changes to pedagogy over several years, prompted in part by the challenges of teaching about the Anzac tradition to ensure higher engagement levels, specifically with the use of multimedia such as media clips and documentary film. This was an opportunity to examine student responses to those teaching methods more closely. Six methods were listed: lecture, discussions in tutorials, documentary film, analysing primary and secondary history sources and critically reflecting on life histories and personal stories. We wanted students to indicate separately their preferences for lectures and documentaries to understand the influence of documentary material even as they were embedded in lectures. The survey question about a range of methods was especially important to gauge differences in students' preference for a teaching method before and after teaching about the Anzac tradition. The analysis in this paper focuses on lectures, tutorials and documentaries as teaching methods, rather than on discussing primary and secondary history sources and personal stories.

The topic of the Anzac tradition is usually discussed about halfway through the 13-week semester, with each week including a two-hour lecture and a one-hour tutorial. Material from several documentaries and related audio-visual media was introduced in the lecture on the Anzac tradition; supplementary material was offered in tutorials, where a format of small groups of approximately six students within the larger group of approximately 28 students had been formed. It must be noted, however, that the lecture was also available online as a slide presentation able to be viewed simultaneously with a recording of the lecture. There was no set requirement to attend lectures or tutorials, although this was strongly encouraged. It was decided to offer a paper-based survey rather than an electronic survey in the lecture, to ensure a good return rate. This was designed to capture those students attending lectures and tutorials in those weeks. The first survey was completed by 111 students, 12 of whom were Bachelor of Arts (BA) students majoring in history; the second was completed by 59, including 8 history-major BA students. As is common, there was a pattern of decreasing attendance as the semester continued, especially after the mid-semester break.

Limitations of the findings were the disparity in numbers between the first and second survey as well as the deidentified nature of the data in the pre- and post-session surveys, due to ethical and logistical considerations. The lack of unique identifiers meant that it was not possible to directly compare individuals' responses, and this has limited the depth of analysis. Responses from the first and second surveys discussed below are therefore in percentages, and the comparisons must be read as general responses of the student cohort as a group. This suggests that further study is required in this area. The post-session survey may be biased in that it was completed by students already demonstrating a higher level of engagement in the course, given they continued to attend lectures in person.

Each survey response was then entered into an Excel spreadsheet to allow information about corresponding responses to be recorded according to criteria such as male or female students, family members in World Wars and prior knowledge of the Anzac topic, as well as the degree a student was undertaking. For the purposes of this paper the focus was on identifying previous knowledge

about Anzac and the Gallipoli campaign generally and the types of media about the First World War students had viewed, as well as the types of teaching methods already mentioned.

History pedagogy in the tertiary space

Postmodern notions increasingly influence approaches to history: it is messy and complex, with a greater emphasis on human agency (Clark 2009) and multiple perspectives (d’Emilio 1992; Epstein 2008; Bathmaker & Harnett 2010). In Australia, there is support for continuing to engage in history in this way (Parkes 2014), but there is also a push back from conservative elements to re-engage with a much more traditional and dominant white Western viewpoint after an audit of university history courses (d’Abrera 2017). As a result, the Ramsay Centre has contacted several Australian universities to offer a controversial degree program in Western civilisation (Coleborne 2017), with a Memorandum of Understanding signed by two universities – Wollongong and the University of Queensland – at the time of writing.

In this more contemporary, “troubled” and nuanced context, there is not one “signature pedagogy” in the teaching of history (Ludvigsson & Booth 2015), except recognition of the need for a greater focus on teaching approaches to achieve a more authentic experience (Ragland 2008). Ludvigsson and Booth (2015) recognise that although there has been considerable progress in tertiary history pedagogy, several areas require further research. They specifically mention the implications of new technologies, as well as “the neglected emotional dimensions of teaching and learning history and the ongoing professional development of historians as teachers” (p. 9).

In Australia, Jennifer Clark (2009) interrogated teaching a first-year history course to history students, examining pedagogical techniques that would improve history literacies, including how to read primary and secondary source material. She noted, “Learning the discipline knowledge and the patterns of disciplinary understanding occurs through interpersonal activity – discussion, exploration, thinking out loud, modelling approaches, and personally demonstrating historical method” (p. 6). Keirle and Morgan (2011) emphasised the need to go beyond focusing on course content and providing a set of readings, asserting that a great deal must be invested in organisation and pedagogy as well as the content taught, especially when dealing with large numbers of students. Finally, another area that has been the focus of some attention is the articulation of a set of history skills and concepts.

Interrogating history skills is connected to a broader educational undertaking to map competencies across a wide range of subject areas. Competencies are incorporated in outcomes-based education as the fundamental approach in all school curricula in Australia (Killen 2009), and increasingly at the tertiary level. There is some agreement on the competencies required for historical scholarship. This is partly the result of the Tuning Project, a European initiative in 2000, of which the discipline of history was an early inclusion. Relevant to this paper are the agreed European competencies:

- Awareness of the differences in historiographical outlooks in various periods and contexts.
- Awareness of the issues and themes of present-day historiographical debate.
- Knowledge of one’s own national history.
- Awareness of and ability to use tools of other human sciences.
- A critical awareness of the relationship between current events and the past.

- Ability to identify and utilize appropriate sources of information.
- Ability to communicate orally and in writing using correct terminology (Nováky 2015, pp. 106-108).

The competencies cited demonstrate that in a first-year history course competencies can extend beyond those traditionally considered to be just history-based.

Echoing Booth (2004), Keirle and Morgan (2011) in Australia see the mainstay of teaching history being higher-order thinking skills, which include analysis, synthesis and critique. Jennifer Clark (2009) teased out “thinking historically” and identified engaging with and interrogating historical sources by asking pertinent questions, negotiating contradictory information and presenting evidence-based arguments as key abilities of the historian. Ludvigsson (2012) suggested critical self-reflection (of teaching staff) as one way to enhance history teaching in higher education, and together with Booth (Ludvigsson & Booth 2015) also saw the need to recognise “the neglected emotional dimensions of teaching and learning history” (p. 9). This is relevant for those teaching history in the tertiary sector as well as schools.

Although Jennifer Clark (2009) refers to many of these skills as “history-specific”, and needing to be explicitly taught, teacher-education students could see many of these skills as generic and as crossing discipline boundaries. Those teaching foundational courses in teacher-education programs with a strong history component are increasingly aware that these skills are transferable beyond the task of teaching history, becoming equally important in the teaching of English, science and the arts in the primary-school classroom. This is not to lose sight of the historical method, but to view the skills derived from history as an add-on to a range of skills that teacher-education students will be able to draw on in their professional lives. It is important, therefore, to alert teacher-education students to the relevance of history teaching through the identification of the explicit skills mentioned above, which are easily transferable to the discipline of education in a broader sense.

At the same time, teacher-education students are cognisant of the practice of teaching as a discipline in its own right (Richardson 1997) and will also study tutors and lecturers from the viewpoint of future teachers as well as current learners, on the assumption that good teachers facilitate effective learning (Trumbull 2004). In this context there is a heightened awareness, and critique, noted by teacher-education students when there are shifts in pedagogical practices.

Perhaps the most important skill learned from history is the ability to critique text. Critical and analytic skills are becoming increasingly important in a world awash with information from a range of sources, some of which are unreliable. Indeed, in 2016, terms such as *post-truth* (“the word of the year” as announced by the Oxford English Dictionary 2016) and *fake news* (Lee 2016) reflect ways that children, students and the wider community are trusting their own emotional judgements over evidence (Shermer 2017). For preservice teachers, there is a direct link between critiquing historical texts and critical literacy and critical pedagogy; such approaches emerged in the 1980s and became overshadowed by neoliberal agendas in the 1990s and early 2000s, but once more are gaining widespread support (Luke 2012).

Shifting ground in teaching the Anzac tradition

The teaching team who have taught into the Australian history first-year course for over 10 years had already begun to make changes to their teaching practices as a result of anecdotal evidence and student feedback generated by the university and team discussions. Students were able to take control of their own learning in social and educational conditions more conducive to open conversation and collaboration.

Tutorials were reorganised to create smaller reading/discussion groups of about six students, despite the fact that tutorials have increased in size in most universities (Keirle & Morgan 2011). These small groups were permanent fixtures that let students get to know a small group and be able to contribute in ways that felt more comfortable. Small-group work is essential in the creation of a classroom community of learners in ways that enhance students' communicative abilities (Lei, Gorelick, Short, Smallwood & Wright-Porter 2011). Students engaging in structured interactive group work provide opportunities for talking, exploring ideas, making judgements, empathising, listening, questioning and practising the skills of critical thinking (Beck, McKeown, Sinatra & Loxterman 1991).

These pedagogical techniques became especially important when teaching the contentious topic of the Anzac tradition. As has been noted, this tradition generates considerable interest in the Australian landscape, occupying a unique "commemorative space" that accommodates disagreement and uncertainty. Indeed, during the State Library of Queensland's commemorative event, "Q ANZAC 100", Martin Crotty noted that "[Anzac Day] attracts me, repels me and, I must admit it, confuses me, but always interests me" (Harbison 2015). Anna Clark (2016, p. 94) sees the process of unpacking the Anzac tradition as one characterised by "multiple, sometimes simultaneous, historical meanings and relationships". In our own teaching, we see the Anzac tradition as central to Australian history, and it therefore needs to be treated with the same analytical rigour as any other subject matter.

Results of survey when teaching the Anzac tradition as problematic

In this section, we first address how students felt about discussing the Anzac tradition, and Gallipoli specifically. Students' prior understanding about the Anzac tradition will then be outlined to establish a context for engagement with the Anzac material. This is followed by an analysis of the data about preferences for different teaching methods. Finally, a discussion of the multimedia resources is important in view of the popularity of visual sources as a teaching device.

This research was prompted by the growing concern of tutors when confronted with resistance and occasionally outright anger from students when they tried to question mythologies surrounding the Anzac tradition. The post-session survey question had a yes/no response and room for a written comment: *Did [the course] provide a safe environment for engaging with Gallipoli and Anzac?* Overwhelmingly the students responded "yes". Only one responded "no", with two responding "I don't know". Perhaps more importantly, the range of written comments included:

We were allowed to have opinions and ask questions.

It was sensitively delivered.

Respectful, conclusive, felt I was able to negotiate ideas for and against.

Everyone who wanted to have a say was allowed.

The lectures and tutorials seem to be the most effective and engaging method due to the discussions that can be produced.

*In tutorials it was inviting and a place you wanted to come and learn about such an important aspect of Australian history.
Equal emphasis on both sides of conflict without prejudice.*

One negative comment stated:

To [sic] opinionated for my liking.

It does seem that even with controversial topics, it is possible to carefully consider a range of pedagogical approaches that can provide spaces for respectful and safe discussion.

Prior understandings of the Anzac tradition

Given that the Anzac tradition provokes such strong reactions, the pre-session survey established what students already knew about the origin of Anzacs, and specifically the Gallipoli campaign. One question asked: *Who was involved in the Gallipoli landing?* Just under 25% did not answer the question or indicated that they did not know. All the rest mentioned Australia but struggled to include other nations involved in the landing, such as New Zealand, Britain, France and India. A startling 40% of those who responded did not include New Zealand as another country involved at Gallipoli, whereas 14% thought the USA had been a participant nation. It is important that war needs to be seen in its global, transnational context rather than simply as a national trope (Winter 2018).

It is interesting to note that only 53% of respondents in the pre-session survey thought it was the right of historians to challenge the Anzac myths. This perhaps illustrates just how deeply embedded the Anzac story is in Australian culture, even whilst detailed knowledge of the events appears limited (National Commission on the Commemoration Centenary 2011). Students can come to the topic with preconceived understandings that are sometimes strongly felt but lack deeper interrogation (Sharp et al. 2017). Some students may have a personal familial investment. For example, in the survey for this research project, just under 30% of students had relatives who had fought in the First World War, and it may be that this group has a higher resistance to shifting ideas about the Anzac tradition.

In response to the pre-session survey question *Do you think the character traits that define the Anzac spirit are uniquely Australian?*, 36% answered “yes”, 33% “no” and 27% “I don’t know”, with the rest not answering. There was an opportunity to write a comment, and 17% of the study sample responded. By far the most frequent comment was citing *mateship* as uniquely Australian. Comments included:

Bravery and courage are universal, but the strongest trait – mateship – is uniquely Australian.

The pride we conducted ourselves with at ANZAC services is unique.

The 'mateship' of Australians is different to others.

Of those who responded “no”, several suggested that New Zealanders have similar cultural traits. Others responded:

Soldiers of many nationalities/races endured similar circumstances.

Most countries would have a similar spirit in times of war to Australia + ANZACs.

They are common personality traits seen globally, not unique to Australia.

This does suggest that there is a heavily Australian nationalistic imagining of the Anzac tradition, even though the acronym includes New Zealand. This can extend to a particularly gendered idea of mateship as a predominantly male trait.

Student preferences for teaching methods

In the pre- and post-session surveys completed the week prior and after the topic of Anzac was covered, students were asked to: *Rank your most preferred teaching method for learning about the First World War, the Anzac tradition and Gallipoli history.* Figure 1 shows the results of the pre- and post-session surveys regarding preferred teaching method. It was expected that students in a course where there were only a relatively small number of history students or those completing a history major as part of their teaching degree would prefer learning about history in ways other than through traditional historical sources. This indeed proved the case, with fewer than 10% of students indicating primary sources and only 1% secondary sources as their most-preferred teaching method. This did not change significantly between the pre- and post-session surveys. The focus in this paper will be on discussing documentaries and the lecture format as well as the tutorial context.

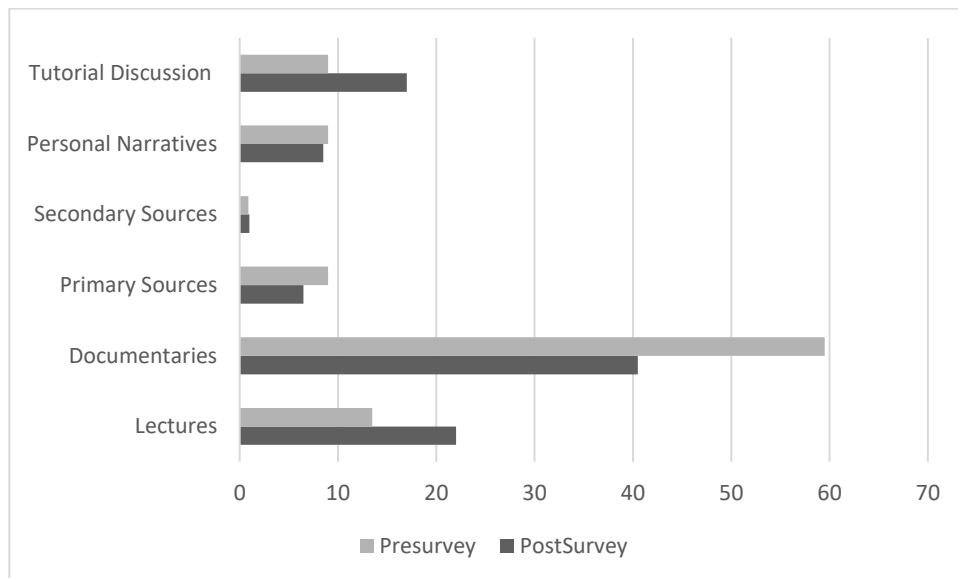


Figure 1. Percentage of students indicating first-preference teaching medium, pre and post participation

Sixty percent of students anticipated in the pre-session survey that their first preference to learn about history would be through documentaries. This suggests that documentaries are a familiar medium for students, and therefore one with which they feel the most comfortable. It is worth noting that first preferences for documentaries dropped to 40% in the second survey, but there was a marked increase in first preferences for the lecture and tutorial format.

One of the most interesting findings was students' preference for the lecture format. In the pre-session survey just under 14% of students indicated lectures as their most-preferred teaching method, but this rose to 22% in the post-session survey. It has been long assumed that the traditional lecture format is the least likely to engage students, given that the format merely requires students,

sometimes in their hundreds, to passively listen for one or two hours. Indeed, Roblyer (2003) deemed lectures irrelevant. The introduction of technologies such as slide presentations provided scope for increased participation (Adams & Bauer 1998; Perry 2003), although they do have their critics (Tufte 2003). More recent studies have interrogated the design of slides to illustrate that presentations containing visual images without being too text-heavy still have their place (Brock & Joglekar 2011). Lectures no longer need to be the passive experiences they once were. In this course, for example, the students were asked an elicitation question at the beginning of the lecture, sometimes using a visual stimulus that they discussed amongst themselves before reporting back. The visual presentations of material in this lecture included still images in PowerPoint slides as well as moving images in documentaries that challenged hierarchical assumptions about the Anzac tradition, such as the presumed ‘whiteness’ of the legend. The popularity of the documentary as a teaching method, when embedded in the lecture format increased the percentage of students preferring lecture formats as their primary teaching method.

Tutorials were deemed a first preference by only 9% of students in the pre-session survey; this almost doubled to 17% in the post-session survey. The tutorial is designed to allow students the space to clarify concepts and engage with materials in a smaller group. In this week, focus questions for discussion included:

1. How do the primary sources (Ashmead-Bartlett 1915; Bean 1929/41) describe the Australian soldiers? Is this description historically accurate?
2. Why has this “story” of our past been so enthusiastically adopted by Australians? Are there alternative stories that explain the nation’s origins?
3. Why are history and memory different? What significance does this hold for the way we think about the Gallipoli campaign?

It has been assumed that tutorials offer considerable benefits to students, and that these benefits certainly outweigh the drawbacks (Lei et al. 2011). Indeed, part of the description of good teaching in tertiary education is based on the premise of encouraging student engagement and deep learning through student collaboration (Duarte 2013). However, in this study students did not prefer tutorials over the lecture format.

Clearly there needs to be more investigation as to students’ preferences, regardless of what lecturers and tutors deem to be the most pedagogically effective methods. One aspect of further research is whether particular student cohorts prefer the lecture format because it is seen as a more efficient way of gleaning information for students who are under other life pressures such as the need to work.

Multimedia resources

Whilst the documentary film was by far the most-preferred teaching method in the pre- and post-session surveys, the use of this material does require careful monitoring. The pre-session survey asked students to indicate film and television material connected to the First World War that they had already seen, with a list of suggestions included. The majority of the students had seen films depicting First World War events. Notwithstanding its age, it is perhaps not unexpected that Peter Weir’s 1981 film *Gallipoli* proved the most familiar, with 61% of students indicating they had seen it. Weir’s film is arguably the most influential modern text on the war for Australians, displacing even Charles Bean’s *Official History* series – a source widely read by earlier generations. More recent films such as *The Water Diviner* had been viewed by 18% of students. Fewer students had seen documentaries such as the two 90th-anniversary transnational productions *Gallipoli: The*

Frontline Experience (viewed by just 10% of students) and *Revealing Gallipoli* (watched by fewer than 5%). Just under one-quarter of students (22%) had not seen any films, documentaries or TV series to do with the First World War or the Gallipoli campaign specifically.

Unravelling the myths of the Anzac tradition is made more difficult when students have many preconceptions. The centenary of the First World War has resulted in a plethora of films, television series and documentaries, some with accompanying ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media) notes, so there is a rich resource to be mined. However, not all productions provide an informed, critical response to the war; some have merely promoted the popular memory of war that has served to exacerbate existing tensions between memory and scholarly history.

To this end, critical documentaries can be employed to introduce new ways of seeing what at first appears to be very familiar material. While a visual text cannot carry the historiographical load of a book or even a journal article, this is to overlook its critical strategic role in the classroom: as a tool to capture the imagination and present an issue in a form that stimulates the visual and auditory senses, and thus promote reading as a natural extension to viewing practices (Rosenstone 1995). Modern documentary film-makers place great emphasis on balancing engagement with educating audiences.

Conclusion

The shift in pedagogical strategies to include a more interactive lecture with the use of documentary films, as well as forming students into small groups within the larger tutorial groups, did result in more positive feedback about teaching the contentious topic of the Anzac tradition, even when traditional understandings continued to be challenged. The methods of instruction were scaffolded to carefully and sensitively engage the students' historical and critical processes, and there was more explicit discussion of the wider application of the history method into other KLAS. Exposure to various forms of media can nudge students to reconsider alternative ways of thinking about the Anzac tradition and introduce them to the constructed and contested nature of historical knowledge. It enables a space to be created that gives students "permission" and the confidence to cast a critical eye over familiar yet complex historical terrain.

It is clear that the pedagogical techniques employed for contested topics such as the Anzac tradition enabled students in this study to remain engaged, even when challenged. Their preference for the lecture format, which incorporated documentaries, demonstrates that this is a format that can remain relevant. Challenging pedagogical moments create opportunities to interrogate teaching practices. The result is that improved techniques are transferable to other spaces. In other words, effective pedagogy often results out of pedagogical challenges.

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