COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The Pacific Islands stretch across nearly a third of the world’s surface, making it the world’s largest single geographic region. Yet in discussions about the region, Pacific Islanders are frequently absent. This course provides a way of understanding the complex histories and cultures of Pacific Island peoples. This course is focused on prominent themes affecting Pacific Islanders, such as colonization, tourism, and migration. The course is divided into two parts. The first five units cover precolonial Pacific Island cultural systems, and Western colonization of the Pacific, including nuclear testing in the Bikini Atoll. The second part of the course explores case studies on island environments and their vulnerabilities; islander out-migration and tourism inflows; food security; indigenous sovereignty movements; and current political and cultural priorities.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Understand the breadth of cultural complexity in the Pacific through a critique of historical representations of the region
- Understand how anthropological theories about the Pacific have contributed to problematic representations
- Develop an understanding of the place of the Pacific at critical historical junctures
- Develop the ability to observe cultural patterns and to analyze environmental, historical, political and economic factors shaping those patterns
- Apply knowledge of patterns to real case materials through in-class exercises