



Course Title: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Health and Well-being: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Program: *Australia Summer 2025*

Academic Department: Occupational Science/ Occupational Therapy

Instructor Name: Dr Sara Brito

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Get to Know Your Professor

Sara Brito was born and raised in Indianapolis and completed her undergraduate studies at Butler University. She then moved and lived for 25 years in Australia (lived in 5/8 states and travelled extensively) making her intimately knowledgeable about the country and culture. She is an avid traveler and in addition to her extensive travels in the US and Australia has been to many countries in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region (southeastern Asia, New Zealand, Tahiti) and Africa (mostly eastern and southern).

Sara Brito is an Associate Professor in the College of Health Science at Eastern Kentucky University. She has previously worked as a professor of Occupational Therapy at two Australian Universities in Victoria. Sara has experience teaching a range of both occupational therapy and inter-disciplinary health classes – including multiple courses that had significant focus on the concept of cultural competency and cultural humility with focus on Australia's First Nations People. Prior to teaching at university, Sara's clinic experience was in hand therapy and general rehabilitation in both hospital and clinic settings.

Course Description



By focusing on how health and well-being are considered in Australia, this class provides American students with a comparative perspective from which to examine their own beliefs and culture as they align with or differ from those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. We will explore the people, their history, and their unique geography in a variety of urban and rural settings, including the dynamic city of Melbourne and regional Queensland locations. Through visits to museums and by interacting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at First Nation's cultural centers, you will gain an enhanced understanding of the diversity of Australia's population and of the richness of each group's cultural traditions – and how those influence concepts of health and well-being.

Course Level

Undergraduate and Graduate

Prerequisite(s)

Be enrolled in a health science degree (e.g., allied health, psychology, nursing, pre-medicine, public health) and have completed 48 college credit hours or with consent of instructor. This course will also have pre-learning activities that students will need to complete prior to travelling overseas.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of all coursework with a passing grade and full participation in course activities, students shall be able to:

1. demonstrate an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' experiences of health and wellbeing encompassing cultural connections.
2. identify historical, political, cultural, societal, environmental, and economic factors influencing health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
3. demonstrate culturally responsive and safe communication skills in and related to different cultural settings.
4. research, analyze, and present information related to health factors impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and compare it to populations in the United States.

Required Readings and Materials

Students are asked to use their home university's library to access the following resources. Please reach out to your course lecturer if you require any assistance with accessing any of them.

Agner, J. (2020). *The Issue Is—Moving from cultural competence to cultural humility in occupational therapy: A paradigm shift*. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74, 7404347010. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.038067>

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competence Course](#)

This course is designed to provide you with foundation knowledge about what cultural competence is, the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, Aboriginal philosophy exploring the Dreaming, cultures and kinship systems, worldviews and connection to land. It will take approximately three hours to complete. It is online and self-directed.

Assignments and Grades

Pre-departure work and assignments. 30%

Pre-learning will be provided to students. This will involve a combination of asynchronous lectures, [online learning modules](#), readings, and preparation of presentation.

While overseas academic work (30%) – 20% Presentation

10% - Attendance & participation:

There will be an assessment of professional skills demonstrated by students while travelling this will include, but is not limited to, the student's ability to demonstrate culturally sensitive communication, organization, flexibility, interpersonal skills, conflict management, time management, leadership, and self-motivation.

After (40%) –

Final project: Photovoice presentation

Graduate students will also complete an essay assignment:

Their 40% *after* coursework will be split between 20% photovoice presentation and 20% essay.



Grading Scale

The following scale will be used to compute your grade.

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59 and below

Onsite Learning Experiences and Activities

Onsite learning experiences in this class will likely include the following site visits. This is a tentative list which will be replaced with a detailed daily itinerary of class meetings and field trips prior to the departure date.

Melbourne

- Healesville Sanctuary: Wominjeka – Indigenous cultural experiences with Murrundindi
- Immigration Museum
- Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Melbourne Museum
- Royal Botanic Gardens Aboriginal Heritage Walk

Sydney

- Circular Quay
- Sydney Opera House
- Sydney Harbour Bridge

Port Douglas

- Mossman Gorge Culture Centre with guided tour
- Cooya Beach Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat tour
- Daintree tour with Aboriginal guide (Daintree Dreaming?)
- Cape Tribulation Tour with Aboriginal guide

Cairns

- Dreamtime Snorkle
- Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park
- Kuranda Riverboat tour and/or Scenic Railway
- Atherton Tablelands "Tropical Food Trail" (Gallo Dairyland, Skybury Coffee & Papaya Plantation, Jaques Coffee Plantation, Innisfail Fruit Forest Farm, Mareeba Golden Drop Mango Winery)

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory at all scheduled activities and class meetings as well as field trip excursions. This includes any virtual meetings before and after the onsite experience. Repeated absences, including for ill health, will require documentation to be excused.



Participation includes not just attending class but also having a positive involvement in all class activities (such as contributing to class discussion intelligently and responding creatively to field trip experiences).

- An unexcused absence will result in a full-letter reduction of the course grade.
- Three significantly late arrivals will equal an absence.
- Late work will be accepted, with a letter grade deduction for each class session.

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic integrity is behaving honestly, responsibly and respectfully in our academic endeavors. We demonstrate integrity in our study by producing our own, original work and by properly acknowledging when we use the work of others to inform ours (including Artificial Intelligence – referenced correctly). Whether accidental or deliberate, using the work of others without acknowledgement constitutes a breach of academic integrity. Other forms of cheating include but are not limited to collusion, plagiarism and using free or paid services to produce academic work, which is known as contract cheating. Penalties for academic dishonesty will result in a failed grade on the assignment.

Physical Expectations

Program requires walking 3-5 miles per day on uneven pavement in all kinds of weather and long periods of standing. Students must be able to carry their own bags/belongings.

While there may be some opportunities for sitting, they may not always be available when navigating museum exhibits or walking from public transport to destinations. Summer weather can include hot and humid temperatures. Additionally, rates of skin cancer are high in Australia – so rigorous sun protection is recommended (e.g. using and re-applying 50+ spf sunscreen, hats that shade your face, ears & neck, and/ or clothing that covers you).

Disability Accommodation

CCSA is committed to providing access to education abroad to the extent possible in a study abroad setting. The earlier CCSA and the faculty know the needs, the more likely we can accommodate them. At a minimum, students seeking accommodations are to contact both the CCSA office and the faculty one month in advance of the program's beginning. Students seeking such accommodation must provide CCSA with a copy of the letter on file with their own Office of Disability Services outlining what services they receive on their home campus.

Title IX Policy

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sexual discrimination violate CCSA policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain support from the Onsite Program Director or the CCSA Executive Director. To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact either of these two officers. Disclosure to



faculty instructors or CCSA officers of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on the program or involving a visitor, student or employee is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and other CCSA employees are required to forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the CCSA Executive Director.

Statement about Final Syllabus

Please note that all CCSA syllabi are subject to change, but every effort will be made to ensure participants receive notice of such changes in a timely manner.