Modern History
Subject guide 2004

This subject guide relates to courses developed from the Modern History Senior Syllabus 2004.

Why study Modern History?
In history, as in our everyday lives, people ask meaningful questions, collect evidence, sift through it, analyse and evaluate it, to produce satisfactory answers to problems of living. These answers provide a context for our own lives and establish a range of values that shape our attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

Through the study of Modern History, students can understand why our modern world is the way it is. They can understand the processes of change and continuity that have shaped today's world, their causes, and the roles people have played in those processes. They can understand that there are relationships between our needs and interests and a range of historical topics, people and events. At a personal level, Modern History helps students to identify their social location, their place in time and their heritage within a distinctive culture. Students develop these understandings through processes of critical inquiry, debate and reflection, and by empathising with the views of others.

What do students learn?
The Modern History syllabus offers students an extensive range of themes and inquiry topics. There are 16 themes in all, each offering a wide choice of inquiry topics. Themes develop broad concepts, such as conflict, power, change, cooperation, the environment. The themes selected for study are developed through inquiry topics that allow students to understand and investigate the concept of the theme in a specific context.

Inquiry topics in Modern History focus predominantly on the 20th century and later. The course that students study will include:

- a range of scales — local, national, international, global
- a range of time periods, from pre-modern to contemporary
- a range of geographical contexts — Australian, Asia-Pacific, European, African, American
- some study of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- a number of briefer studies (background, comparative, linking) to ensure that students can place the inquiry topics within a broader understanding of the history of at least the past two centuries.

How do students learn?
Historical study is based on inquiry. While the teaching of history may involve expository and text-based teaching, the main approach to learning is student inquiry. Students are actively involved in locating, interpreting, analysing and evaluating historical sources, both primary and secondary. In Modern History, sources can include academic texts, diaries, letters, speeches, cartoons, journal articles, newspaper reports, documentary television programs, artefacts and everyday items. Using the inquiry approach, students identify historical questions for investigation, develop
research questions to investigate inquiry topics, locate, analyse and evaluate sources, and reach conclusions or make judgments about the question they have identified.

All of the themes in the Modern History syllabus use an inquiry process that identifies five aspects:

- definitions
- sources
- backgrounds, changes and continuities (motives and causes)
- effects, interests and arguments
- reflections and responses.

**How is student work assessed?**

Assessment in senior Modern History is criterion-based and is designed to help students to demonstrate achievement in the objectives of the syllabus. The criteria used are *Planning and using a historical research process, Forming historical knowledge through critical inquiry*, and *Communicating historical knowledge*.

Students will be assessed in each of four categories of assessment: test essays in response to historical sources, research assignments in response to inquiry questions, multimodal presentations that may include non-written and visual presentations such as video, Powerpoint or interactive CD-ROM materials, and short response tests and response to stimulus tests.

**How can parents help?**

Parents can help their children as they study Ancient History by taking an active interest in and discussing current events and news items, encouraging them to look for the historical background to contemporary events and debates. Much of the subject matter for Modern History arises from the contemporary world and its events and concerns. Parents can help their students by taking an interest in and discussing with their students the range of views that are held in the community about such events, and the evidence and justifications used to support these views.

There is a wealth of reference material available outside the school that is relevant to the study of Modern History, including internet and television materials, dedicated television channels, and other print and electronic material. Many expensive references, including CD-ROM and internet access, are available through local libraries.

Parents can also help their children to develop a systematic approach to managing class notes and other information and resources, to manage time effectively and to meet deadlines for assessment tasks. Parents are welcome to visit the school to meet their child’s Modern History teacher. The Modern History syllabus and the school work program are available to all parents to help them to understand the work that their child will be undertaking in Modern History, and to familiarise them with assessment requirements and deadlines.

**More information**

If you would like more information, please email senior.syllabuses@qcaa.qld.edu.au. You can also visit the QCAA website www.qcaa.qld.edu.au and search for ‘Modern History.'