MHIS375
Shock and Awe: A History of the Postmodern World
S1 Day 2017
Dept of Modern History, Politics & International Relations

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### Disclaimer

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
Mark Hearn
mark.hearn@mq.edu.au
Contact via mark.hearn@mq.edu.au
W6A 411
Monday 1-2 pm

Credit points
3

Prerequisites
39cp at 100 level or above or (6cp in HIST or MHIS or POL units at 200 level including 3cp in HIST or MHIS)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit explores the historical shift from modernity to post-modernity underway since the late twentieth century, tracing: the history of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the emergence of the neo-liberal culture of enterprise that has characterised the global economy since the 1990s; the tension between notions of progress and their environmental consequences; and the nature of war and terror in the post-modern world. The unit also considers how post-modernity manifests in culture and the historical context of these cultural expressions. Post-modernism is explored as a manifestation of the historical shift to post-modernity, and the unit considers a range of post-modernist historical texts, and texts which challenge these interpretations.

Important Academic Dates
Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
- Build personal and communication skills through participation in seminar discussion.
Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution
Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
Treat information in an ethical manner

**Assessment Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Historiography Assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 pm Thursday 23 March 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation &amp; Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>During semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 pm Thursday 4 May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Home Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 pm Monday 5 June 2017</td>
</tr>
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**Historiography Assignment**

Due: **5 pm Thursday 23 March 2017**  
Weighting: **20%**

**Question:** Why does Beverley Southgate argue that historians should embrace postmodernity? Is Willie Thompson right to claim that postmodernism has virtually ‘nothing to offer historians’? Write a critical appraisal of these historian’s perspectives on postmodernity and postmodernism, based on an analysis of the key themes and issues covered in the chapters: Beverley Southgate, *What is History For?* Routledge London 2005, ch.6 Willie Thompson, *Postmodernism and History*, Palgrave Macmillan London 2004, ch.1  
**Note:** Both chapters are included in the Unit Reader, respectively in the Topic One and Topic Three readings. No other sources or readings are required for this assignment.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
- Treat information in an ethical manner

**Presentation & Participation**

Due: **During semester**  
Weighting: **15%**

**Internal students Presentation** This task is designed to assess your oral communication skills
and grasp of the issues under discussion. At the beginning of semester, students will select a tutorial presentation from the various weekly topics. You may conduct a debate, show some images, conduct a quiz, put students in small groups for discussion, show an extract from a film, anything! Presenters may work individually or in pairs. You will be assessed on five criteria:

Preparation
Organization
Content
Creativity
Engagement

External Students Presentation This task is designed to assess your written communication skills in informal settings, and your ability to lead and manage discussion of the issues under consideration. At the beginning of semester, students will select a tutorial presentation from the various weekly topics. You will lead online discussion, using stimulus material or activities to engage your audience. Remember, don't post an essay online - keep presentations short. The point of the exercise is to lead discussion: which means you need to encourage participation. You will be assessed on five criteria:

Preparation
Organization
Content
Creativity
Engagement

Seminar Participation: Seminar participation is taken very seriously. You are required to attend at least 80% of seminars. A significant component of your mark will be based on participation, not simply attendance. Each student is required to prepare for each week’s seminar by reading the set seminar readings, taking notes and participating in class discussion. Each week of the seminar program includes questions on which the discussion will be based and developed. These are listed at the beginning of the week’s readings. The readings are in the MHIS375 Unit Reader and are compulsory reading. Seminar reading and preparation will form the basis for your preparation for your assessment tasks. You need to demonstrate wide reading for your research essay. Seminar reading is also vital for your preparation for the exam. The emphasis in seminars is on your participation. You need to come to class each week prepared to discuss issues relevant to the seminar in an informed way. You must also be prepared to engage with other students in discussion – this means that you need to listen as well as speak. Learning to present, defend and modify an argument in verbal presentation is one of the generic skills you are expected to acquire through studying modern history, so your participation in discussion is essential to your successful completion of the unit.

On successful completion you will be able to:
• Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
• Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
• Build personal and communication skills through participation in seminar discussion.
• Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution
• Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
• Treat information in an ethical manner

Research Essay
Due: 5 pm Thursday 4 May 2017
Weighting: 40%

Research Essay (3,000 words; 40%) This task forms the major component of your course mark and therefore requires a high degree of thought, effort and preparation. The research essay guidelines, questions and reading lists may be found at the back of the Unit Guide.

On successful completion you will be able to:
• Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
• Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
• Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
• Treat information in an ethical manner

Take Home Exam
Due: 5pm Monday 5 June 2017
Weighting: 25%

A take home exam will be handed out in the final lecture. The exam is designed to test both your general knowledge of the historical issues and your grasp of key historiographical debates discussed in the course. The questions will be broad and will focus on the major themes of the course.

On successful completion you will be able to:
• Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
• Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
• Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
• Treat information in an ethical manner
**Delivery and Resources**

**Technologies used and required**

iLearn; recorded lectures and online seminar participation for external students.

This unit has an online presence. Login is via: [https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/](https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/) Students are required to have regular access to a computer and the internet. Mobile devices alone are not sufficient. - For technical support go to: [http://mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/informatics/help](http://mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/informatics/help) - For student quick guides on the use of iLearn go to: [http://mq.edu.au/iLearn/student_info/guides.htm](http://mq.edu.au/iLearn/student_info/guides.htm)

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**MHIS375 Seminar Program**

**Week One** (27 February)

Introduction and allocation of seminar presentation topics.

**Week Two** (6 March)

**Topic 1: Interpreting Postmodernity**


**Seminar discussion questions:** What are the characteristics of postmodernity? Does postmodernity have historical precedents?

**Week Three** (13 March)

**Topic 2: Creative Destruction: Modernity and Modernism**


**Seminar discussion questions:** How does Harvey characterise the project of modernity? Why is Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* ‘barbaric’? How did Bolshevik ‘War Communism’ reflect the modern project? Does the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe complex represent the moment ‘modern architecture died’?

**Week Four** (20 March)

**Topic 3: Pomophobia? The Critics of Postmodern Interpretation**

Beverley Southgate, Postmodernism in History: Fear or Freedom? ch.1; Willie Thompson, Postmodernism and History, ch.1; Richard J. Evans In Defence of History, Introduction; Book Review of Evans In Defence of History by Professor Antony Easthope, Manchester Metropolitan University, Textual Practice, vol.12, no. 3 (Winter 1998); reprinted at: [http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/](http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/)
Focus/Whatishistory/easthope.html

Seminar discussion questions: How does Southgate suggest that historians can overcome ‘pomophobia’? Is Thompson right to argue that postmodernism ‘has nothing to offer historians? Why did Evans argue that postmodernism generated a ‘crisis’ for historians? Why does Easthope assert that ‘Richard J. Evans did not really write In Defence of History’?

Week Five (27 March)

Topic 4: Fearless Speech: Michel Foucault’s History of the Present


Seminar discussion questions: Why does Said argue that Foucault leaves no reader unchanged? Does Foucault's account of neoliberalism and liberal governance succeed or fail? Why does Merquior argue that Foucault has little to offer historians?

Week Six (3 April)

Topic 5: Poststructuralism: the Narrative Subject and the ‘Linguistic Turn’

Alun Munslow, Narrative and History ch.1; Patrick Joyce, Democratic Subjects, ch.12, ‘Narrative and History’; Judith Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight, Introduction.

Seminar discussion questions: Why does Munslow argue that reality and representation work together in the historians’ construction of the past? Why does Joyce argue that the focus on narrative has destabilised the study of history? How does Walkowitz argue that poststructuralism has effected the historical interpretations of power and gender?

Week Seven (10 April)

Topic 6: Progress and Nature


Seminar discussion questions: Why in modernity did nature stand for ‘the other of humanity’, as Zygmunt Bauman argues? Why does Blackbourn claim that writing about the shaping of the German landscape is to write about how modern Germany was shaped? Has resistance to climate change undermined Rachel Carson’s legacy?

Week Eight (1 May)

Topic 7: Postmodern War

Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Barbarism: A User's Guide’, in On History; Red Cross Survey; Christopher Coker, War in an Age of Risk, review by Claudia Aradau, Ethics & International Affairs, Volume 24.1 (Spring 2010), Carnegie Council; David Chandler, ‘Risk and the biopolitics of global
Seminar discussion questions: Why are ‘risk’ and ‘barbarism’ the paradigms of postmodern warfare? Can Lockheed help lift ‘the fog of war’ and reduce risk?

Week Nine (8 May)

Topic 8: Postmodern Terror


Seminar discussion questions: How has the nature of political terror changed in the late twentieth century? Have western nations developed effective strategies to counter it? Is Khan right to argue that terrorism is ‘the most spectacular postmodern manifestation’? Why does Mishra describe Islamic State as a ‘postmodern collage’?

Week Ten (15 May)

Topic 9: The Enterprising Citizen: Neo-Liberalism


Seminar discussion questions: Does the globalization of organised crime reflect the condition of postmodernity? What are the chief characteristics of advanced or neo-liberalism? Does neo-liberalism create 'enterprise workers' or the 'Precariat'?

Week Eleven (22 May)

Topic 10: Fitter, Happier? Postmodern Culture


Seminar discussion questions: Why does Jameson argue that postmodern culture reflects the logic of late capitalism? Has the ‘real’ been displaced by digital technology in postmodern culture? How do works such as Crash, ‘Fitter Happier’ and Blade Runner reflect a response to postmodernity?

Week Twelve (29 May)

Topic 11: Opening the Wall: Postmodern Reflections on Modernity
Seminar discussion questions: What lessons do Priestland and Snyder suggest should be drawn from the history of twentieth century totalitarianism? Why does Havel argue that we must face the future with ‘a new, post-modern face’? Can the project of modernity adapt to the Anthropocene? How does Todorov suggest that we should take the history of the twentieth century into the twenty-first?

RESOURCES

MACQUARIE LIBRARY A comprehensive bibliography for this course, covering a range of themes and pertinent to both the research and tutorial essays is included in the list of research essay questions. Copies of these works will be found in the university library. Key books will be found in RESERVE. Reserve The reserve area of the library (level 2) holds essential books, videos and DVDs. It also holds items which are in high demand. It is for this reason that it is often the first port-of-call. However, there are restrictions on borrowing these items. Reserve items are only available on a short-term basis. Where an item is held in reserve this will be annotated on the catalogue. E-Reserve E-reserve is the place that you will check for journal articles, book chapters and lecture notes. These are documents which have been scanned and made available online. Access is via login and password (which you receive upon enrolment). You can access these from the university, from home or from anywhere with internet access. Film Access There are six video carrels on level 3 in the library which you can use at your leisure (providing no-one is using them). However, they do not provide headphones – YOU HAVE TO PROVIDE YOUR OWN HEADPHONES (you can use your walkman for this if you have one). You can also buy headphones from the photocopy room for $11. There are also two small booths (for one person) on level 3 in which you can view a film without using headphones. THESE MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE (third floor information desk).

WEBSITES

Interpreting Postmodernity: website created by Unit Convenor Mark Hearn to introduce the course and highlight research and relevant speeches, documents, images and readings.
www.interpretingpostmodernity.net


RESEARCH ESSAY QUESTIONS

Due Date: Thursday, 5 May 2016, 5 pm Word Length: 3,000 words. Below is a list of essay questions with references for each, and recommended reading relevant to the lectures and the seminar program. Other relevant books or journal articles may be cited in addition to those recommended below. Students are required to cite at least eight books or journal articles relevant to the question in your essay discussion and in the bibliography. Web sites may be cited in addition to this minimum.

Please number the pages of your essay and write out the question at the beginning of your essay, precisely as it is described below.

Writing your Essays Please consult the Department of Modern History’s webpage http://www.modhist.mq.edu.au/essays.html for advice on writing essays in history. Pay particular attention to properly footnoting your essays.
Submitting your essay: Please submit your essay via Turnitin.

**Topic 1: How have historians assessed the nature of postmodernity?**


**Topic 2: What were the major characteristics of modernity, and how did they shape the history of the twentieth century?**


Topic 3: Does postmodernism offer a new path for historical analysis, or are the advocates of “pomophobia” justified?


**Topic 4: Assess the response by historians to Foucault’s work. Do its weaknesses outweigh its benefits for enhancing our understanding of the past?**


Topic 5: How have historians assessed the opportunities and problems associated with applying the ‘linguistic turn’ to the study of gender history?


**Topic 6: Why did modernity declare war on nature?**


Topic 7: Why are ‘risk’ and ‘barbarism’ the paradigms of postmodern warfare?


Topic 8: Is Islamist terrorism a postmodern phenomenon?

Unit guide MHIS375 Shock and Awe: A History of the Postmodern World


Topic 9: Has neo-liberalism defined postmodernity?


Topic 10: How effectively does Jameson’s critique of ‘late capitalism’ interpret the historical development of postmodern culture?


**Topic 11: How does the fall of the Berlin Wall allow us to rethink the history of modernity, and the possibilities of the future?**

# Unit Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Tutorial</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>Interpreting Postmodernity</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>Creative Destruction: Modernity and Modernism</td>
<td>Topic One</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13 March</td>
<td>Pomophobia? Postmodern Critics</td>
<td>Topic Two</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20 March</td>
<td>Fearless Speech: Michel Foucault's History of the Present</td>
<td>Topic Three</td>
<td>Historiography Assignment – 20% Due Date: 5 pm Thursday 23 March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27 March</td>
<td>Poststructuralism: the Narrative Subject and the ‘Linguistic Turn’</td>
<td>Topic Four</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>Progress and Nature</td>
<td>Topic Five</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Postmodern War</td>
<td>Topic Six</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td><strong>SEMESTER BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>Postmodern Terror</td>
<td>Topic Seven</td>
<td>3,000 word Research Essay – 40% Due Date: 5 pm Thursday 4 May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>The Enterprising Citizen: Neo-Liberalism</td>
<td>Topic Eight</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>Fitter, Happier? Postmodern Culture</td>
<td>Topic Nine</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>22 May</td>
<td>Opening the Wall: Postmodern Reflections on Modernity</td>
<td>Topic Ten</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>29 May</td>
<td>Lecture and seminar program revision, distribution of Take Home Exam</td>
<td>Topic Eleven</td>
<td>Take Home Exam – 25% Due: 5pm Monday 5 June 2017</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>5 June</td>
<td>No Lecture</td>
<td>No Seminar</td>
<td>None</td>
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Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central. Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:


In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct:  [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

Results

Results shown in iLearn, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit  [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au).

Macquarie University's Academic Honesty Policy

Please familiarise yourself with Macquarie's policy.


Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit  [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](http://students.mq.edu.au/support/)

Learning Skills

Learning Skills  ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- **Workshops**
- **StudyWise**
Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
- Build personal and communication skills through participation in seminar discussion.
- Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:
Learning outcomes

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
- Treat information in an ethical manner

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
- Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution

Assessment tasks

- Historiography Assignment
- Presentation & Participation
Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
- Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Identify and apply key historiographical concepts
- Build personal and communication skills through participation in seminar discussion.
- Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to
read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Build personal and communication skills through participation in seminar discussion.
- Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work

**Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens**

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
- Treat information in an ethical manner

**Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible**

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Develop and critical thinking and analytical skills
- Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work
- Treat information in an ethical manner