

[Take 5 with...Dr. Sue Broomhall](#)

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1. What's your favorite course to teach?

We have a first-year unit at my university on global history in the medieval and early modern period, which explores complex interconnections and entanglements of the local and global. It's a unit that provides a different kind of context to where we are in Australia today, what has shaped the society we have here and the present-day ramifications of pre-settlement interactions in the region (and many beyond it) in all sorts of ways. It's thinking about what is important in quite a different way from more conventional history courses that are grounded in a specific geography and chronology, exploring what questions we ask about local contexts, and where and how this knowledge is applied, compared and contrasted. And it's training in a way of investigating the past that can then be applied to a whole range of specific questions and locales worldwide at any period.

2. What's your favorite primary source to use in class?

For global or medieval and early modern history units, many sources are in a range of languages which students do not know. So, we work with a lot of sources in translation. I'd encourage any student to learn another language, because it increases awareness not only of different perspectives about how people perceive and inter-relate to the world, but also of the intellectual role of translators and thus how we can read the documents that they make available to us. For the same reasons, I like to use non-textual sources from the past that are still within students' reach: maps, built remains and streetscapes, artworks, literature, music of the period and so on. As I teach in Australia, showing students what's available for this period from a distance is important, but so too is talking about how the present day offer many remnants of the earlier period, its ideas and practices. Many of the early buildings at my university are modelled after Italian Renaissance architecture. We can talk about the messages being conveyed in these choices. Why are still we surrounded by water-guzzling green lawns in many Australian suburbs rather than native flora? Why are wedding rings worn on fourth finger of the left hand? These are primary sources to the power of older ideas to remain with us today

3. What's your current research project?

I'm currently finalising a monograph called *Gender and the Dutch East India Company* for Amsterdam University Press. I came to it from the research I'd conducted on the Dutch East India Company (VOC) remains in Australia for the five-year community festival on the mid-Western Australian coast, The Zest Festival. I spent a lot of time reading skippers' logs and sailors' accounts on, generally, ill-fated encounters with the peoples and lands of Australia and New Zealand. I was struck by the way emotions helped to perform different constructions of masculinity for these men in texts for the consumption of others in the VOC hierarchy, and for external audiences. The work expanded out from that basis to explore how gender ideologies and practices shaped the experiences of individuals (women and men) associated with the VOC organisation, but also its corporate culture as it came into contact with different peoples, societies and environments around the world.

4. What's your favorite place to do research?

There are lots of very memorable archival and cultural institutions around the world and I've been lucky to have assistance from many colleagues in them, but at the end of the day, my favourite place is nowhere exotic, simply my office. I have a fabulous tree straight outside my window which shades the whole room in a very calming and refreshing green light (which feels very soothing on hot summer days!) It is also full of knick-knacks from everywhere I've been, art posters and a wall of postcards, medieval Lego figures, wooden tulips, a metre-tall plastic Luther from an art installation at Wittenberg, a miniature of the Qing dynasty Jadeite Cabbage, and so on. Each one tells some part of the story of my academic career, places I've been to, ideas I've had, possible connections and future projects, and a reminder of my passions past and present. Hopefully, it's an inviting place for others, with something to intrigue them.

5. What needs to be done to promote Australian and New Zealand Studies more broadly?

I think it's important to be continually connecting the lands and peoples of the region to global conversations as part of flows of communication, mobility and exchange between scholars, and, speaking as a historian, at all historical periods not just those post-European settlement. We can do with yet more diverse voices, with different scholarly outlooks and challenging evaluations on the past and present. But a call for more specific, local and Australian and New Zealand Studies research does not mean we should shy away from also tackling 'big-picture' global narratives from, and integrating, these perspectives.

Scholar Bio: My initial training was in Japanese, French and History, with a PhD in French Studies and History at The University of Western Australia. My dissertation focussed on women publishing in sixteenth-century France with wonderful supervision by two field experts, Professors Beverly Ormerod and Patricia Crawford. After that, I was awarded a scholarship to study at a specialist centre for Renaissance Studies in Tours, and then an Australian Research Council (ARC) Post-Doctoral Fellowship back home. While women's experiences in the early modern period remain an important part of my current work, I also became interested in masculinities and gender more broadly. Additionally, a significant part of my thinking and practice over the past decade has been how gender history is curated, and how the work of scholars is integrated, in cultural institutions and in community programmes, especially through my participation in The Zest Festival, documenting the presence of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) on the western Australian coast, and in research about gendering the museum with international colleagues working with the V&A London and Vasa Museum, Stockholm. I was a Chief Investigator in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, which began in 2011, involved in a program looking at the continuing resonances of European emotions in modern Australia. Part of that work had me thinking about the material culture left behind by the VOC and its meanings for various indigenous and non-indigenous communities today. My recent work looks at gendered dimensions of European trading and missions in the Americas, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Gender is central to my work, but I like to keep expanding my horizons and finding new connections and perspectives, whether I apply them in new or familiar environments.

