

[Take 5 with...Dr. Michelle Arrow](#)

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Take 5 with...[Dr. Michelle Arrow](#) (Associate Professor in Modern History, Macquarie University)

1. What's your favorite course to teach?

In the past I have taught courses in Australian history and it is one of my very favourite things to teach: the subject comes alive for students in a different way each semester, depending on what is happening in Australian politics and culture. But probably my favourite unit to teach is one that I have taught for a very long time at Macquarie: a history of popular culture since 1945 in Australia and the United States. It's always fascinating to see what expertise and interests students bring with them into the classroom (it's different every year!) and it's great fun to investigate popular culture historically.

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

It's very hard to go past *The Australian Women's Weekly*, now digitised and available on the National Library's extraordinary [Trove web portal](#). I'm old enough to remember reading old issues of the *Weekly* on microfilm as an undergraduate, and it's great to be able to introduce students to the easy availability of this amazing primary source online. *The Australian Women's Weekly* is not only a great primary source to use in teaching, it's a very approachable source for students to use when they are embarking on original research projects: reading magazines teaches students about textual analysis, but also about sampling and searching methods.

3. What's your current research project?

My current research project is an ongoing one: together with my colleagues [Barbara Baird](#), [Leigh Boucher](#) and [Robert Reynolds](#), I am researching a history of sexual citizenship in Australia. We are investigating the ways that the sexual and feminist revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s reworked our ideas about citizenship: not just the kinds of rights that Australian citizens could claim, but the languages in which they made those claims. My most recent book, *The Seventies: the Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (NewSouth, 2019) is one of my contributions to this project. It investigated the ways that the slogan 'the personal is political' reshaped Australian political and cultural life in the 1970s: I argued that the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, a Whitlam-era inquiry into private life, was at the heart of this new politics.

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

I am very lucky to be able to work in some beautiful libraries and archives when I'm not in my office. I spent weeks and months of my life in the [State Library of NSW](#) when I was researching my PhD, and developed a particular fondness for the wooden card catalogues there, even though the wooden chairs aren't as ergonomically friendly as they could be! But perhaps my favourite place of all to do research is the [National Library of Australia](#) (though maybe I'm biased, because I was very fortunate to hold an NLA Fellowship in 2016). The National Library of Australia is an extremely beautiful

modern building, recently renovated, with a real *Mad Men* aesthetic to the furnishings. The staff are amazing. The library is such a national treasure and it's an immense privilege to be able to research Australian history there.

5. If you weren't where you are now, how might you use your PhD?

Like many people who have done a PhD, I had a period after graduation where I was convinced that I would not find an academic position and that I needed to investigate other career possibilities. I started (but didn't finish) a Diploma of Education, and I pondered whether I might move into public history work. I even worked on a history television program for a while as an on-camera presenter (*Rewind*, ABC TV 2004). I am so very grateful for the convergence of opportunities, serendipity and sheer good luck that led to my current job at Macquarie University: to be able to teach and research for a living is such a privilege. If I hadn't ended up where I am, I would have loved to have continued working in the media, making history documentaries for television or radio. One of the advantages of being an academic is that this kind of media work is welcomed and celebrated in universities, so I've been able to keep making programs every now and then, and I'd love to make more!

Scholar Bio: Michelle Arrow is an Associate Professor in Modern History at Macquarie University. She is an historian of postwar Australia, with a particular emphasis on the history of popular culture, the representation of history in the media, and the history of second wave feminism. She is the author of three books, including *Upstaged: Australian Women Dramatists in the Limelight At Last* (2002), *Friday on Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia Since 1945* (2009), and most recently *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (New South, 2019). She has held research fellowships at the National Archives of Australia and the National Library of Australia, and she won an Australian Learning and Teaching Council citation for her teaching in 2010. Together with Leigh Boucher and Kate Fullagar, Michelle is currently the editor of the Australian Historical Association's journal, *History Australia*. Before she became an academic, Michelle worked as a presenter on the ABC TV History series *Rewind* (2004). Her radio feature, 'Public Intimacies: The 1974 Royal Commission on Human Relationships', won the 2014 NSW Premier's Multimedia History Prize.