

Student project

Key Topics:

- fire [1]
- indigenous communities [2]


Taking fire: the historical and contemporary politics of Indigenous burning in Australia and the western United States [3]

This project is investigating the political and cultural influence of the understanding of Indigenous fire in settler societies, with a particular focus on 20th and 21st century Australia and the United States. It argues that non-Indigenous understandings of Indigenous fire have not been confined to the academy as anthropological curiosities, but have historically been political incendiaries that competing interest groups have attempted to draw upon, appropriate or deny.


Research team

Student researcher

[4]



Dr Daniel May
[4]
RESEARCH LEADER



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Full description

In this PhD project student Daniel May investigates the political and cultural influence of understandings of indigenous fire in settler societies, with a particular focus on Australia and the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries. He argues that non-indigenous understandings of indigenous fire have not been confined to the academy as anthropological curiosities but have historically been political incendiaries, as competing interest groups have attempted to draw upon, appropriate, or deny indigenous fire in environmental debates and discourse. In his work, he focuses on specific case studies in South-Eastern Australia (the debates following the 1939 Black Friday and 2009 Black Saturday bushfires), Tropical Northern Australia (Kakadu National Park's fire management program from before 1979 to the 2016 Management Plan, and the savanna burning carbon abatement projects in Arnhem Land from the mid 1990s to 2016), South-Western Australia (the debate following the 1961 Dwellingup bushfires), and the Western United States (the 1910-11 fire season and 'light burning' controversy, and the 1988 Yellowstone fires). He projects that despite the commonality of understandings of indigenous fire proving crucial to debate, these case studies have important political, cultural and environmental local nuances which have not been reflected in national or transnational fire management debates. and argues that contested understandings and uses of indigenous fire have not just reflected clashes over specific management issues or power struggles; they reflect broader divisions over environmental values and systems of knowledge, and can be seen as a proxy for how a settler society relates to both its environment and indigenous history.

Related News



The banner features a stylized orange flame icon next to the word "fire" in a large, bold, orange font. Below this, it says "Journal by MDPI". The main text reads "Congratulations to the Fire 2021 Best Thesis Award Winner DANIEL MAY". The background is a warm orange gradient with a circular inset showing a blurred image of a person's shoulder and arm.

Best PhD Thesis awarded to CRC student
FIRE, INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

29 SEP 2021



25 JUN 2021

Nine more PhD's complete
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, MULTI-HAZARD

[7]



25 JUN 2020

New online - June 2020
COMMUNICATION, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

[8]



CRC PhDs feature in upcoming book launch on disaster history
EDUCATION, FIRE

12 JUN 2020

[9]



To burn or not to burn is not the question
FIRE IMPACTS, INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

01 JUN 2020

[10]



05 FEB 2020

To burn or not to burn is not the question
CLIMATE CHANGE, FIRE

[11]



02 JUL 2018



Research abroad for PhD
FIRE, INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

[12]

Publications

Year	Type	Citation
2021	Thesis	May, D. [4] Taking fire: the historical and contemporary politics of Indigenous burning in Australia and the western United States [13]. <i>College of Arts and Social Sciences</i> (2021). doi:10.25911/MA
2020	Book Chapter	May, D. [4] <i>Disasters in Australia and New Zealand: Historical Approaches to Understanding Catastrophe</i> (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). doi:10.1007/978-981-15-4382-1 DOI [18] Google Scholar [19] BibTeX [

Resources

DATE	[22]	TITLE	[23]	DOWNLOAD	KEY TOPICS
28 Jun 2016		Student Presentation at Australian Historical Association (AHA) 2016: From Boom to Bust, 4-8 July, Federation University Ballarat	[24]	 51.96 KB	[25]  51.96 KB [26], indiger

Linked Projects

Policies, institutions and governance
[27]
GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE [28]

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