Living with fire

Lecturer guidelines

Purpose of the learning:

• to appreciate the science of fire in its socio-cultural context
• to introduce an understanding of Indigenous ‘cultural’ fire as a means of delineating mainstream Australian values about bushfire
• to consider the frameworks of contemporary research

Learning Sequence

PRINT VERSION of learning sequence

Description:

Students are asked to read a background framing that connects ‘fire’ and ‘culture’. Lecturers can select learning tasks and/or discussion questions that are in part sequential. (see below for summary of the sequence.)

Guiding questions:

How is bushfire represented in contemporary Australia?

How integral to our culture is bushfire?

How can we re-imagine the concept of fire to strengthen research and management frameworks?

Rationale

The Living with Fire questions may seem more relevant for a student of humanities than science. Even though an understanding of a cultural dimension of the world is core business for humanities it is also a perspective that is critical for scientists and environmental managers to appreciate. Science is both producer and product of our view of the world at any particular time. An ongoing review of the science-culture connections sharpens the frameworks used to define and resolve environmental problems. The following pages are designed to ‘situate’ bushfire in mainstream Australia so that the science itself is viewed in the context from which it takes, and gives, shape.

Summary of Learning Sequence

Background Reading for both topics - Indigenous cultural fire

In this background reading the terms ‘culture’ and ‘indigenous fire’ are introduced so that the values around fire can be identified and explored for mainstream Australia and its ‘fire’ science.

1. Bushfire Knowledge through language, stories and experience

Background reading

a. Bushfire Knowledge through language

• Task - Compare language of fire between indigenous sources and a contemporary scientific source
• Discussion Questions

b. Bushfire knowledge through stories

• Task - look at national library database for titles of books about fire that indicate positive valuing.

c. Bushfire knowledge through experience - includes

• Task - In response to a Parks and Wildlife service’s concern about the negative perceptions people have about prescribed burning create a strategy for a Parks and Wildlife service to create more positive experiences of fire.
• Video - Parks and Wildlife manager explaining concerns about people’s perceptions and understanding about fire and prescribed burning in particular

Concluding Discussion Questions
2. Re-imagining fire of the past for new stories and new research

Background reading

• Discussion questions and/or tasks - critically review contemporary research.

Resources

A. Bushfire Knowledge through language, stories and experience

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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"Great Australian Bushfire Stories is a collection of remarkable tales from all around Australia that tell of our country’s fiercest natural phenomenon: the bushfire. Farmers, landowners, firefighters and city dwellers share with ABC journalist Ian Mannix their experiences of fires: preparing for them, fighting them, and the heartbreaking task of mopping up when their best efforts failed. Some stories are funny, some are tragic, many courageous, but all are testimony to the ingenuity and grit of human beings as they fight to save their homes, their towns and, in some cases, their lives."

| ![Unknown macro: 'flashvideo'] | Parks and Wildlife Services Re-framing Fire Experiences Challenge | Small animated video framing the task for section c. Experience |

Country in Flames

Country of the heart: an indigenous Australian homeland, Deborah Bird Rose, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2002


Bushfire CRC Burning for Biodiversity, Firenote and web link


B. Re-imagining fire of the past for new stories, new research


Fire Regimes in semi-arid lands, L. McCaw – can be ordered from the Bushfire CRC http://www.bushfirecrc.com/publications/confdvd.html


World fire: the culture of fire on earth, Stephen Pyne, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1997

The still-burning bush, Stephen Pyne, Melbourne, Scribe Short Books, 2006