

Humanities 21 Corporate Lecture Series

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Humanities 21 Corporate Lecture Series

About the Corporate Lecture Series

When senior executives are asked what capabilities they would most like to see their staff develop, the answer is seldom specific knowledge from a conventional training course. More often they seek cognitive skills, such as the ability to tackle questions they have never seen before, test hypotheses critically, and develop solutions based on well-articulated logic and analysis.

Talks within the Humanities 21 Corporate Lecture Series expose staff to unusual situations and ideas which encourage them to think through questions for which there are no clear answers. This kind of critical thinking helps to develop perceptive and creative individuals, able to think laterally and plan strategically. These skills can be applied to many kinds of work and are becoming more valuable as job requirements change rapidly.

Bookings

To book talks within the Corporate Lecture Series contact the Humanities 21 General Manager Maeve on 0417 464 001 or maeve@humanities21.com.au

Our talks take place over a 1-hour session, usually during lunchtime or after work. They consist of 40-45 minutes of presentation followed by 15-20 minutes of questions and discussion. Speakers are leading academics in Melbourne who are experts in their fields. To find out how staff respond to our talks, see testimonials from our clients (p.3).

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Testimonials

‘The Humanities 21 speakers are true experts in their fields. Tapping into this expertise on a topic outside the ordinary realms of business is intellectually invigorating. For a firm full of curious people, Humanities 21 talks are like a theme park of unexpected thrills.’

– **Management Consultant, The Boston Consulting Group**

PEXA’s lunchtime sessions with Humanities 21 have been critical to helping our employees think about things other than our day-to-day work. It’s fantastic hearing from academics who are highly eminent in their field!’

– **Chief Executive Officer, Property Exchange Australia**

‘Humanities 21 talks break down barriers, stimulate discussion, encourage broad thinking, and are a welcome change to our usual narrow diet. The speakers are skilled at talking engagingly about their subjects to a diverse group of lay people. Our staff often ask when the next one will be held.’

– **Partner, Ashurst Australia.**

‘Humanities 21’s professional series engrosses audiences, providing fresh insight into contemporary business issues.’

– **Director, Sterling Equity**

‘It gave me a great insight into the French Revolution and the correlations between historic events and current corporate life.’

– **Solicitor, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers**

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Management Themes and Speakers - Leadership

Talk title and learning objectives	Speaker	Video link
<p>Abraham Lincoln: Developing Executive Power Lincoln redefined the nature and scope of executive power. He did this not through ruthlessness but through debate – by inviting his cabinet to challenge his assumptions.</p> <p>This talk explores the effects of giving a platform to dissenting views.</p>	<p><i>Associate Professor Timothy Lynch</i></p>	
<p>Ten Outrageous Leaders Antiquity has spawned a great many leaders and some continue to stand as inspiring or controversial examples of leadership.</p> <p>This talk examines ten leaders – who could easily be labelled ‘outrageous’ in terms of what they tried to achieve and how they went about it – in the context of their successes and failures, and their legacies.</p>	<p><i>Dr Frederick Vervaert</i></p>	
<p>The Greatness of George Washington and Other Myths Despite being a mediocre general who lost nearly every battle and ruled with few achievements George Washington retains his mythic status as one of the greatest leaders of all time.</p> <p>This talk examines the importance of symbols, precedents and history in projecting strong leadership.</p>	<p><i>Dr Matthew Laing</i></p>	

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<p>Donald Trump, Populism and the West The election of Donald Trump has turned American politics on its head and has become a potent symbol of deeper problems in politics and policy, not just in the USA but across the Western world. Populist sentiments have started to reach our own shores and Australia is inevitably caught up in some of the debates that define the Trump era.</p> <p>This talk explores the factors that led to Trump’s election, the issues that define his presidency and the international implications of it all.</p>	<p><i>Dr Matthew Laing</i></p>	
<p>Machiavelli’s Ethics and the Medici Banking Empire The term ‘Machiavellian’ has long been freighted with negative connotations but Machiavelli’s conviction about appearance and deception is relevant to leaders today. How do they negotiate and exercise power? How do they project their <i>personae</i> into the public sphere?</p> <p>This talk explores the positive aspects of Machiavelli’s treatise <i>The Prince</i> and the ways in which his principles transcend to modern leadership.</p>	<p><i>Associate Professor Peter Howard</i></p>	
<p>Julius Caesar and the Power of Image Gaius Julius Caesar remains one of the most famous figures of Roman Antiquity. Why is his name still so familiar, 2060 years after his death?</p> <p>This talk explores Julius Caesar as an early example of populist politics, showing the importance of engaging a mass audience and the triumph of style over substance.</p>	<p><i>Dr Rhiannon Evans</i></p>	

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<p>Cleopatra and female leadership in Antiquity Just over fifty years ago, Sir Moses Finley wrote of ‘the silent women of Rome.’ We now know women played important leadership roles – including Cleopatra, who is often portrayed as a seductress but also possessed masculine traits that led her to power.</p> <p>This talk explores the multifaceted ways in which women have been able to assert power and influence throughout history, and what women today can glean from their examples.</p>	<p><i>Dr Rhiannon Evans</i></p>	
<p>Leading Women on Shakespeare’s All-Male Stage Shakespeare’s stage was a transvestite theatre, in which all the female roles were played by males, including the charismatic leads like Cleopatra and Juliet. There were other theatres in which women played lead roles, so what does this reveal about the overtly constructed roles found in Shakespeare’s plays? Was it to justify ‘male’ characteristics in his female roles, such as Juliet’s decisiveness in the face of Romeo’s passivity?</p> <p>This talk explores femininity in its many forms, and the effects of prejudice – overt and subconscious - on judgment.</p>	<p><i>Dr David McInnis</i></p>	

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Management Themes and Speakers – Ethics

Talk title and learning objectives	Speaker	Video link
<p>Frankenstein and Fear of Genetic Engineering In the summer of 1816, Mary Godwin found herself cooped up inside a villa in Geneva due to foul weather. To pass the time, she and the other guests, who included Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, settled on a ghost-story competition, the most famous outcome of which was <i>Frankenstein</i> (1818).</p> <p>This talk historicises Frankenstein's monster asks how the monster connects with today's hopes and fears about synthetic biology, genetic engineering, cyborgs and artificial life.</p>	<p><i>Professor Deirdre Coleman</i></p>	
<p>Bearing Witness to Trauma and Mass Atrocities This talk explores various histories and concepts that have forced us to avoid or to witness human suffering in our world. Trauma is an interdisciplinary concept that spans psychology, anthropology, philosophy, literature and history.</p> <p>This talk illuminates a number of historical and contemporary events, including the past and present refugee crises in Europe. It will question how human beings adapt to impossible situations.</p>	<p><i>Dr Noah Shenker</i></p>	
<p>The Concentration Camp Universe Once Jews were picked up – from the ghettos, from their homes across Europe, from detention camps, from labour sites, or found in hiding – they were - either murdered in the killing fields of Eastern Europe, or - sent to death camps or concentration camps.</p>	<p><i>Dr Daniella Doron</i></p>	

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<p>This talk focuses on the various responses to impending death exhibited by Jews across Europe and the varied ways survivors account for their survival.</p>		
<p>Disentangling the Drone Debate Militaries around the world are racing to develop and deploy ever more sophisticated and lethal tele-operated weapons. Remotely operated aircraft – drones – have emerged as one of the most controversial technologies of the new millennium. Will drones make war more frequent or less? What is the psychological impact on operators? Should drones be restricted? How?</p> <p>This talk distinguishes the good arguments from the bad, and asks the audience to consider: what is the most ethical path for the future of drone use?</p>	<p><i>Professor Robert Sparrow</i></p>	
<p>Trust in Public and Private Life Trust, when met with trustworthiness, has instrumental value in enabling co-operation and reducing transaction costs. This includes reducing the need for expensive substitutes for trust, such as monitoring and legal remedies. In addition, trust creates meaningful relationships.</p> <p>This talk asks some central questions: what is trust? When is it justified? How do we avoid everyday pathologies of trust and distrust?</p>	<p><i>Dr Karen Jones</i></p>	
<p>Taking Action on Climate Change Climate change is one of the greatest ethical challenges we face, yet taking action to stop it has been surprisingly slow. Is it because there is something peculiar in the moral psychology of individuals which prevents them from responding to problems</p>	<p><i>Dr Holly Lawford-Smith</i></p>	

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<p>of this magnitude? Is it because we wilfully ignore our obligation to prevent harm to future generations?</p>		
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<p>This talk discusses the difficulty of achieving collective action, and presents strategies for decision-making when economics and morality are in conflict.</p>		
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Management Themes and Speakers – Managing Change

Talk Title and Learning Objectives	Speaker	Video link
<p>Why Reagan Could and Carter Couldn't: Leading Reform in Times of Change The examples of Reagan and Carter show why talented and intelligent leadership is not always enough to manage change successfully.</p> <p>This talk shows why an awareness of context is crucial for understanding why forces greater than individual leaders shape countries and organisations.</p>	<p><i>Dr Matthew Laing</i></p>	
<p>The French Revolution: Mismanaging Change Change management is an essential skill in today's workplace but what can the French Revolution teach us about it? Many historians have argued that the French Revolution was the result of Louis XVI and his noble elite mismanaging the fiscal and social challenges confronting them in the 1780s.</p> <p>This talk examines those challenges and the mistakes made by the regime and suggests what we can learn from them about managing change.</p>	<p><i>Professor Peter McPhee</i></p>	
<p>Change and Leadership in Shakespeare Shakespeare's last sole-authored play, <i>The Tempest</i>, is perhaps his most philosophical and timeless. Set on an island that represents a fantasy other-world site, it is a deceptively simple play containing a wealth of political and epistemological considerations.</p> <p>This talk discusses what we can learn from Shakespeare's handling of change, new knowledge, utopian fantasy and alternative forms of leadership.</p>	<p><i>Dr David McInnis</i></p>	

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Management Themes and Speakers – Australia

Talk title and learning objectives	Speaker	Video link
<p>Melbourne: a City Remade In 1977 two reports prepared by Melbourne’s then-urban planning authority, the MMBW, warned that the city’s inner region was facing economic and social distress. Instead of leading to a British- or American-style social disorder, the outcome has been quite the opposite. Inner Melbourne has been colonised by the wealthy, who have remade it in their own image – becoming a vibrant region of highly-paid jobs, commodified leisure activities and urban spectacles.</p> <p>This talk will track how Melbourne was able to manage its changing economic and social landscape in order to become one of the most liveable cities in the world.</p>	<p><i>Associate Professor Seamus O’Hanlon</i></p>	
<p>Language and Power in Melbourne: Then and Now Inner-Melbourne’s language-scape was made and remade due to migration, and restrictions in the 1890s – the decade before the White Australia Policy – threatened to reduce the city’s diversity.</p> <p>This talk will encourage reflection on the dominance of the English language and consideration of what languages, names, and accents carry capital. What kind of language begets marginality or authority? Who carries the burden of communication in the courtroom? In the work place? In the pub?</p>	<p><i>Dr Nadia Rhook</i></p>	
<p>There Goes the Neighbourhood: Changes to Suburban Melbourne If Sydney derives its character from the harbour and its beaches, Melbourne owes its quality as a ‘liveable city’ to its distinctive neighbourhood precincts.</p>	<p><i>Dr Andrew Lemon</i></p>	

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<p>This talk will explore how suburbs have evolved – and how they never stop changing. It will also question: are development and population pressures forcing a bland uniformity on our metropolis? Is the individuality of Melbourne sustainable in an increasingly uniform world?</p>		
<p>Art of Healing: Bush Medicine and Contemporary Art One of the most remarkable art movements to emerge in Australia has come from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, who live in both remote and urban areas. Artists are motivated by the desire to share their culture with younger generations and the broader community. Often the artworks reveal healing practices using native plants.</p> <p>This talk examines how Indigenous Australians have used art as a means of communication with their own communities and with others.</p>	<p><i>Dr Jacqueline Healey</i></p>	
<p>What's the Problem? Australian Art Crime The Australian Indigenous art market is estimated at around \$500 million, and the amount of problematic art in the market at about 10%. These figures are weighed against a very low reporting rate and an even lower rate of prosecution.</p> <p>This talk presents an outline of the history of art and cultural heritage crime in Australia. It also examines the ways in which scholarship in the humanities, science and law is used to support studies of attribution, and how economics determines what is at stake.</p>	<p><i>Professor Robyn Sloggett</i></p>	

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Management Themes and Speakers – Innovation and Technology

Talk title and learning objectives	Speaker	Video link
<p>As Luck Would Have It: When Search Engines Are Not Enough Contemporary scholars have access to an unprecedented abundance of information, but ‘discovery’ is not supported by contemporary search technologies. Search engines omit some vital elements of humanities scholarship – such as meandering and fortuitous connections – in pursuit of efficiency.</p> <p>This talk discusses designs for research tools that increase opportunities for serendipitous discovery.</p>	<p><i>Professor Deb Verhoeven</i></p>	
<p>Crossroads of Civilisation All nations rely on foundation myths and heroic legends to shape their identity. Part of the foundation mythology shared by Western nations is the ideal of Classical Greece, the well-spring from which Western Civilisation drew its traditions of science, democracy, law, toleration, and philosophical inquiry. However in truth Western civilisation owes less to the genius of a European people than to commerce, travel, and engagement with Asia and Africa.</p> <p>This talk demonstrates the importance of diversity and communication in cultural development and innovation.</p>	<p><i>Dr Steven Curry</i></p>	
<p>Wasteful Competition and the Problem of Arms Races Some goods confer relative benefit rather than absolute benefit. This means that when someone improves their share, they do so only at the expense of others. Competition for such goods leads to ‘arms races’ – patterns of steadily escalating</p>	<p><i>Professor Deb Verhoeven</i></p>	

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<p>competition in which participants' efforts cancel each other out; consumption becomes adversarial in the manner of Cold War weapons stockpiling.</p> <p>This talk discusses why arms races are bad, when they might not be so bad, and what we ought to do about it all.</p>		
<p>Finding Meaning in an Ocean of Data How does philosophy come together with Big Data? What is the relationship between the humanities and information sciences?</p> <p>This talk looks at decision theory, logic, philosophies of language and mathematics to explore how information sciences and the humanities collide. It also explores a conceptual framework for making the most of Big Data.</p>	<p><i>Professor Greg Restall</i></p>	

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Management Themes and Speakers – Asia

Talk title and learning objectives	Speaker	Video link
<p>Buddhism in Contemporary Life In Australian workplaces, Buddhism is most likely to appear in the form of corporate mindfulness which encourages calmness and productivity. Mindfulness uses techniques derived from Buddhist meditation.</p> <p>This talk explores religion as a guide for managing life and desire, and as an institutional force which must navigate its relationship with the law and other systems of public order.</p>	<p><i>Dr Lewis Mayo</i></p>	
<p>President Trump and Asia’s Changing Geopolitics Donald Trump’s presidency promises an unpredictable and disruptive vision of Sino-American relations and world politics more broadly. This talk assesses the likely future of Trump’s approach to China and Asia and what it will mean for Australia and the rest of the world.</p>	<p><i>Professor Nick Bisley</i></p>	