An understanding of sport is central to understanding Australian culture and Australians’ sense of who they are in the world. Australia’s biggest cultural events are sporting events. Sport is part of day-to-day discourse and a central part of Australian culture, yet it receives comparatively little attention as an area of serious academic study. It is so often seen as trivial, unimportant and unworthy of ‘serious’ intellectual attention. A critical social analysis of the practice and meaning of sport in Australian culture can, however, provide a deep understanding of not only the unique nature of Australian sport but also of Australian culture and society. This unit of study provides students with a socially critical perspective from which to appreciate the meaning, practice and place of sport in Australian culture. Focused on the range of learning that takes place through children’s and young people’s engagement in sport, the course examines the practice of sport at levels ranging from elite international to grassroots, community-based and school sport. Students will examine the processes of globalisation and commodification in sport and the implications this has for the social and cultural development of children and young people. Sport, Learning and Australian Culture provides a meaningful educational experience by placing students’ first-hand interactions with Australian sporting culture at the centre of the unit of study, by incorporating field trips to relevant sporting events and sites in Sydney. These involve attending sporting events ranging from international rugby games to a children’s (nippers) surf carnival and school sport days. By experiencing Australian sporting culture in this way, students are able to construct a context for their lectures and readings and gain a deeper understanding of the culture-specific meanings of sport and its practices. This unit of study will provide valuable socio-cultural insights into Australia for international students; encourage more critical thinking about the role of sport in all societies; and allow all participants to develop an understanding of the global forces that operate in sport, including the impact these forces exert on local cultures.

Field trips
In addition to lectures and tutorials, students will attend a number of field trips such as:
- ‘Nippers’ (junior) Surf Carnival/Training
- international, ‘Super 12’ rugby match
- GPS high school rugby match
- NRL football game
- junior club rugby league match
- Indigenous sport: youth rugby
- surfing competition
- grade or junior club/school cricket
- netball, and
- lawn bowls

About the staff
Dr Richard Light
Richard Light is a leading scholar in this field. He has as a background as a physical education teacher and coach in a range of cultural settings and has published extensively on the social dimensions of sport and physical education. Richard held national and international titles in martial arts, coached rugby in Osaka, Japan, from 1990 to 1996 and is one of the few Western scholars researching and writing on sport.
in Japan who are able to access its culture. Richard is Section Editor, Pedagogy, for the Asian Journal for Research in Sport Science and sits on the review board for International Sports Studies and Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy. Richard also convened the Second International Conference: Teaching Sport and Physical Education for Understanding, in Melbourne in December 2003, which attracted more than 250 delegates from 19 countries.

Richard’s research draws on social theory to examine the social and educational significance of physical education and sport. Through this focus he strives to provide insight into the breadth and depth of learning that takes place through the body that is implicit, yet deep and lasting. In particular, his work focuses on the role that sport and other regulated physical activity plays in the embodiment of culture, class and culture-specific forms of gender. His work is cross disciplinary and draws on the fields of sport history, the sociology of sport, sociology and education to highlight the significance of school-based sport and physical education for the education and social development of children and young people. He strives to highlight the ways in which children’s and young people’s experiences of school-based sport and physical education, and the resultant learning, is profoundly shaped by larger social and cultural contexts. It is within this work that he identifies the impact that commercial media-sport has on the practice of sport in schools and community sport clubs and the broad range of, often, implicit learning that arises from this for children and young people.

**Indicative reading list**

- Booth D. *Australian Beach Cultures* (2001) London, Frank Cass (Bailleau)
- Pearson K. *Surfing Sub Cultures of Australia and New Zealand* (1979) Brisbane, University of Queensland Press