

Glossary

Ancient

As defined in the Australian Curriculum: the ancient period covers history from the development of early human communities (from 60 000 BCE) to the end of late antiquity (around 650 CE).

ANZAC Day

A national remembrance in Australia for the troops that fought at Gallipoli in Turkey (April–December 1915) during World War I, and for Australians who have fought in subsequent conflicts. The acronym ANZAC refers to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC).

Apostasy

Apostasy is the abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief, principle or identity.

People can be labelled as apostates for holding alternative versions of religious or political beliefs. Apostasy and apostates are generally considered pejoratives and apostates suffer discrimination in many cases.

Some people self-identify as apostates in order to celebrate its positive connotations for independent thinking or to rob the label of its power as an insult.

Artefacts

Something made or shaped by humans for their use, such as a stone tool, a metal sword, a letter, a plastic toy, usually of historical interest.

Asia

As defined in the Australian Curriculum: Asia refers to the territorial area that extends from the western border of Pakistan to the northern border of Mongolia, the eastern border of Japan, and to the southern border of Indonesia.

Atheism

Atheism is the lack of a belief in gods, and therefore an atheist is someone who does not have a belief in any gods.

Australian democracy

A system of government grounded in liberal democratic values and a belief in civic engagement. It includes a written constitution, a well-established representative parliamentary process based on the Westminster system, and a constitutional head of state.

BCE

An abbreviation of 'before the Common Era'. It is the same dating system as the traditionally used BC, meaning 'before Christ'. Historical dates before the birth of Christ are classified as BCE. There is no year zero in this dating system, so the year CE 1 immediately follows the year 1 BCE.

Blasphemy

Blasphemy is something you say or do that shows you do not respect God or a religion.

Burden of proof

An obligation to prove what is alleged. In criminal cases, this obligation rests on prosecution, which must prove its case beyond reasonable doubt. In civil cases, it rests on a plaintiff, who must prove his or her case on the balance of probabilities.

CE

An abbreviation of 'Common Era'. It is the same dating system as the traditionally used AD, short for the Latin phrase *anno Domini*, 'in the year of our Lord'. Historical dates after the birth of Christ are classified as CE. There is no year zero in this dating system, so the year CE 1 immediately follows the year 1 BCE.

Chronology

A study of time. In history, chronology involves an arrangement of events in order, as in a timeline.

Citizenship

A legal status granted by birth or naturalisation to citizens involving certain rights (for example, protection; passport; voting) and responsibilities (for example, obey the law, vote, defend the country). A modern sense incorporates three components: civil (rights and responsibilities); political (participation and representation); and social (social virtues and community involvement).

Civics

An identifiable body of knowledge, skills and understandings relating to the organisation and working of society. It refers to a nation's political and social heritage, democratic processes, government, public administration and legal system.

Modern Worldviews: Glossary

Common law

A body of English law traditionally based on custom and court decisions. Also known as case law or precedent, it is law developed by judges through decisions of earlier courts and an understanding of current context.

Constitution

A set of fundamental principles on which a state or other organisation (such as a club) is governed. Usually, this takes the form of a written legal document setting out specific powers for a government or governing of that entity.

Cultural norm

An expectation of appropriate behaviour derived from a particular system of values that reflects prevailing ideas about how human life should be conducted and regulated. Norms may vary across different settings.

Customary law

In the Australian Curriculum, this refers to the customary law of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; however, in Australia, customary law is subject to constitutional and common law.

Democracy

A system of government where power is vested in the people, who may exercise it directly or through elected representatives, and who may remove and replace their political leaders and government in free and fair regular elections.

Demography

A study of characteristics of human populations, such as size, age profile and life expectancy.

Division of powers

Vesting of powers within different levels of government. Under the Australian Constitution, the Commonwealth Government was vested with specific powers while the states retained general powers. In practice, the distribution of powers has become increasingly centralised over time.

Empire

An extensive group of states or countries ruled over by a single monarch, or a sovereign state, which exercises political, economic and cultural rule or control over the people within, such as the Roman Empire and the British Empire.

Empirical evidence

Information you can collect through observation or investigation.

Ethics

The study of principles relating to what is right and wrong, and what is good and bad behaviour. Ethics is about the question, "What ought we to do?"

There are three main schools of ethics: consequentialist, duty-based, and virtue ethics.

Consequentialist ethics (or teleological ethics, from the Greek telos, goal) holds that the rightness or wrongness of actions is determined by the value of their foreseeable consequences.

Duty-based ethics (or deontological ethics, from the Greek deon, duty) holds that certain acts are intrinsically right, and to do the right thing is equated with being good.

Virtue ethics emphasises that it is the character or disposition of a person that matters most.

Ethical principle

Fundamental rules of behaviour that are thought desirable and which are designed to help in determining the rightness or wrongness of actions.

Ethical problem

An ethical problem occurs in situations where there are competing alternatives, which may be supported by arguments about the outcome of the actions to be taken, where the outcome is expressed in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, better or worse.

Hate speech

Hate speech is any form of expression which advocates, incites, promotes or justifies hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or a group for a variety of reasons such as race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Human rights

The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.

Humanism

Traditionally "humanist" has been a label applied to people or worldviews that are primarily concerned with the ethical value and agency of human beings, or that emphasise reason over dogma or superstition in decision-making.

Modern Worldviews: Glossary

Although many religious traditions have strong histories of humanist thought, the label generally applies nowadays to people or worldviews which are non-religious. So a humanist is someone who believes humans are capable of being ethical and moral without religion or a god.

Liberalism

Liberalism is an idea that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of individuals to be the central problem of society. Liberals typically believe that rules and restrictions are necessary to protect individuals from being harmed by others, but they also recognise that excessive rules or restrictions can pose a threat to liberty. Liberalism generally values pluralism and the freedom of individuals and groups to seek their version of the good life.

Medieval

The period of history between the end of the Roman Empire in the West in the fifth century CE to the end of the Renaissance around 1500 CE.

Modern

The period of history from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution around 1750 CE to the present.

Multicultural

A preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society such as a state or nation.

A society or organisation characterised by support for, or free activity of, religions, within the bounds of the law.

Nationalism

Loyalty and devotion to a person's nation and culture.

Philosophy

"Love of wisdom". Philosophers seek to understand fundamental truths about the world and about humans, and the relationships humans have to the world and to each other.

Philosophy includes metaphysics (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), ethics and aesthetics (theories about values) and logic (the structure and principles of reasoning).

Pluralism

A pluralistic society is one in which people with different worldviews are largely able to live peacefully together.

Privilege

Privilege exists when a group, ideology or identity is given special treatment because of differences in power related to other groups.

Religious privilege exists when a group, ideology or identity is treated specially for religious reasons, e.g. a law that treats two similar ideas or people differently because of the religious nature of one of them.

Referendum

In Australia, a referendum is a vote of Australian electors on a proposed change to the Constitution that must be approved by a majority of all voters from each state and territory, and also by a majority of voters in a majority (four) of the six states.

Representative democracy

A system of government in which electors choose representatives to a parliament to make laws on their behalf.

Rights and responsibilities

Entitlements and obligations that are associated with living in Australia. While all people in Australia enjoy certain rights (for example, equality under the law), there are also responsibilities (for example, paying taxes, jury service). Citizens also have the right to vote and the responsibility of voting at elections.

Rule of law

A legal principle that decisions by government are made according to established principles and that all citizens are subject to the law and equal before the law. Embedded within the rule of law is the idea that people accept and follow, but also change as needed, laws as agreed by a political process and upheld by independent courts.

Secular

Secular can mean non-religious, or unrelated to religion. A secular society is one governed by people's laws through parliament rather than by religious laws.

Many religions use the word secular to distinguish things relating to the material world (secular things) and the spiritual or divine.

Secularism

Secularism is a political approach which aims to balance freedom of and freedom from religion.

Secularism holds that religions should not be privileged by a government nor discriminated against by a government.

Separation of powers

A doctrine that the three arms of government – the executive, the legislature (parliament) and the judiciary – are separate and independent, with powers that act as a check and balance on each other.

In Australia, the separation between the executive and the legislature is weak because the executive is drawn from the legislature, but the separation between the judiciary and the other two arms of government is strong and is enforced by courts.

Sources of evidence

Any written or non-written material that can be used to investigate the past, for example, coins, photographs, letters, gravestones, buildings, transcripts. A source becomes 'evidence' if it is of value to a particular inquiry.

In history, primary sources are objects and documents created or written during the time being investigated, for example, during an event or very soon after. Examples include official documents, such as laws and treaties; personal documents, such as diaries and letters; photographs; film, documentaries, artefacts, and oral histories.

Secondary sources are accounts about the past that were created after the time being investigated, and which often use or refer to primary sources and present a particular interpretation. Examples include writings of historians, encyclopedia, documentaries, history textbooks and websites.

Statute (statutory law)

In Australia, a statute is a written law, also known as an act of parliament or legislation, which commences as a bill, is passed by the parliament and has received assent by the head of state.

Theist

Someone who believes in one god (monotheism) or multiple gods (polytheism). A theist might or might not regard themselves as part of a religion.

Theocracy

A system of government where a religious ideology or religious organisation runs the state.

The adjective 'theocratic' describes something related to theocracy, e.g. "To tolerate the idea of blasphemy is theocratic."

Worldview

A worldview is the philosophy from which an individual or group engages with the world. This may include a set of assumptions about what is true or not true, a set of beliefs about what is good and bad, and a way of interpreting the world and our responses to it.

Westminster system

A system of parliamentary government, also known as responsible government, which evolved in England and was adopted in its colonies, including Australia.

It is based on the principle that executive government is responsible to the people through parliament. The executive government is formed by those who command the support of the lower House of Parliament.

Ministers, including the Prime Minister, are members of a House of Parliament and are accountable to it.

There is a separate, largely ceremonial, head of state, an independent public service and an independent judiciary that applies the rule of law.