



# Pacific Islands Studies

“We should not be defined by the smallness of our islands but in the greatness of our oceans. We are the sea; we are the ocean. Oceania is us.”

Epeli Hau'ofa  
*We are the Ocean: Selected Works*

## Rediscover the Pacific

New Zealand is the world's largest Polynesian country, and the number of institutions and businesses needing employees with knowledge of Pacific cultures and societies is growing rapidly.

Excellent employment prospects await graduates who have knowledge of issues affecting Pacific peoples and skills in intercultural communication in the Pacific context.

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## What is Pacific Islands Studies?

Pacific Islands Studies is a unique, multidisciplinary programme that examines contemporary issues of importance to Pacific peoples, including New Zealanders, within their broad cultural context.

The course covers the geographical area contained within the Polynesian Triangle defined by Hawai'i, Rapa Nui, and Aotearoa as well as the islands of Melanesia and Micronesia. The focus of the programme affirms New Zealand's location within the Pacific and its acknowledged political, intellectual and diplomatic links in the area.

## Pacific Islands Studies at Otago

Pacific Islands Studies combines well with other papers from a wide range of subjects, including Anthropology, Sociology, Politics, Indigenous Studies, Geography, Planning, Management, and History. We help you to interpret these different disciplines from a Pacific Islands point of view.

The major comprises 9 papers from within Pacific Islands Studies, plus an additional 11 papers either from within Pacific Islands Studies and/or from other subjects. You can choose from a broad range of papers on Māori, Pacific and other indigenous societies, and from a range of departments to suit your areas of interest.

Pacific Islands Studies can be studied as a major or a minor subject within the three-year Bachelor of Arts degree. Further study in this area is available at a postgraduate level (masters, PhD). There is also an option to undertake a jointly supervised postgraduate degree with other University departments.

Throughout your degree you will be challenged to analyse and critique the world in which we live and to design and conduct research that will encourage open-minded solutions.

## Areas of learning

A particular strength of this subject area is its cross-disciplinary nature, readily combining indigenous knowledge with a range of other disciplines. Papers in the programme cover topics such as Pacific people's issues,

Pacific education, Pacific leadership, Pacific prehistory, Pacific history, Pacific religion and church history, Pacific art history, intercultural film and media studies as well as Māori culture and history.

You are required to do core papers in Pacific Islands Studies in combination with papers offered in participating departments that have a particular indigenous focus. These departments/subjects include Anthropology, Archaeology, Education, Geography, History, Indigenous Studies, Māori Studies, Media, Film and Communication, Music, Politics, Social Work, Theology, and Religion.

Because of the multidisciplinary nature of this major, you can tailor your own programme of study by choosing papers that suit your interests and career needs.

## Why study Pacific Islands Studies?

"Growing up in Samoa I took my culture for granted, but my studies made me realise how much I still had to learn about Pacific people and their past. Culture is not a static entity, and our future depends on understanding those around us." Malia Lameta, Master of Arts (Pacific Islands Studies).

Whether you want to promote the interests of Pacific Island peoples locally or around the world, a major in Pacific Islands Studies will help you achieve this.

In this programme of study you will learn the value of indigenous knowledge, and how it can be preserved, transferred and adapted to suit the needs of modern indigenous communities.

These communities exist in a constantly changing environment. Being able to track the effect of these changes provides insights into how to formulate better, relevant and more inclusive policies and plans for future development.

Knowledge of Pacific Island cultures has its place in every aspect of society. No matter your interest, Pacific Islands Studies complements many courses of study:

- climate change
- environmental sustainability
- resource management

- agriculture
- policy development
- education
- language revitalisation
- primary health care and preventative medicine
- economic wellbeing and independence
- community development
- religion/church.

## Career opportunities

Our students are equipped with an understanding of Pacific Islands and indigenous cultural philosophies that are relevant in a myriad of employment situations

A background in Pacific Islands Studies creates opportunities for international careers, not only in the Pacific, but also with Pacific peoples in the Americas, Asia and Australia. Knowledge gained in the course is applicable to issues affecting indigenous peoples anywhere in the world.

Graduates with a background of study in Pacific Islands Studies bring to employers a wide range of skills. The multidisciplinary focus of the course provides a wide perspective giving graduates:

- An understanding of contemporary Pacific people's issues combined with an understanding of, for example, history, archaeology, cultural expression and environmental concerns.
- An awareness of ethical issues in relation to Pacific Islanders in the context of past and present colonial practices, gender relations and society and culture.
- Skills in intercultural communication in the Pacific context.

For questions about  
Pacific Islands Studies  
[otago.ac.nz/te-tumu](http://otago.ac.nz/te-tumu)



## PROFILE

### Iunisi Finau Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology, Minor: Pacific Island Studies)

"I was born in Tonga before migrating to New Zealand at a young age, however, my grandparents embedded the Tongan culture and values within my upbringing. Just as I thought that my knowledge for Pacific cultures would suffice, I took a 100-level Pacific Island Studies paper in my first year and was exposed to a completely different understanding of Pacific knowledge.

"Pacific Islands Studies is such a significant area for all students who wish to learn and understand the history, the issues affecting Pacific people, and the roles that individuals need to engage in Pacific spaces. This could ensure that there are improvements made as a collective, for better outcomes within Pacific communities.

"I am now doing postgraduate studies in Sociology and Pacific Island Studies at Otago. I aim to pursue a career that nurtures my

passion for Pacific people and allows me to inspire and support Pacific families and communities that struggle in our society. I want to pursue a career in public policy and ensure that I can give back to my Pacific communities and help with social issues that affect them within the society.

"Throughout my undergraduate years, I was fortunate to gain leadership roles which contributed significantly to my learning. I joined the Otago Tongan Students' Association and had great benefit from being a member of the association.

"The Pacific Islands Studies programme at Te Tumu is the best place for students who want to be knowledgeable about the Pacific so that they can support the wider Pacific communities in New Zealand, the Pacific region and around the world."

