

Historians slam course

HISTORIANS say the new national modern history curriculum for schools reads like a Marxist manifesto that ignores popular aspects of our past and neglects Australia's role in world politics and war.

The course, designed for years 11 and 12, is heavily focused on revolutionary struggles, colonial oppression and women's struggle for equality.

It neglects Australia's British roots and institutions and its military history, with no mention of Gallipoli, Tobruk or Kokoda, the experts say.

The draft lists World War I as a potential case study in "investigating modern history". It lists "controversies surrounding ...

Laurie Nowell

memorial sites and commemorative events" as an area of study but does not mention Gallipoli or the battle of Fromelle.

In a topic headed "Australia 1880-1945", the draft lists "the formation of organised labour", "White Australia" and "wartime government controls, including conscription, control of the labour force, rationing, censorship and propaganda".

But it does not mention the settlement of Australia or the deeds of the first AIF in World War I.

The draft history course was released this week for public discussion, divided into five units: The nation state and national identity; Recognition and equality; Inter-

national tensions and conflicts; Revolutions; and, Australia and Asia.

Historian Andrew Garvie said the course agenda should be altered to give a more balanced view of history.

"This appears to be a very trendy, right-on curriculum. It looks heavily influenced by a Marxist view of history — there's lots about about revolution and struggles against oppression," Mr Garvie said.

"But it lacks an appreciation of Australia's place in the world.

"There seems to be very little about our military history or our links with Britain. Gallipoli and Kokoda appear to be just footnotes to the whole thing."

He said the course also seemed to

be organised as a "slice of life" approach to history.

"It seems to me students will be given bits of history to study. They may not gain an appreciation of the whole of an era or century," Mr Garvie said.

Education consultant Russell Boyle said the history curriculum was too selective.

"The ancient history curriculum spans the period from pre-history to 500AD, while the period of investigation in the draft modern history curriculum is from the late 18th century through to the end of the 20th century," Mr Boyle said.

"There is much in the period in between that would deepen students' understanding of the events and issues that have shaped humanity and our contemporary world."

INS AND OUTS

WHAT'S IN

Civil rights movement in the US

British imperialism

Women's struggle for equality

McCarthyism

The rise of Zionism

Decolonisation and independence in Africa

Studies of revolution

WHAT'S NOT

Gallipoli

Development of the wool industry

Australia's British heritage and links

The First Fleet

The Eureka Stockade

Federation