

Religious Education @ Merici College

This year saw change continue within the Religious Education Department! A number of our staff were part of the Catalyst Early Adopters group for the Archdiocese and this has resulted in a number of important changes to teaching practice that have been welcomed by the students in those classes. We have also had teachers using the Seqta learning management system in Semester 2, so girls who have been in these classes will be ready for the full rollout next year.

Our BSSS seniors also got to participate in the new course with units from both World Religions and Religious Studies – hopefully these extra units will enable seniors to undertake a double major or major-minor in coming years. We also had our first intake of International Baccalaureate Diploma Program students for World Religions complete their exams in May. The four girls achieved excellent results for this course with three of the girls achieving the maximum score of 7 and the fourth student a 6!

We continued the implementation of the new curriculum, this year with Year 10, which means that all our junior years are now using this new curriculum. We once again had very large numbers of students involved in the Black Mountain program with two Mentor classes in Year 10 and almost two thirds of Year 9 girls volunteering at BMS throughout the year. It is so encouraging to see the enthusiasm for these programs which really encourage the students to put faith into action.

None of this is possible without a very talented and dedicated Religious Education Department. Our teachers are passionate about what they do and this is obvious in the lessons they plan and the relationships they develop with their students.

Sociology

In Sociology this year, we covered the topics of economic inequality, crime and justice, popular culture, and age.

We looked at how COVID 19 policies from the Australian Government had helped and hindered people who could be affected financially from the loss of a job and income. Another example we studied was how surfing became an example of popular culture and how it helped the infamous 'Bra Boys' of Maroubra find a shared identity and purpose and the troubles that caused them as a subculture in the area.

To understand social norms, we designed experiments where we broke social norms and watched people's reactions. This was so much fun as we watched how people whispered, stared, and talked about what we were doing.

The Sociology class was part of a trial to test out some Catalyst initiatives. This is an initiative by Catholic Education to support more engagement and participation in class, and we videoed lessons as part of this.

Students are all hoping to get “#Full Marx” In their Sociology results this year.

Photos of the Sociology Class Breaking Social Norms at School (put caption by photos)

Charlotte Ermacora was less than impressed with being videoed for a lesson observation. AKA the 'Death Stare'.

“Sociology has definitely been one of my favourite and most interesting subjects in senior school. We covered a huge range of fascinating topics like power, micro-interactions, inequality and identity. These topics are super relevant to issues in society today, like Covid, child exploitation or poverty, and I also find that I can use my learning from Sociology in other subjects like RE or English. Sociology is unique as you can bring your own opinions and prior understanding of society and culture and look at them through different sociological 'lenses'. Continuing Sociology from Year 11 to 12 was rewarding because I could apply my learning from previous units to new ones and find links between them. The assessments are challenging but have lots of options so you can delve into what fascinates you or what you think is most relevant in society today!”

(Shoshana Serra – Year 12)

Psychology

This year in Psychology, students developed their understanding of individual human behaviour and the impact this has on human interaction. Students considered past psychological research and whether it would be deemed ethical today; turns out some of the most infamous experiments really should not have been conducted but there was plenty of discussion in class as to whether it's ok to benefit from their findings.

The Year 11 and 12s recognise they are going through a particularly tumultuous time in their development at the moment so our study of theories of development allowed students to apply these ideas to their own lives and better understand the mysteries of being an adolescent! According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, students are likely to be experiencing a crisis of identity, sounds about right. Applying Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory of development was also very illuminating for students, however, by interrogating Freud's theory further they could discuss how his ideas are based on limited evidence and therefore may not always be applicable. Another beneficial topic for students that they could apply to their own lives were theories of learning.

Students were introduced to a number of ways that we learn and change our behaviour such as classical conditioning, operant conditioning and observational learning. In class, students were involved in discussion as to how their parents and teachers influence their behaviour and whether reward or punishment is more effective in promoting a positive behavioural response.

During Semester 2, students examined the role of psychology in society; studying how humans think, act and feel in social settings. They considered their own attitudes and the tricomponent model which divides an attitude into three components; thoughts, feelings and behaviour. When these components are incongruous we experience an uncomfortable feeling known as cognitive dissonance and students could discuss many examples of when they had experienced this e.g. "I know I should reduce the amount of time I spend on TikTok...just not right now." One of the topics within the Individuals in Society Unit was criminal and forensic psychology. Students gained an understanding of the difference between the two fields and adopted the persona of a criminologist when analysing a case study and determining a person's culpability, presenting their findings based on biological, psychological and social theory in a multimedia format.

The topics in Psychology this year have intrigued and ignited student interest in psychology as a profession, and studying this subject in College has immensely benefited their schooling but also their understanding of human nature as they grow, learn, develop and interact with wider society.

Andrew Blakey

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