

Defining *Islandness*

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While Tasmania's Pete Hay has written of the "intractable faultlines" in attempts to derive an island studies theory (Hay 2006, 2013), islanders the world over know in their bones that life on an island is different. Newfoundland writer Michael Crummey calls it an "inexorable gravitational pull... elusive, ephemeral, and barely definable when we try to say exactly what it is and how it shapes us" (Crummey and Locke 2004, 20). The Island Institute's Philip Conkling calls it "a metaphysical sensation that derives from the heightened experience that accompanies physical isolation," which can be equally experienced by visitors as an "instantaneous recognition" (Conkling 2007, 191). Newfoundland's Lisa Moore just calls it "this *Newfoundland thing*" (Crummey and Locke 2004, 20).

Borrowing from island biogeography a term whereby "some aspects common to islands result in shared evolutionary forces on islands the world over" (Berry 2007, 168), we look at what Godfrey Baldacchino calls "the island effect" (Baldacchino 2007, 2): those shared traits of islandness that affect humans who inhabit islands. We look at how being surrounded by water has a direct and profound influence upon those who live on islands. Whether people perceive themselves as being cut off and isolated or part of the main; whether they're hemmed in and stifled or safe and cocooned; whether they see island living as close-minded and insular or perfectly suited for their circumstances at the time; whether they find the omnipresent sea overwhelming or comforting; whether they succumb to the vulnerability of island living or are able to adapt with relative ease to whatever adversity is thrown their way, are all part of the continuum of the island effect, and are all contributors to island identity.

By taking a multidisciplinary approach to understanding culture and identity; by looking at theories of identity, place, and culture; and by exploring specific examples of how island identity manifests on specific islands around the world, this course tries to grasp that metaphysical sense of islandness – the "instantaneous recognition" that is often so hard to put into words.