Research and Referencing Issues

* Think carefully about your sources – make sure they are academic!  Wikipedia should almost always be avoided.  Also consider whether other websites, including ‘news’ sites, are credible, and appropriate for an academic piece of work and for the point you are trying to make.  Think about the authors’ intended audience.  We want to see some critical evaluation of your sources.  This may be evident simply in your choice of reference source, if not in your written comment on those sources.
* Try to avoid referencing lectures.  All of our lecturers here are La Trobe are experts in their field of research, however not all lectures are presentations of the lecturer’s own work, rather they (the lectures) are often a combination of the presenter’s own and others’ work, put together in a way intended to educate and inspire you, the students.  Importantly, they are intended as an invitation to conduct further research, the results of which we hope to see in your essays and other assessments.  Try to find published sources whenever possible – show us your research skills.
* Where appropriate, in-text references should include page numbers as well as year of publication.  In-text references go inside the relevant sentence/punctuation.  For example:

If a person simply has no son at the time of his or her death, another patrilineal male relative can be called in to perform the rituals; but this idea is disturbing, “almost as if the rituals lose some of their efficacy” (Bennett 1983, p. 130).

Note the full stop appears after the reference, not before.  Page numbers ought to be included not just for direct quotes (as above), but also when you paraphrase a particular point or idea from a specific place within a text.  Page numbers are not necessary (only) if you are summing up an argument made throughout a text.  For example:

There appears to be an assumption that there is a transition from arranged marriage to love marriage directly caused by a transformation from ‘tradition’ to modernity.  However, there is no clear distinction between tradition and modernity in practice and expressions of romantic love existed prior to the transition to modernity.  Love is not a new, ‘western’ concept (Hart 2007).

* List journal articles in your reference list as if you read the hard copy (i.e. no URL), even if you actually find them via the internet.  For example, for this journal article, found via the library’s website, the only information needed in the reference list is:

Feldman-Savelsberg, P 1995, ‘Cooking inside: kinship and gender in Bangangté idioms of marriage and procreation’, *American Ethnologist*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp.483-501

Writing and Formatting Issues

* Be clear about the cultural groups you are writing about.  Some essays in the past told us about polygamy or bridewealth and dowry but contained no (or little) mention of the actual cultural groups being discussed.  It is difficult then not to assume that problematic sweeping generalisations are being made.
* Sub-headings are not required in shorter essays (less than 3,000 words).  Sub-headings may help you with the writing process, they are useful in organising your work and help to reduce repetition, but please delete them before submission.
* Spellcheck doesn’t pick up on all errors (and sometimes it tries to ‘fix’ words that are already correct!), but please keep an eye on it anyway.  If you are unsure of the correct spelling of a word, look it up.  For example, confusing ‘practice’ (a noun) and ‘practise’ (a verb) was a common mistake in essays in the past.
* Read the department rules before you start your work.  Please!  Though most essays were correctly formatted (double spacing, wide margins, etc.), a few too many were not.  Ignoring the department rules about formatting is a good way to put your reader/marker in a bad mood before s/he has even got past your introduction.

General

* Due dates are not a ‘guide’, please do get your work in on time or request an extension from me if circumstances may prevent you from doing so.  Keep me informed of your progress so that I can do all I can to help you get through the subject successfully.  Marks have been deducted for lateness (5% per day, as per the department rules).