

You are invited to the next Melbourne Salon at the Alliance Française
51 Grey St., St. Kilda

Thursday 2nd August 2018, 7pm - 9 pm

French convicts and the case for freedom in Australia

Dr Alexis Bergantz



Escape was on every mind. How many succeeded remains a tantalising question. For the thousands of convicts France sent to New Caledonia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the best way to stay at large, but also the most dangerous, was to reach Australia. The ones who survived the hazardous journey were quick to disappear, doing what they needed to go on: some became prostitutes, kitchen porters, or reinvented themselves as heirs to French nobility.

The lives of France's *bagnards* who sought refuge in Australia have until now attracted little attention – perhaps a testament to their cunning. Through an analysis of extradition files, government reports and periodicals, this talk will pay particular attention to the creative agency of the convicts who were caught in the Australian legal system and in the judicial limbo between the French and British empires.

Alexis Bergantz is a Lecturer in French Studies at RMIT University. He completed his PhD at the Australian National University in 2016, for which he was awarded the John Molony Prize in History. His research interests mainly focus on Franco-Australian cultural history and penal colonisation in New Caledonia. His work has been published in *Australian Historical Studies*, *The French-Australian Review* and the *New Zealand Journal of French Studies*.

Cover charge (includes cheese and wine) \$15; Bookings and pre-payment essential please:
<https://www.afmelbourne.com.au/culture-and-events/special-events/the-melbourne-salon-august-2018/>