ISS 3500 International Field School: The Netherlands

Accommodating Difference: Culture, Identity, and Migration in the Netherlands
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Course Credit: 1.0

This field course explores, over two days of seminars in Guelph and sixteen days in the Netherlands, the themes of culture, identity, migration and integration as they are playing out in the Netherlands; and it takes place in Amsterdam and The Hague. The Netherlands is generally considered a tolerant, progressive, open, liberal society. Perhaps best known for its legalization of cannabis, prostitution, and euthanasia, it also has strong protections of LGBT rights, and, in the late 1990s its generous immigration policies were thought to be a model for the rest of Europe. It has also been an ardent supporter of the post-nationalist European project of the European Union. Not surprisingly, then it has been a popular destination among those migrating across Europe from war-torn African and Middle Eastern countries. However, as in many other Western democracies, nationalism and xenophobia (fear of what is perceived to be foreign) are on the rise. In 2007 the Netherlands became the only country in the world to require that residents who have relocated to the Netherlands from countries outside the European Union past a test measuring whether they are sufficiently integrated into society within 3.5 years of their arrival. In the 2017 election, Gert Wilders’ anti-Muslimism, anti-immigration, anti-European Union Freedom Party was the second most popular. His commitment shut down asylum centres, ban the Quran, close all mosques and Islamic schools, and forbid the wearing of the hijab in public places, along with his commitment to leave the European Union, appealed to a remarkable number of Dutch voters.

What has changed? What is “Dutch” culture and identity and has it changed dramatically, evolved gradually, or stayed more or less the same? Is migration a new phenomenon in the Netherlands? How does it relate to the Netherlands’ “Golden Age of the 1700s, its colonial past, and its experience of occupation in WWII? Is this resurgence of nationalism and the overt xenophobia of the Freedom Party and its supporters a temporary phenomenon? In this course we explore these themes, and, to the extent that it is possible, we consider the experience of a recent immigrant to the country, exploring how they might come to find answers to these questions through their lived experience in The Hague and Amsterdam. In addition, we explore the kinds of services available to them; what government supports and programs they would have access to; how difficult or easy it would be to make ends meet (What’s the cost of living? Where would they shop? Where would they live?); and what it would take (in terms of finances, time and knowledge) to pass the integration test. In answering these questions in the Dutch context, students will gain some appreciation of similar dynamics at play in other European countries. This course aims to “enhance your “global understanding”, knowledge of cultural similarities, and differences, the context (Historical geographical, political and environmental) from which these arise, and how they are manifest in modern society.”

The Hague is chosen for this field course because, in addition to hosting the Dutch government, parliament and supreme court, it is known as “The International City of Peace and Justice,” and is home to 150 international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including the
International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court, making it one of the major cities hosting the United Nations institutions. Its population is culturally diverse, yet still subject to the debates and identity politics and policies of the country as a whole. In this sense, it is the “best case scenario” for resources available to a new immigrant. The city is also rich in Dutch history and culture. Amsterdam is chosen for this field course because it has the largest percentage of foreign born inhabitants among Dutch cities. It also affords the opportunity to experience both traditional and modern Dutch culture and art and history, in the form of museums and other activities.

**Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, you should be able to:**

- Explain how identity is socially constructed and continually evolving in the Netherlands
- Define the broad strokes of history of the Netherlands in global context – from economic and artistic power house in the 1600s forward
- Identify that migration is not a new phenomenon in the Netherlands, with centuries of history
- Explain the relation between occupation in WWII and racism today.
- Explain difference between integration and multiculturalism policies.
- Place the Netherlands’ approach to integration of non-European citizens in comparative perspective, reflecting on how it is similar to or different from Canada’s.
- Describe the relationship between xenophobia, nationalism and the distribution of economic wealth in the Netherlands.

This course aims to encourage you to become critical thinkers. The goal is to be more aware of the assumptions you hold as truths, and for you to explore why you hold them. We take as a starting point that knowledge and truth are the product of unique systems of social, historical and political discourse and interpretation, and the course encourages you to identify how knowledge is contextual and constructed.

The activities and assignments associated with this course are designed to foster your “critical and creative thinking”, one of the learning objectives of the University of Guelph. To this end, the engagements seek to promote: “intellectual curiosity; the ability (as in independence of thought) to ask useful kinds of questions (rather than the ability always to have answers); the ability to see far reaching implications; the ability to make connections between disparate topics.” Promoting critical and creative thinking also means de-emphasizing “accumulation of facts or data and rote learning.

The engagement described below are designed to foster your “global understanding” another one of the learning objectives at the University of Guelph. To this end, the engagements are to strengthening your sense of historical development and intercultural competence. Finally, the assignments that accompany the engagements are designed to enhance you “literacy”, another one of the learning objectives at the University of Guelph. Assignments will encourage you to “read and write and, in general, to communicate properly (as it is) a fundamental intellectual too. With it students can learn to think clearly and to some purpose. Without it, they cannot analyze properly, nor develop an independence of thought. Literacy affords a means of access to the raw material upon which the critical or creative intelligences is to exercised. It affords a means of communicating, of shaping ideas and concepts, of selecting between different or competing formulations.”

**Course Requirements:**

The Course will be divided into six themes. Students will complete three assignments relating to one or more of the six themes. Two of the four assignments are completed as part of a group, other one is completed individually, and submitted in the week following return to Canada. The individual assignment is worth 50% (due May 31st) while the other two are each worth 10% of your final grade and completed as group projects during your time in the Netherlands. The other 30% of your grade is based on meaningful participation in the group activities and in the two days of seminars proceeding the field course.
PLEASE NOTE: These activities are subject to change – when you’ve had a chance to look at them, we will communicate by facebook group, and decide if you’d like to have more “down time” on the weekends. Together we can decide which places we might eliminate. Currently one Sunday is free.

1) Hockey, Maple Syrup and Mounties are to Canada as are to The Netherlands: Dutch identity through Stereotype
We explore stereotypically Dutch identity markers. As reflect on the origins of windmills, cheese, tulips and wooden shoes, and “Delft Blue” china, relating them to our theme of migration. Did you know, for example, that the first tulips in the Netherlands were imported from Turkey?

Activities:
• _Day Trip: Keukenhof Flower Park, Lisse South Holland (Week 1, April 30)
• _Day Trip: Volendam, Zaanse Schans Windmills and Countryside (Week 1, May 1)
• _Day Trip: Royal Delft Factory, Nieuwe Kerk and Tower, Delft (Departing from the Hague Week 2, May 10)

2) Migration and the Netherlands in the “Golden Age” and colonization
During the 1600s the Netherlands was an economic world leader, and important cultural and artistic centre. What was the role of migration during this important time in Dutch history? How does this period inform contemporary identity in the Netherlands?

Activities:
• _Black Heritage Amsterdam Canal Tour (Slave Trade was integral to the Dutch Golden Age) (May 2)
• _National Maritime Museum* (World Trade Leadership led to International Political and Economic Power) (May 2)
• _Rembrandt House Museum* (Art and Culture of the Golden Age) (May 3)
• _Day Trip: Museum of Ethnography – Leiden* (Colonization affects migration patterns in the 20th Century: Indonesian Colonial Heritage in Transition exhibit) (May 4)
• _Mauritshuis* – best of Dutch and Flemish Art from the Golden Age (May 11)

3) Racism, WWII Occupation and its Legacy
During WWII Germany Occupied the Netherlands. The Dutch either adapted, collaborated or resisted. Threads of these approaches to Occupation are apparent in contemporary debates about migration, immigration and integration in the Netherlands.

Activities:
• _Walking Tour of the Jewish Quarter including Portuguese Synagogue (May 5)
• _Anne Frank House* (May 5)
• _Jewish Historical Museum* (pending time May 5)
• _National Holocaust Museum* (May 8)
• _Resistance Museum* (May 9)

4) Dutch Identity through Art History and Contemporary Art
Some of the world’s most famous artists are from the Netherlands, and their works reflect and refract the social and cultural history of the Netherlands.

• Van Gogh Museum* (May 3)
• Panorama Mesdag* (May 14)
• _Gemeentemuseum* (Mondriaan, Klee and other Hague School Artists) (May 14)

5) The Contradiction between Dutch Cosmopolitanism and Openness and Dutch Nationalism and fear of the other
Building on the themes explored in the seminars in Guelph before coming to the Netherlands (see below) we explore the juxtaposition between the official “openness” of the Hague, known as the International City of Peace and Justice and narratives of the 2017 election.

- International Peace Palace International Court of Justice; International Criminal Court / World Peace Flame (May 13)
- Amsterdam Museum* (May 8)
- Museon* - IN this museum of Culture and Science, the “One Plane” exhibit and the International Lounger are the platform for the international partners of the city (May 12)
- Tropemuseum* - Commonality of human themes of morning, celerating, praying and fighting across Africa, Western and Southeast Asia, New Guinea and Latin America (May 9)
- UN High Commission of Refugees (Den Haag)/International Centre for Counter-terrorism International Zone (May 12)

6) From Multiculturalism to Integration
Building on the themes explored in the seminars in Guelph before coming to the Netherlands, we consider the ease (or difficulty) with which the refugees to the Netherlands would pass the mandatory integration test, and how they might make ends meet.
- Amsterdam Museum* (May 8)
- De Pijp and Jordaan Districts (Syrian, Moroccan, Surinamese) and the Albert Cuypmarket (May 9)
- Humanity House* (May 12)
- The Hague Market, and the Hague International Centre (May 13)
- Binnenhof and the Ridderzaal (Hall of Knights) – the site of government decision-making (May 11)


Seminars at Guelph April 26 and 27:

April 26, Morning: Introduction
Readings:

April 26, Afternoon: Migration across Europe
Readings:
- Websites TBD
- Henk van Houtum and Leo Lucassen, Beyond Fortress Europe: a New Approach to Migration (excerpt only)

April 27, Morning: Dutch Values under Threat? The 2017 Election AND The Dutch solution: Integration over Multiculturalism
Readings:
April 27, Afternoon: Social mobility, Education and the Polarization of Dutch Society

Readings:

- *Economic Inequality in the Netherlands in 8 Figures* (URL required)
- *Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015* (URL required)
- *The Integration Test* (online resource)