



## Bachelor's courses Faculty of Humanities

VU University Amsterdam - Student- & Onderwijszaken - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit - 2018-2019



## Imagining the Dutch: themes Dutch History

|                            |                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Course code</b>         | L_GCBAALG003 ()                    |
| <b>Period</b>              | Period 1+2                         |
| <b>Credits</b>             | 6.0                                |
| <b>Language of tuition</b> | English                            |
| <b>Faculty</b>             | Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen |
| <b>Coordinator</b>         | dr. T.A.E.R. Vanneste              |
| <b>Examinator</b>          | dr. T.A.E.R. Vanneste              |
| <b>Teaching staff</b>      | dr. T.A.E.R. Vanneste              |
| <b>Teaching method(s)</b>  | Lecture                            |
| <b>Level</b>               | 200                                |

### Course objective

The main aim of this course is to familiarize an international group of students coming from different educational backgrounds with the most essential aspects of the history of the Netherlands. Students will also be taught on how to connect Dutch history with a number of present-day debates, academic as well as non-academic. Students will be required to relate the course themes with debates on identity, nationalism, the role of the media, democracy, tolerance and national consciousness. They will also learn how to connect these themes and debates with different representations of aspects of Dutch history in the media and in museums. Not all participating students are history students, and this course will also introduce several concepts of history as an academic discipline, by discussing several branches within the field, such as political history, colonial history or national history. After taking this course, students will be able to recognize normative thinking in scientific literature and in the work of historians. Students will also learn how to read and summarize academic writing, and how to use scientific literature in debate. The course also addresses the problematic nature of obtaining historical information from internet resources. Students will be demanded to integrate their own reading with the different lectures. It is considered crucial to adopt a critical stance, which is why the course opens with a debate on stereotypes.

### Course content

The perception of the Netherlands at home and abroad includes several stereotypes. It is a country of cheese and herring, of windmills and coffeeshops, of clogs and canals. It is also a country characterized by tolerance, a consensus democracy and pillarization. Historically, the small nation of the Dutch Republic has experienced a Golden Age in the seventeenth century, during which time it was a 'world power', leading to economic prosperity, but it was also a time in which the foundations were laid for a colonial system that persisted until the twentieth century. Perceptions and images of the Netherlands by foreigners and Dutch citizens themselves tell a story of the Netherlands, as they are informed by both past and contemporary experiences. In different time periods, stereotypes and ideas about 'the Dutch' and 'Dutchness' have been invoked to consider the Netherlands as an example to follow, but they have also been questioned about their truthfulness. Who were/are 'the Dutch'? What is 'typically Dutch' about the Dutch from an international perspective? What are the differences between how the Dutch themselves and how foreigners have imagined the Netherlands? And how should we deal with these images from an academic perspective? These

questions form the starting point on this English-language introductory course on Dutch history. The lectures of the course focus on a variety of relevant themes in different time periods and cover a wide range of topics. Some of the themes that will be discussed are

- The historical reasons for the extraordinary economic growth and cultural richness of the Netherlands in the 17th century
- The further development of the Dutch as a maritime nation and colonial nation in the 18th century
- The rise of democracy in the 19th and 20th centuries
- The Dutch experience of WWII
- Recent debates about the colonial past and immigration

Discussion among students about the content of the lectures and the course literature is part of this course, which is specifically designed to connect history with contemporary issues.

### **Form of tuition**

There is a lecture once a week (1h45). All the thematic lectures will be given by guest professors, all active at the VU's History Department. Presence in class is mandatory. Students who have a reason to be absent have to inform the course's coordinator in time of their absence, which is limited to a maximum of two times, after which the student can be penalized with exclusion.

### **Type of assessment**

There are two written assignments (25%), as well as a written exam (75%).

### **Course reading**

Friso Wielenga, A History of the Netherlands. From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) ISBN 9781472569592 (obligatory).

Next to Wielenga's handbook, students will be asked to read articles or book chapters related to each theme, which will be posted on Canvas in due time.

### **Target group**

Students taking part in the program 'A Semester in Amsterdam';  
International Students; Dutch students interested in Dutch History.

### **Remarks**

This course will be provided two times: in periods 1&2 (L\_GCBAALG003) and in periods 4&5 (L\_GCBAALG004).