

2023

Dutch Culture: Society and Current Issues



Course Coordinator:
Dr Kristian Mennen

31 July – 11 August

About

This intensive two-week programme offers an overview of the main characteristics and historical backgrounds of present-day Dutch culture and society.

Utrecht University scholars and guest lecturers will provide introductions to a broad variety of topics, ranging from the lay-out of the country, the political system and political culture, via the colonial past and contentious issues around agriculture, environment and political polarisation, to lectures on perceptions of the Netherlands through foreign eyes. Lectures, interactive seminar sessions and group assignments are complemented by an excursion to the port city of Rotterdam.

The goal of this course is to provide a concise overview and first insights in Dutch politics, culture and society, as a solid basis of understanding for anyone interested in these issues or in the Netherlands in general.

The course will, *first*, provide a solid foundation in for understanding the Netherlands via its geographical features, the political system and political culture, characteristic institutions and arrangements, the structure of the Dutch economy and (aspects of) the history of the country. This basis will be expanded by further explorations into specific themes and contentious issues in Dutch society today: the agricultural system, migration, integration and diversity, the permissive society and the role of (national) historical memory.

Period

31 July – 11 August 2023

Credits

4.0 ECTS + Certificate of Attendance

Contact people

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Course Materials



Jaap Verheul & Emmeline Besamusca (eds.), *Discovering the Dutch: On Culture and Society of the Netherlands* (Amsterdam, 2014) – e-book available via the Utrecht University library service.

Format

This course is designed for face-to-face students-instructors interaction.

The course adopts different teaching methods: lectures and workshops, fieldtrips, self-study, and collaborative work. This course is interactive, thus participants are invited to ask relevant historical questions, collaborate on assignments and participate in discussions about the literature and the lectures. Students participation is crucial both in terms of individual preparation (e.g. readings) and reflection, engagement in sessions' Q&As, and creating a successful basis for preparing for the written exam.

You will receive more information and a finalised and more detailed schedule on the first day of the course. For information about the Social Program, please have a look at the Utrecht Summer School website!

On-site Education

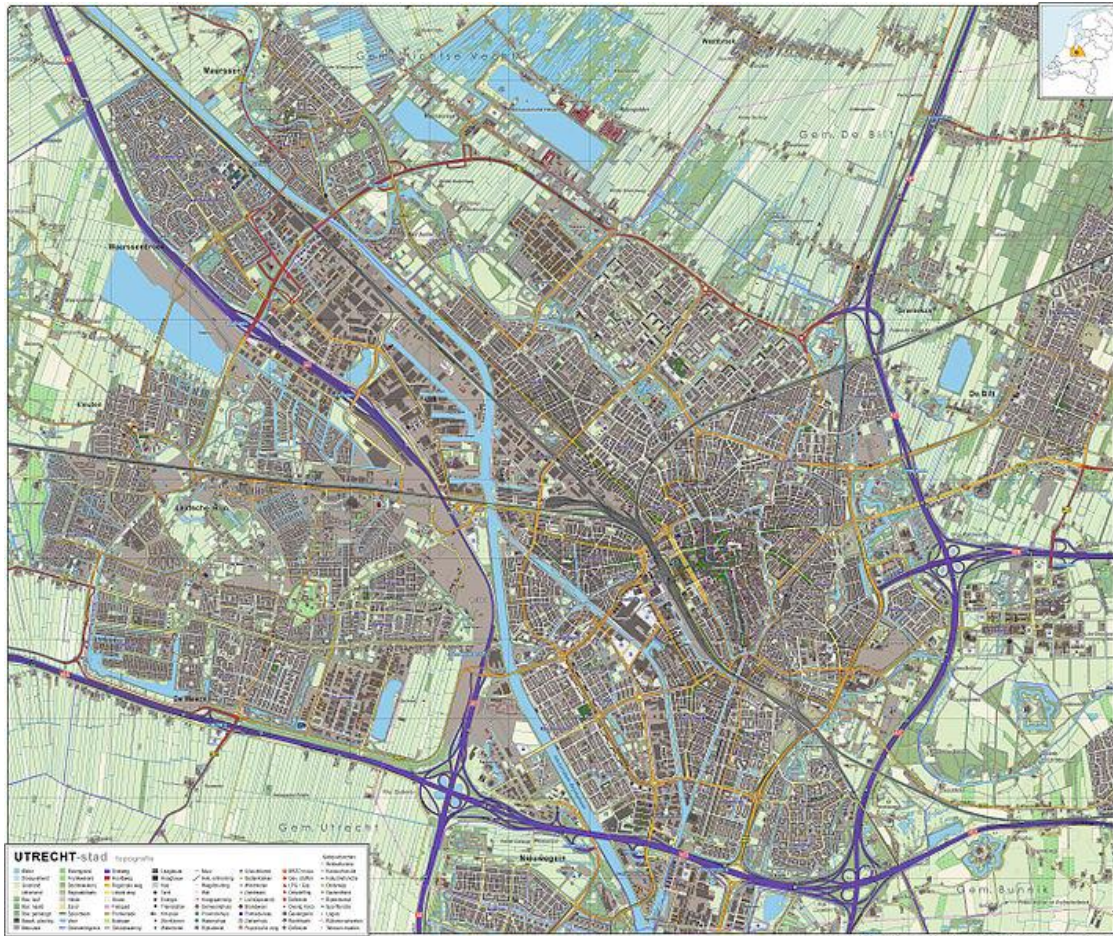
During the course, you can use several of Utrecht University's computer and printing facilities. You have received your computer login code (SOLIS ID) from the Summer School administration. If this is not the case, send them an e-mail at summerschool@uu.nl or contact them by phone: +31 (0)302534400.

You are recommended to use one of the main computer rooms of the Faculty of Humanities in Kromme Nieuwegracht 80 (KNG 80). The computer rooms are opened from Mondays through Fridays from 08h45 to 17h00. The computer rooms are closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

Another option is to use the computers at the University Library (UB) Innercity (Drift 27). Again, use your login code (SOLIS ID) to log in at any of the library computers. You can also use the computers on the standing desks to search catalogues without having to log in. You cannot work on these computers and there are no printing facilities.

Beware: the University Library (UB) Innercity (Drift 27) will be closed in the weekends. On July 10-14 it will close at 6.00 p.m.





1 Utrecht city map. Wikimedia Commons

Location

Lectures and seminar sessions will take place in the building **Drift 25, room 1.03**.

Utrecht's ancient city centre features many buildings and structures several dating as far back as the High Middle Ages. It has been the religious centre of the Netherlands since the 8th century. It lost the status of prince-bishopric but remains the main religious centre in the country. Utrecht was the most important city in the Netherlands until the Dutch Golden Age when it was surpassed by Amsterdam as the country's cultural centre and most populous city.

Utrecht is host to Utrecht University, the largest university in the Netherlands, as well as several other institutions of higher education. Due to its central position within the country, it is an important transport hub for both rail and road transport. It has the second-highest number of cultural events in the Netherlands, after Amsterdam.

Dutch Culture: Society and Current Issues

Day-to-day academic programme

31 July – 11 August, 2023

WEEK 1

Monday, 31 July

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

Readings for today *Discovering the Dutch*, Introduction and chapter 24 (pp. 13-18 and 311-321).

10:00-10:45 | Welcome and Introduction to the course

10:45-12:00 | Lecture #1: Kristian Mennen (UU): Introduction to the Netherlands

Lunch

13:00-17:00 | Group assignment 1: Visit a Dutch Neighbourhood

Instructions: see pp. 8-9.

Hand-in deadline: **Sunday, 6 August, 23:59 h** via e-mail

Tuesday, 1 August

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

Readings for today *Discovering the Dutch*, chapters 1, 8 and 9 (pp. 21-31 and 109-131).

10:00-12:00 | Lecture #2: Kristian Mennen (UU): The Dutch Monarchy and Parliamentary Democracy

Lunch

13:00-15:00 | Lecture #3: Sanne Albers (Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences): The Dutch: a Chinese Perspective

Wednesday, 2 August

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

Readings for today *Discovering the Dutch*, chapters 2 and 10 (pp. 33-43 and 133-143).

10:00-12:00 | Seminar #1: Dutch Politics

Lunch

13:00-15:00 | Lecture #4: Roel Frakking (UU): Dutch Colonialism

Thursday, 3 August

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

Readings for today *Discovering the Dutch*, chapter 3 (pp. 45-54).

10:00-12:00 | Lecture #5: Anna Teijeiro Fokkema (VU Amsterdam): Dutch agriculture: a success story?

Lunch

13:00-15:00 | Film screening: *Alles is liefde* (2007)

After the afternoon session: start formulating your first ideas for the written assignment 2: Comparing Cultures. Hand-in deadline: **Wednesday, 9 August, 09:59 h** via e-mail

Friday, 4 August – Excursion

One day in the Rotterdam harbour

A bus transfer to Rotterdam will be provided.

Rotterdam is famous for being the largest port in Europe: a gateway to Dutch, German and European industries for products and commodities from all over the world. The excursion will include two guided tours: one in the old 17th-century harbour area of Delfshaven, and one with a boat tour in today's modern harbour area, with container shipment and oil facilities.

WEEK 2

No lectures or seminars during the weekend, but please do not forget to:

- 1) hand in the written assignment 1 via e-mail, **Sunday, 6 August, 23:59 h** at the latest;
- 2) work on the written assignment 2: Comparing Cultures (deadline **Wednesday morning**)

Monday, 7 August

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

Readings for today *Discovering the Dutch*, chapters 6, 12 and 22 (pp. 83-94, 157-168 and 287-296).

10:00-11:00 | Lecture #6: James Kennedy (UU): The Netherlands as a permissive society

11:00-12:00 | Seminar #2: The permissive society in practice

Lunch

13:00-15:00 | Seminar #3: A divided society



Tuesday, 8 August

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

Readings for today *Discovering the Dutch*, chapters 4 and 21 (pp. 57-66 and 275-285).

10:00-12:00 | Lecture #7: Emmeline Besamusca (UU): Integration and diversity

Lunch

13:00-15:00 | Seminar #4: Current issues in Dutch public debate

Wednesday, 9 August

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

Readings for today *Discovering the Dutch*, chapters 11 and 19 (pp. 145-155 and 249-259).

Before the morning seminar session (9:59 h): **deadline** written assessment 2: Comparing Cultures

10:00-12:00 | Seminar #5: Dutch Identity and a National Past

Lunch

13:00-17:00 | Self-study: prepare for final test

Thursday, 10 August – Final test

Where: Drift 25, room 1.03

13:00-15:00 | Final Test

Friday, 11 August

10:00-11:00 | **Excursion:** Climbing the Utrecht Dom Tower

Lunch

14:30-16:00 | Presentation of Certificates (at **Drift 25, room 1.03**)

16:00-18:00 | Drinks

Location: **Café Hofman, Janskerkhof 17A**



Assignments

Assignment 1: Visit a Dutch Neighbourhood

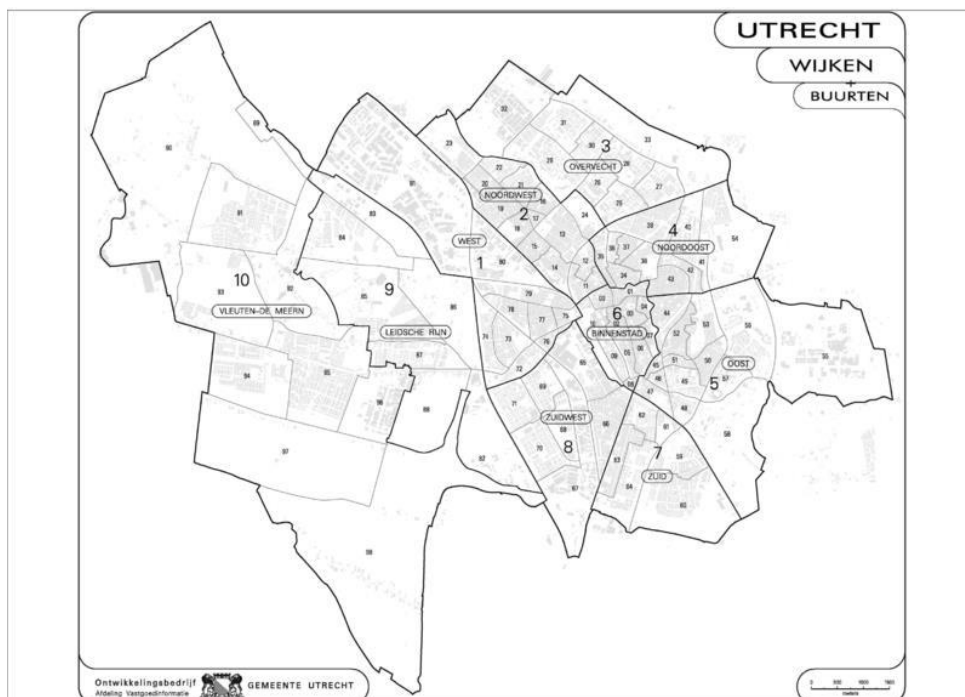
Date of visit: Monday, 31 July (afternoon)
Hand-in date: Sunday, 6 August, 23:59 h at the latest, via e-mail
Format: Write a short essay (400-500 words) on your impressions of one of the following neighbourhoods.

Instructions: Visit one of the selected five city districts in Utrecht (see below). Each district has a distinct atmosphere, or, better yet, *various* atmospheres. Take notes of things that strike you, thoughts and impressions, and take to class for discussion. Ideally, you will chat with locals too. Try to find out what they think of their neighbourhood.

For an overview of all districts districts (in Dutch: *wijken*) in Utrecht, see <https://www.utrecht.nl/wonen-en-leven/wijken/>

Excellent maps of all these districts can be found on google (maps). The **minimum requirement** per district is:

1. West. Visit Lombok and Oog in Al and stroll through the Kanaalstraat.
2. Noordwest. Go to Ondiep, walk down the Amsterdamsestraatweg, explore Zuilen.
3. Noordoost. Walk through the Griftpark, check out Tuindorp and Tuinwijk.
4. Zuid. Visit Tolsteeg and 'Old' and 'New' Hoograven.
5. Oost. Visit the Wilhelminapark and go to Galgenwaard (and check the football stadium). Make a detour to the Uithof, to Utrecht Science Park.



Guidelines:

- Each student is assigned to one district; every district will be visited by at least two students. If you prefer one particular district, please say so **in advance**.
- The visit can be done alone or in small groups. Travelling in a big group hampers casual observation and interaction, and will change your impressions.
- To get a better feel for the neighbourhood, visit stores, markets and/or other establishments.
- Contrast your impressions with your experiences in your home country. How does it compare to the situation of minorities in your own country?
- Write an essay on your impressions (individually).
- If you fail to visit the district, to hand in a paper with your impressions in time, you will have to make an 800-word essay on the subject as a make-up assignment.

Assignment 2: Comparing Cultures: Here and Home

Hand-in date: Wednesday, 9 August, 9:59 h at the latest, via e-mail
Format: Write a short essay (500-600 words) comparing the situation or aspects of the Netherlands to your home country.

Looking back on the past couple of days, write a short **essay** on the topic that has struck you most, when comparing it to the situation in your home country. Put forward a clear description of the ways things are here (in the Netherlands) and back home. Explain how things are the same, or totally different. Also make an argument about what you prefer, and how things could possibly be improved – whether it is back home, or here in the Netherlands. Use what you have learned during the course from the readings and the lectures. You are allowed to consult additional sources.

Guidelines:

- You are free to pick a topic you find most interesting.
- Support your opinion with several detailed arguments that reflect the knowledge you learned about your issue from the readings and lecture.
- Your opinion and arguments should measure **500-600 words**.

Assessment

There will be two assessments that test the acquisition of knowledge and your ability to reflect individually and in group.

Assignments: 2 x 15%

Final Exam: 70%

Credits: 4 ECTS

You need an average grade of at least 5,5 to pass the course.

Attendance and Grading Criteria

Note that full attendance is expected in all lectures, seminar sessions, and excursions. Students who are absent beyond their fault (illness, accident, etc.) should submit a medical certificate to Roberta Biasillo as soon as possible. Make-up assignments are expected for all unexcused absences. Ten percentage points will be subtracted for all uncompensated absences. Students who fail more than two make-up assignments will be dropped from this course.

Your grades will be numerical grades according to the Dutch grading system. Dutch grades range from 0 (very bad) to 10 (excellent). At Utrecht University, a 5,5 is the lowest passing grade, though note that this might be different at other (Dutch) institutions. Also note that grade inflation has not affected the Dutch grading system as much as it has some American institutions. Grades of 9 and higher are rarely given, the most common grades are between 6 and 8. The Utrecht University student registration system (Osiris) that will produce your transcript will round off all grades to whole numerals for 5 and lower, and half numbers for 5.5 and higher. On course work and examinations, however, it is customary to receive a grade that has not been rounded off. Plusses and minuses are sometimes used, and count for one-fourth of a point, for instance: 8- = 7,75. Meaning of numerical grades:

9.00-10.00	Excellent
8.00-8.99	Very good
7.50-7.99	Good
7.00-7.49	Very satisfactory
6.50-6.99	Satisfactory
6.00-6.49	Sufficient
5.50-5.99	Acceptable; minimum pass
5.00-5.49	Insufficient; fail
4.00-4.99	Unsatisfactory
3.00-3.99	Very unsatisfactory
2.00-2.99	Bad
0.00-1.99	Very bad

Note that conversion of grades that you have received in the Netherlands to grades at your home institution is the responsibility of your home institution, not Utrecht University. This chart should be used as an indication; no rights can be drawn from it.