



Dutch Cultural Heritage: Art and History

21 July – 1 August.

Lecturer: Dr. Gertjan Plets – Associate Professor in Heritage Studies

Contact moments

On non-excursion days we meet at 9h30-11 for a lecture on the theme of the day. We hold a seminar in the afternoon 13h30-15h.

Lecturer

Gertjan Plets – Associate Professor in Heritage Studies -- g.f.j.plets@uu.nl

Abstract

This course studies the cultural heritage of the Low Countries from a critical perspective. Monumental buildings, museum collections and cultural landscapes in the Netherlands and Belgium give us a selective historical understanding of both countries. Heritage is what a social context wants to preserve in the present for enacting certain futures; also in the Netherlands and Belgium certain pasts have been preserved, and others have been deliberately forgotten. In this course, we study the mechanics and politics of heritage-making by zooming in on the Low Countries. We learn about both countries' carefully constructed historical landscapes and explore the politics and tensions behind them. Students learn and engage with a series of heritage and art collections and learn about Dutch and Belgian culture and politics and how heritage played a role in making society and citizens. Since many collections and monuments have been made in the 19th and 20th centuries students learn about the cultural history of that period as well. The course importantly also zooms in on more contemporary debates about heritage preservation: we look at the contested memory of fascism, slavery and colonialism. In the course, three excursions are planned across the Low Countries.

Structure of the course

- **Monday 21-07: Introduction**

Morning:

Lecture: key concepts in heritage studies

Afternoon:

Seminar: overview of coursework and discussion of literature

Readings:

- Sharon Macdonald, 2013. *Memorylands*, Routledge. ([Chapter 1: The European Memory Complex](#))

- **Tuesday 22-07: The history of heritage**

Morning:

lecture, the birth of heritage in the Low Countries

Afternoon: seminar, heritage in the 19th century

- Rodney Harrison, 2012. *Heritage: Critical Approaches*, Routledge, (Chapter Prehistories of World Heritage: The emergence of a concept)

- **Wednesday 23-07: the birth of the museum**

Morning: lecture, the birth of museums in the Low Countries

Afternoon: seminar, discussion literature

- Tonny Bennett, 1995. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge. (Chapter 1)

- **Thursday 24-07: analysing exhibits**

Morning: methods in museum analysis and discourse analysis

Afternoon: seminar, discussion of literature on heritage and museum methods (TBC)

- **Friday 25-07: Excursion Amsterdam**

Students chose 1 museum that they will study in groups of 5 and collectively deconstruct in preparation for a presentation. They can sign up on Monday and choose between 4 museums: the Resistance Museum, the Rijksmuseum, the Amsterdam Museum, and the National Maritime Museum.

Students will be accompanied from Utrecht Central Station to Amsterdam Central by train. We will start the day with a guided tour of a special exhibition about Dutch Colonialism in the Wereldmuseum. After lunch, students will explore Amsterdam on their own and visit the museums in their preselected groups. The lecturer will travel together with them in the morning; students will need to return independently.

- **Monday 28-07: group presentations + difficult heritage**

Morning: group presentations about museum visit

Afternoon: seminar, discussion literature on difficult heritage

- Sharon Macdonald, 2009. *Difficult Heritage*, Routledge. (*Chapter 1*)

- ***Tuesday 29-07: excursion + colonial heritage***

Morning: Lecture on Colonial history, the Netherlands, and the decolonisation of heritage. Lecture will start with a short discussion close to the University Museum and the UU Botanical Garden.

Afternoon: Seminar, literature discussion, decolonisation museums and heritage.

- van Huis, I. (2019). Contesting Cultural Heritage: Decolonizing the Tropenmuseum as an Intervention in the Dutch/European Memory Complex. In: Lähdesmäki, T., Passerini, L., Kaasik-Krogerus, S., van Huis, I. (eds) Dissonant Heritages and Memories in Contemporary Europe. Palgrave Studies in Cultural Heritage and Conflict. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11464-0_8

- ***Wednesday 30-07: World Heritage and workshop colonial history writing***

Morning: politics of world heritage

Afternoon: Visit world Limes heritage site Utrecht, Castelum hoge Woerd.

- ***Thursday 31-07: Exam + excursion***

Morning: exam

Afternoon: Visit kamp amersfoort

- ***Friday 01-08: Goodbye***

Morning: feedback exam (optional)

Afternoon: goodbye with drinks at Castellum Hoge Woerd

Coursework

- Midterm group presentation exhibition (15 minutes presentation + 10 min Q&A)
- Final exam about the key concepts and examples discussed in class

Requirements

- Knowledge and ability to produce written coursework in academic English (Level C)
- Ability to speak, discuss and converse in advanced English (Level C)
- Basic cycling skills

Disclaimer

Depending on factors such as the size of the group and availability of some offers, individual parts of the excursions might change. Please check the Summer School website.