

Dutch Art and Culture: From van Gogh to van Buuren, and from the Canvas to the Screen

ARTS-3060 (3 credits)

Netherlands: SIT Track Option

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

For a small country, the Netherlands plays an outsized role in the annals of art history. From the Flemish Primitives (such as van Eyck) to their 16th-century counterparts (such as Bosch and Bruegel) and the “masters” of the 17th-century (which produced such luminaries as Rembrandt and Vermeer), the Netherlands is well-represented in standard art history texts. While this course will chronicle those key moments in the historical development and rise to prominence of Dutch art, it will both expand the traditional canon (which is often synonymous – and populated only – with Dutch male White painters), and study contemporary forms of art produced in the Netherlands that move beyond visual art, and rival their predecessors in terms of their popularity and genre-defining influence. In particular, this course will trace the development of electronic dance music (or EDM), a genre of music that was originated and made popular by Dutch artists (such as Armin van Buuren, Martin Garrix, and Tiësto), and the burgeoning role of the Netherlands in the European and global film landscape. While each of these art movements will be studied individually – and placed in its contemporary socio-political and cultural context – the course will have an overarching focus both on the ways in which style, technique, and narrative are imbricated in the creation of meaning, as well as on the geopolitical factors that enable the dissemination of Dutch art beyond the country’s borders. Finally, the course will ask students to consider how the Netherlands is represented – and chooses to represent itself – in and through each of these art forms, and which subjects and people are strategically omitted from these artistic (re)constructions of Dutch life and culture.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Delineate the key movements in Dutch art history, identify the thematic preoccupations of each, and trace them back to the social, political, and economic dimensions of Dutch life and culture.
- Articulate the principal narrative and formal features of the mediums, genres, and artists discussed in the course, and situate them in their historical context of production.
- Observe, parse, and interpret individual works of Dutch art (including works of art not discussed in the course) – whether they be paintings, songs, or movies – and argue how they make meaning as they travel across borders.
- Critique the canonization of Dutch art history, pinpoint the topics, art forms, and artists that are excluded from the Dutch canon, and conceive of a counter-canon that addresses and restores one of those omissions.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational.

The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualization*, and *active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Texts

Book chapters and articles outlined below under Course Schedule, and posted in Canvas in Files. This is a selection of those texts:

- Barnett, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*. 11th edition. Pearson, 2015. 23-41; 99-120.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." 1936. *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*. Edited by Francis Francina and Jonathan Harris. HarperCollins, 1992. 297-307.
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. 1972. Penguin, 2008. 1-33.

- Burke, Wendy. "Dutch Identity and 'Dutchness.'" *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film: Memory, Myth, and the Cultural Legacy of War*. Amsterdam University Press, 2017. 109-139.
- Butler, Mark J. "Electronic Dance Music and Interpretive Multiplicity." *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music*. Indiana University Press, 2006. 117-177.
- Cuelenaere, Eduard, Stijn Joye, and Gertjan Willems. "Why Small European Film Industries Remake Each Other's Successes: The Case of the Low Countries." *The Routledge Companion to European Cinema*. Edited by Gabor Gergely and Susan Hayward. Routledge, 2022. 201-210.
- Depoorter, Matthias. *The Flemish Masters: From van Eyck to Bruegel*. Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2023. 6-53.
- Franits, Wayne. "Genre Painting." *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*. Edited by Helmer J. Helmers and Geert H. Janssen. Cambridge University Press, 2018. 268-289.
- Gombrich, E.H. *The Story of Art*. 1950. Phaidon, 2023.
 - Chapter 1: "On Art and Artists." 21-37.
 - Chapter 14: "Tradition and Innovation: The Fifteenth Century in the North." 195-209.
 - Chapter 17: "The New Learning Spreads: Germany and the Netherlands in the Early Sixteenth Century." 249-265.
 - Chapter 20: "The Mirror of Nature: Holland in the Seventeenth Century." 309-325.
- Iskin, Ruth E. "Re-envisioning the Canon: Are Pluriversal Canons Possible?" *Re-envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon: Perspectives in a Global World*. Edited by Ruth E. Iskin. Routledge, 2017. 1-43.
- Lewis, Ingrid, and Laura Canning. "The Identity of European Cinema." *European Cinema in the Twenty-First Century: Discourses, Directions and Genres*. Springer, 2020. 1-13.
- Mazierska, Ewa, Tony Rigg, and Les Gillon, eds. *The Evolution of Electronic Dance Music*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.
 - Chapter 1: ---. "The Past and Future of Electronic Dance Music." 1-25.
 - Chapter 2: Jori, Anita. "The Meanings of 'Electronic Dance Music' and 'EDM.'" 25-41.
- Moser, Benjamin. *The Upside-down World: Meetings With the Dutch Masters*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2023. 9-40; 105-127.
- Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. University of California Press, 1988. 3-51; 289-373.
- Verstraten, Peter. "From Historical Discomfort to Historical Trauma." *Dutch Post-War Fiction Film through a Lens of Psychoanalysis*. Amsterdam University Press, 2021. 299-343.

Assignments

Participation (15%)

Students are expected to be physically and mentally present for all classes. To prepare for class, students should critically read the assigned texts prior to each class and come prepared with relevant questions and insights.

Annotation exercise (15%)

Students will be asked to annotate/critically mark up an excerpt from a Dutch museum catalogue or Dutch art textbook. Intended to straddle the line of visual and textual learning, and to begin to hone students' close reading skills, students will use arrows, dotted lines, and other visual symbols (which would be outlined in detail) to ask explanatory and critical questions, identify key points, arguments/assumptions and logical leaps/fallacies, and link back to concepts already discussed in the course. This assignment also serves as scaffolding for the policy paper assignment.

Site visit reflection paper (20%)

Students will be asked to write a short reflection paper (1,000 – 1,500 words) unpacking one of their site visits by analyzing how it furthered their understanding of one specific topic that was discussed in one specific reading. Intended to test students' ability to bring theory/policy into conversation with practice, and to tease out the (productive) tension between the two, students will be asked to produce an integrative analysis of the site visit by drawing explicitly (and in equal measure) on statements made/materials they engaged with during the site visit, and arguments advanced in the reading they select.

“Facets of the Netherlands” podcast interview (25%)

Students will be asked to follow in the footsteps of (amateur and professional) podcast hosts by recording their own podcast episode for the “Facets of the Netherlands” podcast, a wide-ranging but policy-centric podcast about different facets of Dutch culture. They and their co-host(s) will discuss and analyze a topic of their own choosing and present the audience with the ways in which this topic is currently being understood and debated, and why it constitutes an important facet of life in the Netherlands.

In a twenty-minute podcast episode (if they opt for a podcast with two hosts) or a thirty-minute episode (if they choose to have three hosts), they will demonstrate their ability to synthesize information, engage in public pedagogy, and speak convincingly and authoritatively on a topic of their own choosing. (Students are advised – but not required – to choose a topic that they will flesh out in the policy paper assignment.)

Policy paper (25%)

Students will be asked to produce a full-fledged policy proposal (1,500 – 2,250 words, with each section between 500 and 750 words), i.e. a detailed action plan that:

- is addressed and caters to a specific audience (whether that be an institutional actor, the broader public, or a stakeholder with a vested interest in the issue)
- identifies and captures the key parameters of the issue, problem, or lacuna they are seeking to address (also referred to as the policy brief – 500-750 words)
- outlines the existing policies and theories that undergird how the issue is currently understood, and provides an assessment of two policies that have either been proposed or already implemented (also referred to as the policy analysis — 500-750 words)
- establishes the need of, argues for the efficacy of, and provides evidence for an original policy to the problem they are seeking to address or solve (also referred to as the policy action – 500-750 words)

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+

74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance

written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.]

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Accessibility Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

Details, including site visits and assignment due dates will be fleshed out by the specifically faculty. Below you will find a breakdown of the topics covered in this course each week:

Class 1: Introduction to the course: Thinking, talking, and writing about art

Class 2: The canon in art history: Constructing, revising, and critiquing [a] cultural history

Class 3: Dutch painting I: From the Flemish Primitives to Bruegel

Class 4: Dutch painting II: From Rembrandt and Vermeer to van Gogh

Class 5: Dutch Painting III: Revisiting the Dutch "Golden" Age: Interrogating the nexus of art and colonialism

Class 6: Dutch music I: The development, musical design, and "Dutchness" of electronic dance music

Class 7: Dutch music II: EDM, rave culture, and the re-mixing of identity in Dutch nightlife

Class 8: Dutch music III: EDM around the world: the global circulation, local reception, and shifting meanings of electronic dance music

Class 9: Dutch cinema I: Between high and low: Film production and distribution in the Low Countries in the shadow of Hollywood

Class 10: Dutch cinema II: Does the post-war Dutch film exist?: Cultural memory, World War II, and the themes and motifs of Dutch cinema

Class 11: Dutch cinema III: Verhoeven country: Paul Verhoeven, auteurism, and the re-editing of the Dutch film canon

Class 12: End-of-course reflections