**ISS 3400 International Field Study: The Netherlands**

**Accommodating Difference: Culture, Race, Identity, and Migration in the Netherlands**

**Instructor: Julie Simmons, Department of Political Science,**

**University of Guelph**

Course Credit: 1.0

This field course explores, over five three hour seminars in Guelph and twelve full days in the Netherlands, the themes of culture, identity, migration and integration in Europe 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 early legalization of cannabis, prostitution, and euthanasia, it also has strong protections of LGBTQ+ 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 and 2021 elections, Gert Wilders’ anti-Muslimism, anti-immigration, anti-European Union Freedom Party has been the second most popular. His commitment to 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, appeals to a remarkable number of Dutch voters.

This course takes as a starting point that identity is the product of unique systems of social, historical and political discourse and interpretation, and the course encourages students to identify how identity is contextual and constructed. Adopting a post-modern lens, students are encouraged to find answers to the following questions (which can be asked about any country and its identity politics)**: How has “Dutch” culture and identity been constructed over time, and has it changed dramatically, evolved gradually, or stayed more or less the same?**

In answering this question, students are further encouragedto explore**: If migration is an ongoing phenomenon throughout history, how is the construction of identity in the Netherlands related to migration in the Netherlands’ “Golden Age” of the 1700s, its colonial past, role as a leader in the global slave trade, and its experience of occupation in WWII? Is this resurgence of nationalism and the overt xenophobia of the Freedom Party and its supporters a reconstruction of Dutch identity or a continuation of and/or gradual evolution of an existing sense of identity?**

**In the course students 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**.

**Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students 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 the 1600s forward

• \_Identify that migration is not a new phenomenon in the Netherlands

• \_Explain the complex relation between occupation in WWII and nationalism 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.

The activities and assignments associated with this course are designed to foster students’ “**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 engagements are designed to foster their **“global understanding”** another one of the learning objectives at the University of Guelph. To this end, the engagements are to strengthen students’ sense of historical development and intercultural competence. In answering the questions above in the Dutch context, students will gain some appreciation of similar dynamics at play in other European countries. They will develop a better sense of 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.

Finally, the assignments that accompany the engagements are designed to enhance your **“literacy”,** another one of the learning objectives at the University of Guelph. They “afford 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 two group assignments relating to one or more of the six themes. The individual assignment (Reflection on each Engagement in the Netherlands (Again, see below)) 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 seminars proceeding the field course.

PLEASE NOTE: These activities are subject to change, depending on their availability after final student numbers are known for the field school.

**Activities**:

The course (1.0 credits) is divided into six themes that explore different aspects of the construction of identity in the Netherlands, and current identity politics. Students are encouraged to experience these five aspects as though they are a recent immigrant or refugee to the Netherlands. The assignments involve a combination of group assignments (primarily involving the practical lived experience of refugees in the Netherlands), individual reflection assignments and a final paper assessing academic research on the themes of the course.

1. **Dutch identity through Stereotype**

We explore stereotypically Dutch identity markers: 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? Patterns for Delftware were intercepted from Chinese china patterns stolen during the Golden Age of international exploration.

Activities:

• \_Day Trip: Gouda – Gouda cheese factory and stroopwafle making; Sint Pieter’s Kerk

• \_Day Trip: Volendam, Zaanse Schans Windmills

• \_Day Trip: Royal Delft Factory, Niewe Kerk and Tower, Delft

**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. However, now this title is hotly contested, given that the Dutch were leaders in the slave trade of this period. What was the role of migration during this important time in Dutch history? How is slavery reflected in art from the so-called Golden Age? How does this period of the slave trade inform contemporary identity in the Netherlands?

Activities:

• \_Historical Walking Tour of Amsterdam (When did the city come to exist, and what was its role in

the global economy?)

• \_Gouda Walking Tour, St. Pieter’s Kerk lecture and study of stained glass windows (the original city states of the “golden age”).

• \_Black Heritage Amsterdam Canal Tour (Slave Trade was integral to the Dutch Golden Age)

• \_National Maritime Museum\* (World Trade Leadership led to International Political and Economic

Power; Slaves were a major currency Dutch West India Company)

• \_Mauritshuis (Dutch and Flemish Art from the Golden Age – How are Slaves, economic power, and cultural wealth depicted in art?)

**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 of Amsterdam

• \_Jewish Historical Museum

• \_Anne Frank House

• \_National Holocaust Museum

• \_Resistance Museum\*

• \_Canal and Bunker tour/Atlantic Wall Museum in The Hague

• \_Visit to Canadian War Cometary in Holten

Discussion with representatives from the Canadian Legion in The Netherlands in Lochem

• \_Bike and Bunker exploration along the German “Atlantic Wall” Defense from Scheveningen to Wassenaar incl. the Canadian Ambassador’s Residence

**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, (including the slave trade).

• Van Gogh Museum\*

• \_Gemeentemuseum\* (Mondriaan, Klee and other Hague School Artists)

• \_Mauritshuis\* (best of Dutch and Flemish Art from the “Golden Age”)

• \_Rijksmuseum\* (Home of Rembrant’s “The Night Watch”)

• \_Museum Voorlinden (Contemporary Art)

**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 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 national election and the 2019 provincial elections.

• \_International Peace Palace International Court of Justice

• \_International Criminal Court

• \_Red Light District

• \_Binnenhof and the Ridderzaal (Hall of Knights) – the site of government decision-making

**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 might experience integration. would pass the mandatory integration test, and how they might make ends meet.

• \_The Hague Market – clothe and feed a refugee family

• \_Humanity House – live the experience of a refugee

• \_Council for Refugees in The Netherlands

• \_Black Heritage Canal Tour

Through working with Humanity House in Den Haag and the Refugee Council in the Netherlands, we meet refugees and 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. But, through engagement with refuges and stories from those that work with them, we also explore the ease or difficulty with which refugees adopt or challenge the dominant construction of Dutch identity.

**Seminars in Guelph:**

**morning: Introduction**

* Welcome and Introductions
* Review of Logistics
* Dutch identity through Stereotype
* Is there a national identity in The Netherlands?

**Readings TBD**

**afternoon: The Dutch Golden Age/Slavery**

* Reformation and roots of equality
* Economics
* Colonization of Indonesia and Suranam, Slave Trade
* Art, Science and Religion

**Readings TBD**

**morning: Racism, WWII Occupation and its Legacy**

* Nazi Occupation: What did people know about the holocaust, and what thought processes informed their decisions to protect/hand over Jewish friends and neighbours
* What was it like to live in occupied Holland?
* Narratives of Enablers and Resisters then and now
* Liberation Day – The Canadian Connection
* Relation to Germany then and now

**Readings TBD**

**afternooon: From Dutch Cosmopolitan and Openness to the resurgence of Dutch Nationalism**

* Dutch approach to “the body” and other manifestations of pragmatism
* Same sex partnerships and marriage
* Cannabis/ Drug addiction
* Legal sex work
* Global leadership in peace movement
* Rise of Dutch Neo-Nationalism

**Readings TBD**

**Morning From Dutch Multiculturalism to Integration**

**Readings TBD**