

HIS 223

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Office: 5231 Humanities

Office Hours: Mon./Wed. 2:30-3:30 & by appointment

## **The Dutch Golden Age**

### *Course Description:*

The seventeenth-century Netherlands is probably best remembered today as a period of great artistic achievement when individuals such as Rembrandt, Vermeer, Frans Hals, Judith Leyster, and many other Dutch Masters created paintings that are still admired and treasured today. But this time was a Golden Age for the Netherlands in many other ways as well. During the seventeenth century, this small, waterlogged nation emerged as an economic powerhouse and one of the leading states in Europe complete with a worldwide colonial empire. In fact, it proved at turns to be an important ally and feared rival of much larger states such as England, France, and Spain. The Netherlands was also important as a republic in a continent dominated by monarchies, as the first heavily urbanized society in Northern Europe, and as a country that granted broad toleration to religious minorities earlier than any of its neighbors. Using assigned readings, lecture material, and of course art, this class will detail the cultural, economic, political, religious, and social developments that brought about a truly Golden Age in the Netherlands.

### *Objectives:*

- Survey the political, economic, and social factors behind the Netherlands' rise to world prominence during the seventeenth-century.
- Examine the positive and negative aspects of Dutch urbanization, economic dominance, and far-flung networks of trade.
- Explore the lives of common men and women living in the Dutch Republic.
- Trace the background to and course of the rise of widespread religious toleration in the Netherlands.
- Provide historical context to the paintings of Dutch masters such as Rembrandt and Vermeer.

### *Requirements:*

- Attend and participate in class
- Complete assigned readings
- Write one 4-6 page paper due in lecture on April 20
- In-class Exam 1: Friday, February 27; Exam 2: Friday, April 10
- Final exam: Monday, May 11

### *Readings:*

Course Packet (hereafter CP)

Arie van Deursen, *Plain Lives in a Golden Age*

Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*

The class website has links to and downloads of the rest of the required readings (hereafter Web)

*Class Schedule and Assignments:*

**Week 1: Introducing the Netherlands—Old and New**

January 21: Introduction to the Netherlands and the Course

January 23: The Low Countries at the End of the Middle Ages

*Reading:* None

**Week 2: Humanism and the Reformation in the Low Countries**

January 26: Dutch Humanism

January 28: The Dutch Reformation

January 30: The “Wonderjaar” of 1566

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 3, 5 (pp. 79-105), and 7
- [CP] Westermann, *A Worldly Art*, pp. 47-53
- [Web] “Preface” to the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* of Erasmus
- [Web] Eye-Witness Account of Image-breaking at Antwerp, August 21-23, 1566

**Week 3: The Dutch Revolt**

February 2: Repression and Exile

February 4: William of Orange and the Sea Beggars

February 6: Gains in the North; Losses in the South

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 8-10
- [CP] Remonstrance of William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, 1572
- [Web] English translation of “Het Wilhelmus”
- [Web] Act of Abjuration, 1581

**Week 4: Emergence of the Dutch Republic**

February 9: De Facto Independence

February 11: Governing the Republic

February 13: The Beginnings of Dutch National Identity

*Reading:*

- van Deursen, Chapter 10 (pp. 155-157)
- Israel, Chapters 12 (pp. 241-262) and 13
- [CP] Simon Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, pp. 67-68
- [Web] Union of Utrecht, 1579

**Week 5: “Buitenlanders” in the Dutch Republic**

February 16: Refugee Populations from the Southern Netherlands

February 18: Amsterdam’s Jewish Community

February 20: British, German, and Huguenot Immigrants

*Reading:*

- van Deursen, Chapter 2
- Israel, pp. 308-310, 627-630
- [CP] Simon Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, pp. 587-596

- [CP] Baruch Spinoza, “Selections from *Ethics*,” pp. 110-121

### **Week 6: Truce & Consequences**

February 23: The Twelve-Year Truce with Spain

February 25: Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants

February 27: **Exam 1**

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 17 (pp. 399-410), 18-19, and 20 (pp. 450-465)

### **Week 7: The Dutch Economic Miracle**

March 2: The Rise of Dutch Trade

March 4: Other Successes in the Dutch Economy

March 6: Tulip Mania

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 14 (pp. 307-321) and 26 (pp. 610-619)
- [CP] Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 13-23, 38-48
- [Web] *Tulip Book* of P. Cos, 1637

### **Week 8: The Colonial Empire of the Dutch Republic**

March 9: The Dutch Empire in Asia

March 11: New Netherlands

March 13: The Slave Trade and Outposts in Africa and South America

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 14 (pp. 321-327) and 35
- [CP] Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World*, pp. 110-128
- [Web] Charter of the Dutch West India Company, 1621

### **Week 9: Society in the Dutch Republic**

March 23: Urban and Rural Lives

March 25: Nobles, Regents, and Burghers

March 27: The Poor and Poor Relief

*Reading:*

- van Deursen, Chapters 1 (pp. 3-19), 3-4, and 10 (pp. 157-170)
- Israel, Chapter 15
- [Web] William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (1673), Chapter 4

### **Week 10: Religion in the Dutch Republic**

March 30: Protestant Churches in the Netherlands

April 1: Dutch Catholics

April 3: The Rise of Toleration

*Reading:*

- van Deursen, Chapters 15-16
- Israel, pp. 499-505, 637-645

### **Week 11: The Peak of the Golden Age**

April 6: Victory

April 8: The Career of Johan de Witt

April 10: **Exam 2**

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 29 (pp. 700-713; 726-738), and 30 (pp. 748-766; 785-795)

### **Week 12: Gender Roles, Education, and Popular Culture in the Republic**

April 13: A Golden Age for Women?

April 15: Growing up Dutch

April 17: Pamphlets, Pubs, and Other Forms of Dutch Pop Culture

*Reading:*

- van Deursen, Chapters 6, 8-9
- Israel, pp. 686-690
- [Web] Album of Adriaen van de Venne (1626), Plates 18, 20, 22, 29, 35, 39, 73, 76, 96, and 97

### **Week 13: Art & Literature during the Golden Age**

April 20: Overview of Golden Age Art, Architecture, and Literature [**Paper Due**]

April 22: Visit to Special Collections / Chazen Museum of Art

April 24: Visit to Special Collections / Chazen Museum of Art

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 23 (pp. 552-564) and 33 (pp. 863-881)
- [CP] Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 128-137
- [Web] Selection from Vondel

### **Week 14: Cooperation and Conflict with England and France**

April 27: Early Alliances

April 29: Franco-Dutch Relations through the “Rampjaar” of 1672

May 1: Anglo-Dutch Relations through the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 29 (pp. 713-722), 30 (pp. 766-785), 31, and 32 (pp. 841-854)
- [Web] *The Dutch-mens Pedigree, Or, a Relation Shewing How They Were First Bred and Descended from a Horse-Turd Which Was Enclosed in a Butter-Box*, 1653

### **Week 15: Decline & Fall of the Dutch Republic**

May 4: Economic & Political Decline

May 6: The End of the Republic

May 8: Summary and Review

*Reading:*

- Israel, Chapters 37 and 43
- [CP] Blom and Lamberts, eds., *History of the Low Countries*, pp. 199-218

**Final Exam: Monday, May 11 (10:05 a.m.)**