

ARTH 440/599 Fall 2014
The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer
Dutch Visual Culture in the 17th Century
Tuesday 4:30-7:10 Music/Theater Building 1008

Instructor: Dr. Angela Ho
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Office Hours: Monday 12-2 pm, Thursday 10 am-12 pm, and by appointment
Office: Robinson B 334

Course Description

Within decades of its emergence as a new state in the seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic rose to the position of a great maritime and economic power in Europe. This seminar explores the role played by the pictorial arts in the shaping of Dutch culture and society. The Dutch developed a booming, sophisticated art market, creating an environment in which new genres such as still life, landscape, scenes of social life, and group portraiture flourished. The course will examine the works of artists such as Rembrandt, Vermeer, Frans Hals, Jan Steen, and their less well-known but equally interesting peers. We will situate paintings, prints, book illustrations, and maps produced by these artists within their historical context, and ask how images helped construct—and comment on—religious, social, and gender norms. We will investigate the intricate links between art production and the study of natural sciences, advances in technology, commercial ventures, and colonial expansion. Class discussions will also consider the different approaches art historians have taken to interpret and evaluate pictorial works produced in this so-called Golden Age of Dutch art.

Course Objectives

In this course, you will:

- Hone your skills of visual analysis and interpretation;
- Read primary and secondary sources critically;
- Develop your skills in critical thinking, research, and writing;
- Develop your knowledge of the methodologies of art history.

Course Format and Requirements

This course will be run as a seminar. I will provide background information or explanations when appropriate, but the bulk of the class sessions will be devoted to critical discussions of assigned readings. Your engagement with ideas presented in classes and readings, and your ability to apply them, will be assessed based on your participation in discussion, blog postings, response papers, and a final research project (oral presentation and research paper).

Students must complete all graded assignments and other requirements listed on the syllabus. Even if your overall average without one of these elements is sufficient for a passing grade, you cannot pass the class without specific, prior permission of the instructor.

Percentage breakdown:

Attendance and participation: 15%

Weekly blog postings: 15%

Response papers: 15%

Presentation: 10%

Draft of final paper: 10%

Final paper: 35%

Grading scale

A+	97-100	C+	77-79.5
A	93-96.5	C	73-76.5
A-	90-92.5	C-	70-72.5
B+	87-89.5	D	60-69.5
B	83-86.5	F	< 60
B-	80-82.5		

Readings

The textbook for this course is:

Alpers, Svetlana. *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983.

Additional weekly readings, consisting of articles and book excerpts, will be posted on Blackboard. In order to get the most out of this course, it is essential that you complete the assigned readings BEFORE you come to class.

Participation

In a seminar, learning happens when we are discussing readings and visual materials. Attendance and informed participation in class discussions are therefore required of all students. Your starting attendance/participation grade (i.e., you attend all class meetings but do not participate in discussions, or do not give any indication that you have done the readings) will be a C+. You build on that grade with informed contributions to class discussions.

If you cannot attend class due to medical reasons or other emergencies, I would be happy to meet with you during office hours to bring you up to date with the course material. Proper documentation, however, must be submitted to me in a timely fashion. Otherwise, after one missed class, each subsequent unexplained absence will lead to a deduction of 10% of your participation grade.

It is important to maintain a positive learning environment and observe rules of classroom etiquette in class sessions. Constructive comments and criticism are welcome, but please be mindful of and respect one another's views.

Blog postings

From weeks 2 – 7, 9, 11 – 12, choose at least 6 weeks to submit short responses (around 250 words) to the readings. Please post your response on Blackboard by 1 pm on the day we discuss the relevant topic in class. Please see page 8 for further instructions.

Response Papers

For students registered for ARTH 440: Out of the 6 weekly postings, choose two to expand into longer, more formal response papers. For students registered for ARTH 599, choose three to develop into formal papers. Hard copies of response papers are due the week *after* we discuss the relevant topic. Please see page 8 for specific instructions.

Research project

One of the major objectives of this course is to help you develop the skills necessary to write a research paper. Each of you will define a project that explores one or more of the major themes addressed in the course. To help you develop the project step by step, I will ask you to submit a paper proposal, an annotated bibliography and a draft of your paper at various points of the semester. You will also present your hypotheses and findings to the class on November 18, November 25, or December 2. A draft of your final paper (10 pages for ARTH 440; 15-20 pages for ARTH 599) is due by the end of the day on November 15, the Saturday after we meet in week 12. The final version due by the end of the day on December 14. You can submit your draft and final paper electronically to Blackboard.

PLEASE NOTE: In the interest of fairness, papers must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Students will incur a 3% grade penalty per day for late papers. In cases of medical or other serious problems, please document them and let me know as soon as possible.

A note about presentations: this is an opportunity for you to get feedback from your colleagues before you finalize the paper. It will also give all of you a chance to learn from each other. Attendance at all presentations is mandatory. For each presentation you miss, you will incur a 2% penalty out of the 35% allotted to the final paper. So if you miss an entire session with 5 presentations, 10% will be deducted from your final grade.

English as a second language

If English is not your first language, feel free to discuss with me any concerns you have about the writing assignments. Please, however, give me plenty of notice (at least a week) before the due dates. You may also consider consulting the Writing Center. Be sure to plan ahead, because the Writing Center is very busy near the end of the semester.

Tech requirements

I will ONLY use your GMU email addresses. If you prefer to use a commercial account, you must activate the email forwarder on your GMU account. Readings, course updates, and instructions for assignments and examinations will be available on Blackboard. Please also note that you will be expected to give a power point presentation of your research project.

Please be respectful of your peers and your instructor when using electronic devices.

- Do not use cell phones in class.
- Do not engage in activities that are unrelated to class. Such disruptions show a lack of professionalism and may affect your participation grade.

Add-drop deadlines

Please note the following add-drop deadlines:

September 2, 2014	Last day to add a class
	Last day to drop a class with no tuition penalty
September 16, 2014	Last day to drop a class with 33% tuition penalty
September 26, 2014	Final drop deadline with 67% tuition penalty
September 29 to October 24, 2014	Selective withdrawal period

It is your responsibility to observe the add-drop deadlines to ensure that you are properly registered for specific courses.

Students with disabilities

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please note that requests for accommodation must be provided to me at least two weeks before the due date of the first assignment. For further information and documentation please contact the Office of Disability Services, Student Union Building I (SUB), Room 4205, Telephone: (703) 993-2474, TTY: (703) 993-2476.

Standards of Academic integrity

Strict adherence to the Honor Code as defined in the undergraduate catalogue is expected. Plagiarism, cheating on examinations, and all other instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Committee, and may result in a failing grade for the course. Please consult the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process.

Tentative Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1 August 26

Introduction: A New State in Europe

Simon Schama, "The Unruly Realm. Appetite and Restraint in Seventeenth-Century Holland," *Daedalus* 108 (1979): 103–23.

J. L. Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 1-15.

Mariët Westermann, *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585-1718* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 17-28.

Week 2 September 2

The Art of Describing: Approaches to Dutch art

Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), xvii-xxvii, 1-25.

Eddy de Jongh, "To Instruct and Delight," in *Questions of Meaning: Theme and Motif in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painting*, ed. Michael Hoyle (Leiden: Primavera, 2000), 84–103.

Eric Jan Sluiter, "Didactic and Disguised Meaning? Several Seventeenth-Century Texts on Painting and the Iconographical Approach to Northern Dutch Paintings of the Period," in Wayne E. Franits ed., *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Week 3 September 9

Art, Science, Knowledge

Alpers, *Art of Describing*, excerpt from Chapter 3 ("With a Sincere Hand and a Faithful Eye"), 72-91; 99-118.

Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565-1629)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 66-94.

Elizabeth Sutton, "Possessing Brazil in Print, 1630-54," *JHNA* 5 (2013).

<http://www.jhna.org/index.php/past-issues/volume-5-issue-1/181-possessing-brazil-in-print>

Week 4 September 16

Art, Money, Value

Mariët Westermann, *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585-1718* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 28-45.

John Michael Montias, "Cost and Value in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art," *Art History* 10 (1987): 455–66.

Neil de Marchi and Hans J. van Miegroet, "Art, Value, and Market Practices in the Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century," *Art Bulletin* 86 (1994): 451–60.

Week 5 September 23

Rembrandt: History Painting and Artistic Identity

Alpers, *Art of Describing*, 222-28.

H. Perry Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), excerpt.

Margaret Carroll, "Civic Ideology and its Subversion: Rembrandt's *Oath of Claudius Civilis*," *Art History* 9 (1986): 12-35.

Eric Jan Sluiter, *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 221-43.

Week 6 September 30

Describing the Land: Landscapes and Mapping

Alpers, *Art of Describing*, excerpt of Chapter 4 ("The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art"), 126-33; 139-68.

Julie Berger Hochstrasser, "Inroads to Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 48 (1997): 193–221.

Alexandra Onuf, "Envisioning Netherlandish Unity: Claes Visscher's 1612 Copies of the Small Landscape Prints," *JHNA* 3 (2011). <http://www.jhna.org/index.php/past-issues/vol-3-1/130-envisioning-netherlandish-unity-claes-visschers>

Optional:

Ann Jensen Adams, "Competing Communities in the 'Great Bog of Europe': Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 35–76.

Week 7 October 7

Paper proposals due

Making Sense of Things: Still Life and Value

Celeste Brusati, "Natural Artifice and Material Values in Dutch Still Life," in *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*, ed. Wayne Franits (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 144–57.

Elizabeth Alice Honig, "Making Sense of Things: On the Motives of Dutch Still Life," *Res* 34 (1998): 166–83.

Norman Bryson, "Abundance," in *Looking at the Overlooked. Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 96-135.

Week 8 October 14

Columbus Day break; no class

Week 9 October 21

Bibliography due

Fashioning Identities: Dutch Portraits

Ann Jensen Adams, *Public Faces and Private Identities in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 21-58.

Joanna Woodall, "Status Symbols: Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Portraiture," *Dutch Crossing* 42 (1990): 34-68.

Harry Berger, Jr., *Manhood, Marriage, & Mischief: Rembrandt's "Night Watch" and other Dutch Group Portraits* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 177-215.

Week 10 October 28

No class; individual meetings

Week 11 November 4

Picturing Life in the Republic: Genre Painting

Elizabeth Honig, "The Space of Gender in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," in *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*, ed. Wayne Franits (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 187–201.

H. Perry Chapman, "Women in Vermeer's Home: Mimesis and Ideation," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 51 (2000): 236-71.

Mariët Westermann, "Steen's Comic Fictions," in *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 53-67.

Week 12 November 11

Vermeer and the Art of Seeing

Alpers, *Art of Describing*, 26-46.

Celeste Brusati, "Perspectives in Flux: Viewing Dutch Pictures in Real Time," *Art History* 35 (2012): 908-33.

Daniel Arasse, *Vermeer: Faith in Painting*, trans. Terry Grabar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 59-75.

OR

Bryan Jay Wolf, *Vermeer and the Invention of Seeing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), excerpt.

***Draft of final paper due November 15, 11:59 pm**

Week 13 November 18

Oral Presentations

Week 14 November 25

Oral Presentations

Week 15 December 2

Oral Presentations

***Final paper due December 14, 11:59 pm**

ARTH 440/599 Fall 2014

The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Dutch Visual Culture in the 17th Century
Weekly Readings, Blog Postings, Response Papers

Each week I will provide some questions to guide you through the assigned readings. Please post your responses and observations on the readings to Blackboard by 1 pm on the day we discuss that particular topic in class. The goal of this assignment is to help you develop the skills of critical reading.

Reading critically does not mean gathering information from a text, or simply reading it through once from beginning to end. Critical reading is active reading. Underline or highlight the main points and note down your thoughts and questions. When you have finished a reading, go back over your notes and highlights, and consider the following:

- When was the text written? How would the date of the text affect the way you approach it?
- What are the author's major arguments? Bear in mind that most readings, even those presented as narratives or biographies, contain an argument.
- You will often find a lot of data and details in the texts; how does the author marshal this information as evidence to support his/her arguments?
- Do you find the argument effective? Why or why not? How do the conclusions compare with other readings you have encountered?
- Do you detect any assumptions or biases underlying the author's conclusions?

Blog postings

Gather your thoughts and observations into a 250-word essay and post it to Blackboard. Identify the main arguments of a reading and—if appropriate—pose questions about the parts that you find particularly difficult. From weeks 2 – 7, 9, 11 – 12, post at least 6 responses to the readings.

Response papers

For two of those weeks (three for graduate students), you are asked to write a longer, formal response paper on the readings (4-5 pages). Turn in the response paper one week after we discuss the readings in class. For example, if you decide to write a response paper on the topic for week 2 ("The Art of Describing"), you will submit the paper in week 3. If you draw on your classmates' postings on Blackboard, you must acknowledge your sources. It goes without saying that your response must reflect your own critical engagement with the text, and should not be a mish-mash of your classmates' postings.