European Studies

Utrecht University - Faculty of Humanities

This course offers you the opportunity to explore the history and culture of Europe. Studying in the beautiful medieval city of Utrecht, you will not only explore the various European cultures and identities, but also study the key issues concerning ‘The rise of modern Europe’ from the Middle Ages to the end of the 19th century, taking the city of Utrecht as point of departure. Lastly, you will examine the three major wars that shaped the 20th century in Europe: WOI and II, and the Cold War.

The topics we will study during your first two weeks in Utrecht will help you to understand the complicated structure of Europe and will shed light on the motives for integration as well as the obstacles on the way to European unity. Lectures will focus on the history, social and economic structures, culture, and current political and social debates within the wider European community. In light of these last topics we will organize a field trip to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts and the European Parliament in Brussels. All in all, a thought-provoking and inspiring course.

The next two weeks are a more of an ‘experience’. This historical journey, which illuminates Europe from the Middle Ages to the end of the 19th century from a Utrechts point of view, will help you to understand the many social, historical, religious and cultural factors that came to shape modern Europe. The many museums, cathedrals and canals of Utrecht and visits to, for example Amsterdam, are included in the program and will offer you some of the most breathtaking highlights of Dutch history and culture. Topics include for example the Dutch Golden Age; the era spanning roughly the 17th century in which the Dutch became one of the world’s greatest maritime, economic and artistic world powers.

Excursions will lead you through Utrecht and Amsterdam, visiting several historical museums in Utrecht and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. In the last two weeks, the focus shifts to the 20th century. During this century, Europe not just experienced one, but three horrific wars: the First and Second World War and the Cold War that followed in their wake. However, this century might as well be regarded as an age of rebuilding, transatlantic collaboration, and global connections, thus making the twentieth century much more diverse. You will receive lectures on a variety of historic topics; spanning not only the histories of the three wars, but also topics such as international cooperation and multilateralism, which resulted in international organizations such as the United Nations, the relation of the United States to Europe, the fall of communism and decolonization. You will also be taken on a number of excursions, for example to the Anne Frank House and the Jewish quarter in Amsterdam, and the International Criminal Court and the Peace Palace in The Hague. During this special track there will be various excursions. Students will visit the Brussels, The Hague and various museums in Amsterdam and Utrecht.