



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Netherlands Program, Summer 2026

EDU 400 / HON 300 Topics: Comparative Foundations of Education – U.S. and the Netherlands

Instructor: Dr. David J. Roof

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description: This study abroad course offers a dynamic, comparative exploration of educational foundations in the United States and the Netherlands, focusing on the intersections of history, philosophy, policy. Anchored in both theory and immersive experience, you will examine how differing cultural, political, and social values shape educational systems and goals. Special emphasis will be placed on the purpose of education in democratic societies, approaches to education, and the impact of contemporary policy trends in both countries.

You will engage directly with Dutch schools, education leaders, and community organizations while also reflecting on the American context. Through site visits in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and The Hague, you will gain firsthand insight into the Dutch model of inclusive and pluralistic education, and how it compares to ongoing debates in U.S. schooling, such as equality of opportunity, school funding, standardization, and the role of public versus private institutions.

This course is ideal for students interested in education, international studies, public policy, sociology, and civic leadership. You will critically reflect on your own educational experiences and beliefs, drawing on global perspectives to reimagine the role of schooling in shaping our societies future.

Note: This course may be used to fulfill general education requirements in social science, education, or global studies. Please consult your academic advisor and the course instructor, Dr. David Roof, to determine how it may apply to your degree plan.

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to introduce students to the comparative study of education through immersive, experiential learning in the Netherlands. Students will critically examine the historical, philosophical, social, and political foundations of education in both the United States and the Netherlands. Emphasis will be placed on how differing national contexts influence educational purpose, structure, curriculum, and equity.

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the historical and philosophical foundations of education in the U.S. and the Netherlands.
- Compare and contrast key features of the Dutch and American educational systems, including governance, curriculum, funding, and equity.
- Examine how education serves democratic citizenship in both national contexts.
- Reflect on the impact of global, neoliberal, and policy trends on local educational systems.
- Identify and evaluate the roles of schooling in advancing equity, pluralism, and civic participation.
- Engage in thoughtful dialogue and deliberation with peers and stakeholders in both host and home contexts.
- Demonstrate intercultural awareness and sensitivity through active participation in field experiences and group learning.

Specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- **SLO 1:** Articulate the core differences and similarities between Dutch and American educational philosophies, as evidenced in journal reflections and group discussions.
- **SLO 2:** Apply key concepts of democratic education and civic responsibility through on-site engagement and structured reflections.

- **SLO 3:** Conduct a comparative analysis of educational policy challenges (e.g., school choice, inclusion, standardization) in a final project or essay.
- **SLO 4:** Demonstrate growth in intercultural competence by engaging respectfully and thoughtfully in international educational settings.
- **SLO 5:** Evaluate personal assumptions about the purposes of schooling through course readings, discussions, and a final integrative civic learning activity.

This course aligns with the goals of the Kentucky Institute for International Studies (KIIS) and SACS accreditation by promoting global understanding, intercultural competence, and civic engagement through structured academic inquiry and direct experiential learning abroad.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course: This course explores the historical, philosophical, and sociological foundations of education in the United States and the Netherlands through a comparative lens. Through readings, site visits, and guided discussions, we will examine key themes that shape public education systems globally, with a particular focus on democratic values, equity, and school governance. Major topics include:

- **The Purpose of Education in a Democracy** - Exploring theories of democratic education (Jefferson, Dewey, Biesta), and comparing civic aims of schooling in the U.S. and the Netherlands.
- **Historical Foundations of Schooling in the U.S. and the Netherlands** - Investigating how historical events and cultural traditions have shaped educational systems, including the Dutch "pillarization" model and U.S. common school movement.
- **Philosophical Foundations: Humanism, Liberalism, and Pragmatism** - Examining key philosophical approaches to education and how they inform policy and practice in both contexts.
- **School Choice, Vouchers, and Market-Based Reform** - Evaluating the impact of school funding structures, privatization, and parental choice policies in both countries.
- **Teacher Education and Professional Identity** - Reviewing teacher preparation pathways and societal expectations of educators in the U.S. and Netherlands.
- **Religion, Pluralism, and Education Policy** - Understanding the influence of religious traditions on curriculum, school governance, and educational freedom, especially in the Dutch context.
- **Current Educational Challenges and Reforms** - Identifying key policy debates such as inclusion, mental health, digital learning, and teacher shortages in both contexts.

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement: This course, EDU 400 / HON 300 Topics: Comparative Foundations of Education: U.S. and the Netherlands, may fulfill general education requirements at many institutions. At Ball State University, this course may fulfill requirements in the University Core Curriculum under Tier 2: Domain - Social Science or Intercultural Inquiry, pending departmental and advising approval. Students from other institutions are encouraged to consult with their academic advisors or transfer credit offices to determine how the course satisfies general education or program-specific requirements.

6. Required Readings and Materials: This course will utilize a curated selection of excerpts from scholarly articles, book chapters, and policy documents to support comparative inquiry into education systems in the United States and the Netherlands. All readings will be provided digitally or distributed in class. **No textbooks are required** for purchase.

Core Readings: Comparative Foundations and Policy

- Owings, W. A., Kaplan, L. S., & Volman, M. (2015). Education in the U.S. and the Netherlands: An equity comparison and a few big questions. *Journal of Education Finance*, 41(2), 145–163.
- Lijphart, A. (1977). *Democracy in plural societies: A comparative exploration*. Yale University Press. [Chapters on education and democracy in the Netherlands]
- Lubienski, C., Perry, L. B., Kim, J., & Canbolat, Y. (2022). Market models and segregation: Examining mechanisms of student sorting. *Comparative Education*, 58(1), 16–36.
- Verhoeven, J. C., & Kelchtermans, G. (2018). The impact of school choice on educational systems in Europe: A Dutch case study. *Educational Studies*, 44(5), 544–560.

Supplementary Readings (Policy & Contextual)

- Dutch Inspectorate of Education. (2024). *The State of Education in the Netherlands*. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.
<https://english.onderwijsinspectie.nl/documents/publications/2024/08/7/the-state-of-education>
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Netherlands). (2021). *Citizenship Education in the Netherlands: Policy and Practice*.
- OECD (2022). *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* (Netherlands & U.S. comparative sections).

7. Graded Assignments: This course is designed to blend scholarly analysis with immersive experiential learning. Assignments are structured to promote engagement before, during, and after the study abroad program, ensuring students are prepared to critically reflect on comparative education systems and their underlying philosophical, historical, and policy foundations.

Assignment	Description	Percentage
Pre-Departure Reading Reflections	Short written reflections (300–500 words each) on selected readings completed prior to departure. These will connect foundational concepts in the social foundations of education with issues relevant to Dutch and American education systems.	20%
Active Participation and Dialogue	Students are expected to actively contribute to group discussions, field visits, and guest speaker Q&As. Participation includes asking thoughtful questions, engaging in respectful dialogue, and contributing to group activities.	30%
Field Journals (Daily or Bi-weekly Entries)	Students will maintain a reflective journal that documents observations, questions, and thematic connections during the Netherlands experience. Entries should integrate course readings with field-based insights.	25%
Final Comparative Analysis Project	A synthesis essay and/or visual activity comparing U.S. and Dutch approaches to one or more of the following: school governance, funding equity, citizenship education, or school choice. Students may propose creative formats for this assignment (e.g., podcast, documentary short, infographic).	25%

Work will be graded on the following scale:

- 90 – 100 A
- 80 – 89 B
- 70 – 79 C
- 60 – 69 D
- Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.)

8. Generative AI Policy:

Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.

Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can “hallucinate” (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.
- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

"I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.]."

8. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

9. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

10. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with

dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.