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Quarter/Year	Course Number	Day/Time	Instructor
Fall 2020	ART-HIST 390	TR 2:40-4	Swan
Course Title	Degree/Distro Fulfillment		
An Art of Describing Blackness: Early Modern Visual Culture of Race	seminar; 1400-1800		

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How did early modern northern European images participate in and help to form a visual culture of race? Taught by a scholar of Dutch art of the seventeenth century, this seminar will explore sixteenth- and seventeenth-century northern European representations of Blacks and blackness by German and Dutch artists Albrecht Dürer, Hans Burgkmair, Hieronymus Bosch, Peter Paul Rubens, Rembrandt van Rijn, and others. We will also consider ethnographic prints, printed maps, and allegories. The general focus is on interactions among German, Flemish, and Dutch Europeans and black Africans and Melanesians that resulted in images made between 1550 and 1700. How do images of Blacks operate within the artistic conventions of the time? How do they relate to conceptions of the exotic? And how did they then and how do they now contribute to the construction of race?

We will study images made in the era of Atlantic slavery and early European colonialism, and how these intertwined histories structured and benefited from forms of visual representation. In the early modern era, it was conventional to depict the youngest of the three Magi who travel to adore the Christ child as a black African. By the end of the seventeenth century, portraits of bourgeois white families often included a black servant. Throughout the era, ethnographic prints of black Africans encountered in the context of trade circulated widely. Made and admired in the context of the transatlantic slave trade, these images were also in some cases records of individual encounters between artists and the men and women they depicted. Can we square the personal with the political in the case of an art of describing blackness?

The seminar opens with readings on the invention of whiteness in the early modern colonial era in the context of the slave trade and recent research on “Black Tudors” and on relations between Elizabethan England and the Ottoman Empire. It will showcase recent research on black Africans in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, and on Dutch investment in the transatlantic slave trade and plantation colonialism. We will consider specific case studies of northern European prints, paintings, drawings, sculpture, and architecture that frame constructions of blackness. Geographically, the materials we study issued from The Netherlands and Germany, but the course considers European engagement in the American colonies, Melanesia/Indonesia, and the Atlantic and Brazil.

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## Required Textbooks

Readings will include work by Ibram X. Kendi, Nell Painter, Miranda Kaufman, Kim Hall, Jerry Brotton, Elmer Kolfin, Joseph Koerner, David Bindman, Elizabeth Sutton, Stephanie Leitch.

## Assessments

Students will present regularly on readings and on individual images; there will be two short essays and one longer (8-10 page) final research paper, with the option of presenting the final project digitally using ArcGIS or Omeka3 platforms (training provided during the quarter).