



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# Showed trials: Truth telling in documentary film and court

Course Code	R_STTT
Credits	6
Period	P1
Course Level	200
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Law
Course Coordinator	dr. S. Stolk
Examiner	dr. S. Stolk
Teaching Staff	dr. S. Stolk, prof. dr. W.G. Werner
Teaching method(s)	Study Group, Lecture

## Course Objective

This course focuses on truth and (visual) evidence in documentary film and court proceedings. More concretely, we explore the truth regimes of documentary film and court proceedings and study what happens when the two meet.

Upon completion of the course, students can:

- Recognize, understand and compare the functions of truth-telling in documentary film and court proceedings.
- Analyse how visual evidence is used in both contexts.
- Critically reflect on the representation of legal proceedings in documentary film.
- Use film to study law and court cases.

The course specifically focuses on international courts and tribunals but the core questions apply to national contexts too.

## Course Content

The course revolves around four main questions:

(a) What are the functions of truth telling in documentary film and court proceedings? How is (visual) evidence used in both contexts? We will discuss these questions on the basis of a concrete cases before international courts and documentary films about related topics.

(b) What happens when film footage is used as evidence in a court case? How do truth claims shift? How can primarily artistic products such as documentary films be transformed into legal evidence, and how does this differ from the use of other types of visual evidence? Again, we will discuss these questions in relation to a concrete case.

The function of truth in court is primarily geared towards a decision, and thus sets boundaries to what counts as relevant and what is out of order. In addition, court cases are pre-structured through rules of evidence and procedure, determining what counts as reliable (visual) evidence. Finally, truth in court is most of all articulated verbally. Documentary film, on the other hand, can be used to tell a multitude of truths and knows numerous ways to present and combine different types of evidence. It can leave questions undecided and allows for ambiguity. What is more, documentaries not only tell a truth, they most of all show a truth.

In the course, students are trained to recognize and understand the differences and overlap between these truth and evidence regimes of (documentary) film and law.

## Additional Information Teaching Methods

Interactive lectures; film screenings; and group discussion.

## Method of Assessment

Three short assignments that compare the use of visual materials in court cases and documentary film. The assignments include written and visual components (such as essays, storyboards, film clips etc.)

## Entry Requirements

Not required

## Literature

See course manual published on Canvas.

## Additional Information Target Audience

Apart from regular students, the course is also available for:

- Students from other universities/faculties
- Contractor (students who pay for one course)

## Additional Information

The course is part of the minor 'Visual Evidence'. The course is open for everyone.

## Explanation Canvas

Canvas is the main communication platform of the course.

## Recommended background knowledge

Not applicable. No specific knowledge in the field of law and/or film is required.