The Institute for Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies (HLCS) is part of the Faculty of Arts. Its main objective is to create a stimulating environment for research in literature and literary theory, cultural studies, history, art history and archaeology. HLCS research is based on a common focus: ‘Europe and its Worlds’.

‘Europe and its Worlds’ is a research theme in which questions as to whether and how ‘Europe’ consists of different worlds are addressed, how it differs from the rest of the world, and how it interacts with other worlds. Researchers collaborate in thematic groups to explore the spaces, cultural practices, beliefs, texts and ideas related to this central theme. The groups combine expertise from a variety of disciplines and function as platforms for discussing research plans and results, ensuring communication between researchers and supporting academic integrity. The results of HLCS research are mainly intended for a scholarly audience of peers, but often for a wider audience as well.

Research facilities
• The Humaniora Library (155,000 volumes, 15,500 serial volumes, 750 serial subscriptions and 600 manuscripts)
• The Catholic Documentation Centre archives and publications of Catholic institutions and individuals in the Netherlands, 1800-present (www.ru.nl/kdc)
• The Centre for Art Historical Documentation manages a large collection of visual material and provides services in the field of image research and delivery of image material (www.ru.nl/ckd)
• The Auxilia archaeological project bureau (Provincial Roman History; the analysis of excavations in the former territories of Germania Inferior (www.ru.nl/auxilia)
Kunera: a database of over 15,000 medieval pilgrim badges and ampullae of religious and profane subjects (www.kunera.nl)

Collaboration

The HLCS focuses on establishing European research networks with prominent partners in its areas of expertise.

Prof. André Lardinois is one of the founders and chair of the Network for the Study of Archaic and Classical Greek Song, which is engaged in the study of archaic Greek lyric, iambic and elegiac poetry and song, with representatives in most European countries as well as in a number of major American universities (Berkeley, Harvard, Stanford and Yale). The aim of this network is to pool the resources of individual scholars, who now often work in isolation, by holding regular meetings, keeping in contact through a network website and a newsletter, and defining topics of common interest within archaic Greek poetry that groups of scholars in different countries can work on together.

Prof. Carla van Baalen is one of the founders of the European Information and Research Network on Parliamentary History (EuParl), which connects European research institutions and experts in parliamentary history. The network facilitates the exchange and dissemination of knowledge and promotes comparative studies on parliamentary culture in Europe. Another aim is to help institutions becoming more visible beyond their national boundaries and to facilitate cooperation between the participating institutions.

Dr Marguérite Corporaal is the leader of the International Network of Irish Famine Studies, a platform in which Famine scholars present their research and work on joint publications which approach the Great Hunger from interdisciplinary viewpoints and generate more generally applicable insights into the socio-cultural and economic contexts in which famines occur. Additionally, the network offers an internet forum where digitalized resources can be published, thereby creating an archive through which public organizations with an interest in the Famine can have access to reliable information.

Research results

Although there are many works dealing with Pompeii and Herculaneum, until recently none of them has tried to encompass the entire spectrum of material related to their reception in popular imagination. In his book *Pompeii’s Ashes. The Reception of the Cities Buried by Vesuvius in Literature, Music, and Drama*, Prof. Eric Moormann surveys a broad variety of such works, ranging from travelogues between ca. 1740 and 2010 to 250 years of fiction, including stage works, music, and films. The first chapters provide an in-depth analysis of the excavation history and an overview of the reflections of travellers. The remaining chapters discuss historical novels, contemporary adventures, time travelling, mock manuscripts, and works dedicated to Vesuvius. *Pompeii’s Ashes* demonstrates how the ceaseless fascination with the oldest still-running archaeological projects in the world began, developed, and continues today.

Two famous paintings attributed to the medieval Dutch master Hieronymus Bosch, 'Christ Carrying the Cross' (around 1515-16) and 'The Seven Deadly Sins' (around 1500), are thought to have been imitations painted around the same time. This conclusion was made after years of research by the Bosch Research and Conservation Project (BRCP). Paintings were compared using infrared reflectography, ultra high-resolution digital macro photography and other modern techniques. Prof. Robert Erdmann, Dr Matthijs Ilsink, Prof. Jos Koldeweij and Prof. Ron Spronk are members of the project team, alongside researchers...
from Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum and the University of Arizona in Tucson. Both paintings have long been regarded as seminal works by Bosch, known for his love of fantastical angels and saints, diabolical monsters and devils and nightmares taken from Biblical themes.

A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond offers a completely new comprehensive vision of the world of late medieval Catholicism through the prism of Observant reforms and its major fruits, all the way up to the later sixteenth century. The Observant Movement was a widespread effort to reform religious life across Europe. It took root around 1400, and for at least a century thereafter it inspired or shaped much that became central to European religion and culture. This volume provides scholars with a current, synthetic introduction to the Observant Movement. In essays the authors also seek to expand the horizons of the study of Observant reform and to open up new avenues for future scholarship. Dr Bert Roest is one of the editors and contributors.

Dr Lotte Jensen and Dr Marguérite Corporaal published ‘Poetry as an Act of International Diplomacy: English translations of Willem van Haren’s Political Poetry during the War of the Austrian Succession’ in the Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies. In the eighteenth century, the worlds of diplomacy and poetry were inextricably connected. This book was written by the work of the Dutch statesman and poet Willem van Haren (1710-1768), whose political poems played an important role in the negotiations of international political relations during the War of the Austrian Succession. It is argued that the great interest in Van Haren’s work in England is due to the country’s positioning in the European conflict as well as Anglo-Irish relations during the 1740s. Lotte Jensen and Marguérite Corporaal demonstrate the value of HLCS theme groups that combine expertise from a variety of disciplines.

The jazz heard in documentaries about the liberation was nearly always added to the images at a later stage. The actual liberation music was much more versatile. It has been brought back to life in the exhibition ‘Songs of Liberation’ in the National Liberation Museum in Groesbeek, based on a unique collection of more than 300 pieces of sheet-music, recently donated to the museum from the US. ‘Songs of Liberation’ also looked further than the summer of 1945. From the introduction of jazz in the Netherlands in the 1920s to censorship and Schlager-music in the occupation years. After the war, American and British music thrived in the transition from jazz to rock ‘n roll and pop music. On the occasion of this exhibition, Prof. Frank Mehring published a richly illustrated book entitled Soundtrack of liberation. Songs, sounds and dances in the summer of 1945.
Alicia Montoya (Professor of French Literature and Culture) was awarded an ERC Consolidator Grant for ‘Middlebrow Enlightenment. Disseminating Ideas, Authors and Texts in 18th-century Europe (MEDIATE)’. By developing a state-of-the-art database, this project will identify not the ‘high’ Enlightenment texts studied within the history of ideas, nor the ‘low’ forbidden texts of book history, but rather the real best-sellers of the 18th century.

Compared to other countries, the Netherlands generally scores high in the field of literary translation. But even here there is room for improvement. Translations are not always easy to read, can be stylistically very different from the original and in some cases downright incomprehensible. How can this be explained and how can it be prevented? And what are the characteristics of a good literary translation? These and other questions about literary translation were discussed by Prof. Maarten Steenmeijer in the first ‘State of the Translation lecture’ in SPUI25 in Amsterdam. The state of literary translation in the Netherlands is also the central theme in Schrijven als een ander. Over het vertalen van literatuur (Writing as someone else. About translating literature). In this book, literary critic and translator Maarten Steenmeijer uses examples to demonstrate and explain what can go wrong in translating literature and why.

Thinking Through Fashion is the first book designed to help readers understand the context of fashion. It aims to help them grasp both the relevance of social and cultural theory to fashion, dress, and material culture and, conversely, the relevance of those fields to social and cultural theory. It does so by offering a guide through the work of selected major thinkers, introducing their concepts and ideas. Each chapter is devoted to a key thinker, capturing the significance of their thought to the understanding of the field of fashion, while also assessing the importance of this field for a critical engagement with these thinkers’ ideas. It is a guide and reference for students and scholars in the fields of fashion, dress and material culture, the creative industries, sociology, cultural history, design and cultural studies. The editors are Agnès Rocamora (University of the Arts London) and Prof. Anneke Smelik.

Future research
Prof. Alicia Montoya was awarded an ERC Consolidator Grant for ‘Middlebrow Enlightenment. Disseminating Ideas, Authors and Texts in 18th-century Europe (MEDIATE)’. By developing a state-of-the-art database, this project will identify not the ‘high’ Enlightenment texts studied within the history of ideas, and not the ‘low’, forbidden texts of book history, but the real best-sellers of the 18th century. These texts represented the most visible face of the Enlightenment to readers on the ground, but have hitherto never really been studied. It will elaborate a typology of this corpus, describing its generic traits, intended readers, relationship to major political-religious debates, and how readers in different parts of Europe appropriated these texts through translations, reworkings and other uses. The project thus brings an ambitious, bottom-up approach to intellectual history, using book history data and innovative digital tools to argue that the Enlightenment was fashioned not only by the progressive intellectuals we know today, but just as importantly, also by a large mass of forgotten, middlebrow best-sellers that need to be adequately studied if we are to truly understand how we ‘became modern’ (or not).

On average the Dutch are the tallest people in the world. But at the beginning of the 19th century, this wasn’t the case. Why we have since become so tall? In the context of the NWO’s ‘Free Competition in the Humanities’, Prof. Jan Kok received a grant to clarify this mystery. The research uses inspection reports of conscript 19 year-old boys born between 1811 and 1922 that will be linked to their life courses. An explanation of this phenomenon should probably be sought in broad access to good food, as well as in the reduction of childhood diseases and child labour. The researchers will map the size and composition of the family of the conscripts and their later life course (marriage, children, career, and life expectancy), as well as their social background and place of origin. By recording the lengths of the fathers and sons of the conscripts, they also aim to elucidate a possible genetic component.
Key publications


Mixson, J.D. & Roest, B. (Eds.). (2015). A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond (Brill’s companions to the Christian tradition, 59). Leiden/Boston: Brill.


Dissertations: 9
Scientific publications: 221
Professional publications: 219
Director: Prof. Olivier Hekster

Olivier Hekster has been Professor of Ancient History at Radboud University since 2004. He obtained his doctorate degree cum laude with a thesis entitled Commodus. An Emperor at the Crossroads. Olivier Hekster focuses his research on the role of ideology in ancient Rome, specifically on Roman imperial representation. He has been Lecturer in Ancient History at Wadham College Oxford and Fellow and Tutor of Ancient History at Merton College Oxford, spent a year at the Commission for Ancient History and Epigraphy in Munich on a Humboldt Research Fellowship for Experienced Researchers, was a member of Royal Academy’s The Young Academy (2005-2010) and has chaired of the international network Impact of Empire since 2006. He recently obtained a large personal grant (Vici) from NWO.

Within the same programme Prof. Hans Bak obtained a PhD position for Iris Plessius. When the peace of Westminster was signed in 1674, the Dutch colony formerly known as New Netherland came into the hands of the British after a ten-year struggle. The moment the Dutch surrendered, the victors began to write the history of the United States from a British perspective, largely ignoring the influence of other European countries. The objective of this project is to assess the role the Dutch played in the genesis of the United States during the formative years of the 17th and 18th centuries by exploring the relationships that existed between the Native Americans and the Dutch from 1674 till 1783. Prof. Johan Oosterman and Dr Jan Kuys have acquired funding from the NWO programme ‘Added Value through Humanities’. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Duchess Mary of Guelders had a prayer book made in a cloister near Arnhem. It ranks as the highlight of book production from the Northern Netherlands around 1400 and reflects the ambitious and internationally oriented culture in Guelders at the time. The context in which it functioned, however, is still largely unknown. The aim of this project is to make this context visible by investigating the relationship between the prayer book, the duchess who had it made and used it, the time in which it was created, and the places the book and Mary of Guelders can be connected to. Traces of these places in the landscape will be marked physically by the use of signs as well as virtually on the website www.mariavangelre.nl.

Prof. Jan Kok and Dr Angélique Janssens are partners in the Marie Curie ETN ‘Methodologies and Data mining techniques for the analysis of Big Data based on Longitudinal Population and Epidemiological Registers’ (LONGPOP). In recent decades, research teams across Europe have developed longitudinal population registers and large research databases, opening up avenues for new linkages between different data sources and resulting in the reconstruction of hundreds of thousands of individual life courses and multidimensional biographies of people. Such databases provide the foundations for a much better understanding of stability and transformation in societies. LONGPOP will create a network of research teams to share experiences, start joint research across national and disciplinary borders, create a training track for specialists in the field, and increase the number of users of these rich databases, making them accessible to more scientists and stakeholders.

Prof. Sible de Blaauw obtained a PhD position for Maarten van Deventer within NWO’s ‘PhDs in the Humanities’ programme. During Late-Antiquity and the Early-Medieval period, Rome’s inhabitants were surrounded by ancient institutions, traditions and a cityscape conveying messages of civic prosperity and glory. At the same time Rome’s dwindling population, wars, unrest and declining financial strength resulted in the decline of the cityscape. The need arose for a new shared identity that could function as a source of self-esteem and coherence. How did Rome’s inhabitants shape their new collective cultural identity and what was the role of the cultural heritage of the city of Rome? This research will focus on archaeological and iconographical sources.