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European History Culture and Art HI-100-K01

Policies on Prostitution

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### Policies on Prostitution

Cultures across the world differ from country to country. Since arriving in the Netherlands, I have already seen the extent to how cultures differ from their cultural norms/values, to how structurally systems work within each nation. Sex work in the Netherlands is a fairly new concept for me, but one that truly intrigues me to see how sex workers, police force, and the overall community work as one to support this business and uphold the industry. How does the culture of sex work differ from the Netherlands to the U.S, and how does being exposed to sex work alter your opinion?

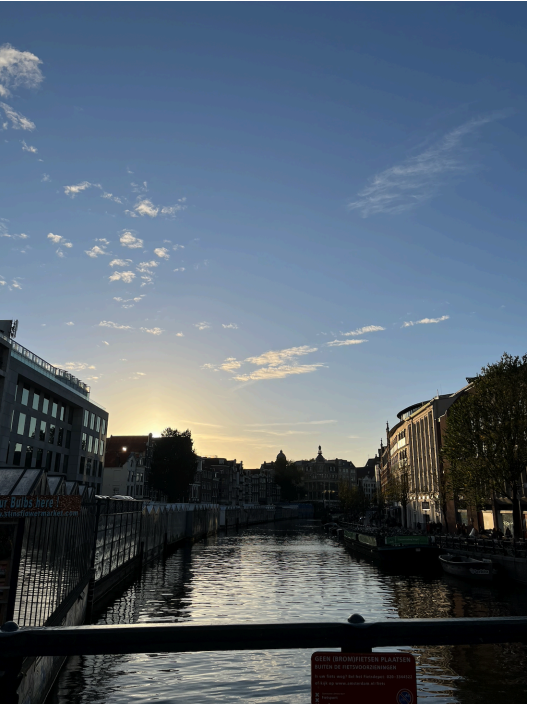
In the Netherlands, sex work is legal, and welcomed as a profession. Coming directly from the Government of the Netherlands website, "Prostitution is legal in the Netherlands as long as it involves sex between consenting adults" (Zaken). It is considered a real job, with workers paying taxes and working daily shifts at a time. If there is an issue for example with a customer refusing pay, sex workers have the ability to bring in legal help such as a police officer that will help to track down, or hold the customer accountable. Drastically different, in the United States, sex work is illegal. It is frowned upon by Americans, however there also is a large portion of Americans fighting for decriminalizing it, and despite being illegal, it still happens in more secretive and likely unsafe ways.

Coming from a culture where sex work is not supported, to a culture where it is embraced, it was intriguing to see how our norms are so different and so engrained in us. Walking the Red Light District was truly an experience to watch this system of work in action and how in the open it is amidst a tourist city. It truly is an art form and a form of work that should be supported. Also being a student of Chester Lee's class, I had the opportunity to speak with an online sex worker, and hear her experiences over the past 12 years in the industry. Hearing from her helped to show the true differences between sex work cultures in the Netherlands versus the U.S. She has been a sex worker for 12 years, and is open amidst family and friends as to what her job is. Even within her own relationship, there is a strong sense of trust that what she does is her job and pays all her bills because of how successful she is. If this were the U.S, there would be an element of secrecy and judgment. She would not be able to tell her family and friends her job title, and that element of trust may not exist amidst relationships.

As you can see the culture of sex work varies from nation to nation. Now, after being exposed to this more accepting culture here in the Netherlands, I believe other nations, such as the United States, should follow this example as well. Legalizing sex work could allow for more jobs, more sex work within a safe context, and the building of an overall community. I truly was impressed by this section of culture in the Netherlands, and my trip to Amsterdam will be one I never forget.

## Work Cited

Ministerie van Algemene Zaken. "Prostitution." *Government.nl*, Ministerie Van Algemene Zaken, 22 Nov. 2017, <https://www.government.nl/topics/prostitution>.





**Photo Reflection:** For my photo reflection I chose to highlight the architecture of Amsterdam. I was able to learn a lot about the architecture of this city over the course of our 3 days there, and found it very interesting as well as aesthetically pleasing. Amsterdam buildings are built on a slant, with hooks on the top floor of the buildings. This was a way for goods to be transported up and down the building without having to climb flights of steep stairs. To prevent goods from hitting or damaging windows/property, the buildings are slanted. Stairs were never an option because they were built too steep. Residents are taxed by the width of their properties, so architects build narrow, yet deep houses to avoid large taxes, hence steep and narrow stairs to match this building model. This architecture is very recognizable no matter where you are in Amsterdam, as seen in my attached photos. Whether you are out for the night, strolling the canals in between rain showers, or enjoying a meal, you can easily see the slanted buildings, narrow buildings, and hooks on top of each floor.