



Introduction to Central Asia *Fall 2019*

Near Eastern Studies 26
Geography 55

Course Information

Instructor: Sanjyot Mehendale
Near Eastern Studies
Office: 294 Barrows Hall
Office Hours: Tu/Th 1:00 – 1:45 pm

Class Day/Time: Tu/Th 11-12:29 pm
Class Room: 102 Wurster
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Course Description

In both public imagination and academic focus, Central Asia¹ has long been marginalized as a region land-locked between, and dominated by, the ancient "great" civilizations of China, India, Persia and Rome, and the modern powers of Asia and Europe. Most of the attention garnered by the region has rested on its value as a transit zone -- the so-called ancient Silk Road -- and store of natural resources for these other dominant civilizations. Relatively few scholars have devoted attention to the region as anything but an adjunct, and the study of Central Asia is still only rarely included in the academic curriculum of American universities. The long night of Cold War politics, which restricted international research in the region and limited Western access to Soviet and Central Asian sources, reinforced this conceptual marginalization.

¹ The term *Central Asia* in this semester refers to the five former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. At times, reference will be made to regions across the border such as in Afghanistan, China, and Russia.

At the end of Soviet hegemony in Central Asia in 1991, several newly independent nation-states (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) emerged on the geopolitical map. These states that had their formal beginnings as artificial creations of Stalin's policy of "National Delimitation," struggled with the conundrums of national identity amidst competing ethnic and religious affiliations. The post-Soviet transitional stage offered a number of significant issues for attention by scholars of both modern and ancient Central Asia: the governmental forms that succeeded local and transnational Soviet structures; the role of Islam and ethnicity in post-Communist social and cultural constructions; the impact of the disintegration of Soviet control on the economies, infrastructure and environments of the independent republics; and the effect of emerging ideologies on the uses of the region's history and on the direction of scholarship pertaining to ancient Central Asia.

The fall of the Soviet Union also brought renewed scholarly and public policy interest in the newly independent states of Central Asia, as well as neighboring Mongolia, Xinjiang province (China), and Afghanistan. Since 11 September 2001, the region has witnessed even greater international attention and a dramatic increase in the presence of external actors, particularly the United States.

This course addresses the cultural complexities of ancient and the geo-politics of modern Central Asia, creating an opportunity to view Central Asian cultures and societies as specific and dynamic, rather than merely as recipients of and conduits for external forces.

Course Structure

Lectures

The course consists of 80-minute lectures with built-in time for discussion. Students are expected to keep up with all assigned readings. Although the readings are designed to fit the topics of individual lectures, they are complementary to the lectures and do not cover all the material discussed during class. Therefore, students are strongly advised to attend all lectures. If for some (good) reason students have missed a class, they are requested to either obtain notes from fellow students or discuss alternative readings with the instructor during office hours.

Readings

Students are assigned material for each class session. Readings will be available on BCOURSES (under "files") or accessible via JSTOR and PROQUEST EBOOK CENTRAL.

Course Requirements

1. **(40%) Written Responses.** Students will hand in one written response each week starting Tuesday September 17 (for Week 3), and ending Tuesday, November 12 (for Week 11). Each weekly entry should be roughly two pages and include lecture notes and your ideas on what was covered in class and assigned during that week.

2. **(40%) Final Research Project.** To be decided in consultation with the instructor but students (individual or in small groups) are free to pick any type of (substantive) project such as class presentation, creative writing/historical fiction, digital humanities, or research paper, among others. All projects must adhere to a high level of critical and analytical thinking by creating new or original knowledge, or contributing to existing knowledge by employing a systematic investigation. If students opt for a written assignment, it should be around 15-20 pages (double-spaced). If opting for a group project, each role should be clearly articulated and demonstrated, carrying the same weight as the others.
3. **(20%) Class presence and participation.** Students are encouraged to engage in classroom discussions. They are also required to attend class and **to inform the instructor beforehand of their absence. Unexplained absences will result in a failing grade.**
4. **NOTE: NO FINAL EXAM**

Office Hours

Office hours are tentatively scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-1:45 pm, in 294 Barrows Hall. Students are encouraged to come to the office hours early in the course for an introductory discussion, which may allow the instructor to get a sense of students' expectations and backgrounds, and may provide an opportunity for students to ask specific questions about the direction of the course.

The instructor can also be reached by phone at (510) 643-5104 and by email (sanjyotm@berkeley.edu) to schedule an appointment outside regular office hours. Email messages should not include requests to repeat lecture segments or to answer questions about course materials. Students are expected to come to regular office hours to discuss in person any problems they might be experiencing with the course materials.

Course Goals and Objectives

- Acquiring specialized knowledge of the region defined as Central Asia
- Assessing the history of Central Asia through scholarly and historical sources, as well as a variety of media (newspapers, film, documentaries etc.)
- Understanding the ways in which parts of Central Asia are linked historically, culturally and politically with South Asia, the Near East, Europe and East Asia
- Developing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the region
- Developing critical thinking skills to be reflected in written responses to individual lectures and the writing of a research paper

Class Schedule and Topics

Week 1 (Th August 29)

Introduction: Why Study Central Asia?

Required Reading Thursday

Heathershaw, John, and Megoran, Nick. "Contesting Danger: A New Agenda for Policy and Scholarship on Central Asia." *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 3, 2011, pp. 589–612.

(BCOURSES)

Week 2 (Tu September 03 – Th September 05)

The Central Asia "Stans": Beyond the Pejorative

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan (Former Soviet Central Asia)

Required Readings Tuesday

Batsaikhan, U. and Dabrowski, M. "Central Asia at 25." *Policy Contribution*, vol. 13, May 2017, pp. 1-22. **(BCOURSES)**

News item: <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-other-strongmen-are-watching-nazarbayevs-experiment>

Required Reading Thursday

Roberts, Ken. "Post-Communist Youth: Is There a Central Asian Pattern?" *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2010, pp. p537-549. **(BCOURSES)**

Week 3 (Tu September 10 – Th September 12)

Physical and Cultural Landscapes

Required Readings (Viewings) Tuesday

"Amid Deserts Steppes and Mountains." *Central Asia Atlas of Natural Resources* (Chapter 1). Hong Kong: Asian Development Bank, 2010, pp. 1-23. **(PROQUEST EBOOK)**

News item: <https://eurasianet.org/desert-marathon-spotlights-kazakhstans-fragile-ecosystem>

Required Readings Thursday

Levi, Scott. "Turks and Tajiks in Central Asian History." *Everyday Life in Central Asia*. Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca (Eds.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 15-31.

(PROQUEST EBOOK)

News item: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/09/the-tajik-tragedy-of-uzbekistan/>

Week 4 (Tu September 17 – Th September 19)

Steppes, Shamanic Traditions and Pastoral Nomadic Identities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Required Reading (Viewing) Tuesday

Carole Ferret, "Mobile Pastoralism a Century Apart: Continuity and Change in South-Eastern Kazakhstan, 1910 and 2012," *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2018, pp. 503-525. (BCOURSES)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuBvtr2l8Xk>

Required Readings Thursday

Rancier, Megan. "Resurrecting the Nomads: Historical Nostalgia and Modern Nationalism in Contemporary Kazakh Popular Music Videos." *Popular Music and Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2009, pp. 387-405. (BCOURSES)

News item: <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-kyrgyz-pop-stars-succor-kyrgyznes>

Week 5 (Tu September 24 -Th September 26)

Oases Cities on the Historical "Silk Road"
Video Documentary

Required Readings Tuesday

C. Waugh, .Daniel. "The Silk Roads in History." *Expedition Magazine*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2010, pp. 9-22. (BCOURSES)

"Plants on the Silk Road." *Fruit from the Sands: The Silk Road Origins of the Foods We Eat*, by Robert N. Spengler, 1st ed., University of California Press, Oakland, California, 2019, pp. 12–37. (JSTOR)

News item: <https://www.euronews.com/2015/10/19/samarkand-s-silk-road-treasures>

Week 6 (Tu October 01– Th October 03)

Religion

The Role of Sufism in Modern Tajikistan

Required Readings Tuesday

Khalid, Adeeb. "Islam in Central Asia." *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, pp. 10-34. (PROQUEST EBOOK)

News item: <https://eurasianet.org/s/islam-the-state-and-security-in-post-soviet-central-asia>

Required Readings Thursday

Louw, Elisabeth. "Sufism and the Veneration of Saints in Central Asia. " *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia*. New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 42-61. (BCOURSES)

News item: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bnjbv8/shaman-kazakhstan-winter-photos

Week 7 (Tu October 08– Th October 10)

Art, Science, and Politics during the Timurid Era (14th – 16th Century)

Required Reading Tuesday

Ashrafyan, K.Z. “Central Asia under Timur: From 1370 to the Early Fifteenth Century.” *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* 4. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1999, pp. 323-349 (BCOURSES)

Required Readings Thursday

Paskaleva, Elena. The Bibi Khanum Mosque in Samarqand: Its Mongol and Timurid Architecture.” *The Silk Road*, vol. 10, 2012, pp. 81–98 (BCOURSES)

News item: <https://www.rferl.org/a/bulldozing-history-ancient-uzbek-city-unesco-status-at-risk/28392139.html>

Week 8 (Tu October 15 – Th October 17)

Central Asian SSRs and the Making of a Soviet “East”

Required Readings Tuesday

Thibault, Hélène. “The Soviet Secularization Project in Central Asia: Accommodation and Institutional Legacies.” *Eurostudia*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2015, pp. 11-31. (BCOURSES)

News item: <https://eurasianet.org/s/perspectives-on-the-importance-of-being-soviet>

Required Reading Thursday

Benjamin, Craig. “Soviet Central Asia and the Preservation of History.” *Humanities*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2018, 8 pages. (BCOURSES)

Week 9 (Tu October 22 – Th October 24)

Rebuilding Nations, Restructuring Economies: Central Asia after the Fall Past is Present in Uzbekistan

Required Reading Tuesday

Ploskonka, Kasia. “Mankurtism, Monuments and Marketing: Identity and Power in Post-Soviet Contemporary Art of Central Asia.” *The SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research*, vol. 9, 2015-2016, pp. 47-64. (BCOURSES)

Required Readings Thursday

Paskaleva, Elena. “Ideology in Brick and Tile: Timurid Architecture of the 21st century.” *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2015, pp. 418-439 (BCOURSES)

News item: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-uzbekistan-president-funeral-idUSKCN11903O>

Week 10 (Tu October 29 - Th October 31)

Post-Communism, Youth Culture, and Social Media in Central Asia

Required Reading Tuesday

Bhat, Mohd Aslam. "Post-Communist Transition and the Dilemmas of Young People in Central Asia: A Landscape of Uzbekistan." *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, vol. 21, nos. 2-3, 2013, pp. 207-236 (BCOURSES)

Required Readings Thursday

Imamova, Navbahor. "Social Media and Online Public Debate in Central Asia: A Journalist's Perspective." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2015, pp. 359-376 (BCOURSES)

News item: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/02/kazakhstan-social-media-crackdown-suffocates-freedom-of-expression-online/>

Week 11 (Tu November 05 – Th November 07)

***Environmental Degradation and the Impact of Climate Change
Environmental Migrants and Refugees***

Required Readings Tuesday

Abdullaev, Iskandar; Giordano, Mark, Rasulov, A. *Cotton in Uzbekistan: Water and Welfare*, Paper Presented at Conference on Cotton Sector in Central Asia: Economic Policy and Development Challenges. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 3-4 November 2005. (BCOURSES)

News item: <https://www.rferl.org/a/majlis-podcast-cotton-campaign-in-central-asia/28513471.html>

Required Readings Thursday

Bernauer, Thomas, and Siegfried, Tobias. "Climate Change and International Water Conflict in Central Asia." *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 49, no. 1, January 2012, pp. 227-239. (BCOURSES)

News item: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-37755985>

Week 12 (Tu November 12 - Th November 14)

Women's Space and Place in Post-Soviet Central Asia

Required Reading (Viewing) Tuesday (11/21)

Ishkanian, Armine. "Gendered Transitions: The Impact of the Post-Soviet Transition on Women in Central Asia and the Caucasus." *Central Asia and Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development*, Mehdi Parvazi Amineh and Henk Howeling, Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 161-182 (PROQUEST EBOOK)

<https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstans-me-too-moment/29753018.html>

Required Readings Tuesday (11/28)

Blakkisrud, H., & Kyzy, N. A. "Female Heroes in a Man's World: the Construction of Female Heroes in Kyrgyzstan's Symbolic Nation-Building. *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2017, pp. 113-135. (BCOURSES)

News Item: <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/2000-years-before-metoo-a-central-asian-epic-of-girl-power/>

Week 13 (Tu November 19 – Th November 21)

TBD

Week 14 (Tu November 26)

TBD

Week 15 (Tu December 03 – Th December 5)

TBD

Week 16 (Tu December 10 – Th December 12)

R/R/R