

Preliminary (draft) syllabus – not final

Central Asia and Empire

Cherie Woodworth

HIST S372 // Summer 2011

Course texts: (recommended to buy)

Christopher Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road. A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, 2009) [\$30; available used]

David Morgan, *The Mongols*, 2nd edition (2007) [\$30; also available used]

Jack Goody, *The Eurasian Miracle* (Polity Press, 2010) [\$20; also available used]

Peter Perdue, *China Marches West* (Harvard Belknap, 2005) [\$20; also available used]

Morris Rossabi, *The Mongols and Global History* (Norton, 2011)

Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan. A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, 2010), available online [\$30; also available used]

Books on course reserve: (assigned readings)

Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire* (Cambridge, 1997)

Etienne de la Vaissiere, *Sogdian Traders* (Brill, 2005)

Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field* (Cornell, 2004)

Kenneth Pomerantz, *The Great Divergence. China, Europe, and the Making of the World Economy* (Princeton, 2000)

Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, *The World that Trade Created* (M. E. Sharpe, 2006)

Books on course reserve: (for reference or research questions)

Nicola DiCosma and Peter Golden, *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 2009)

James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed* (Yale, 2010)

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 2nd edition (Hill and Wang, 2003)

David Sneath, *The Headless State* (Columbia, 2007)

Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001)

Fitzhugh, Honeychurch, and Rossabi, *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire* (Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institution, 2009)

Course assignments:

As with all summer courses, attendance at every class session is expected. There will be an in-class midterm exam (1.5 hours) and a final exam (2 hours). There will be impromptu in-class essays which, if graded, will be folded into the “discussion” grade.

Each student will also undertake *one* “Research question” (chosen from those listed below), write a brief (3 page) report with citations or bibliography and present research findings in a 10 minute class presentation.

Preliminary (draft) syllabus – not final

Grading:

“Research question” report and presentation	25%
Discussion and in-class essays	20%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	30%

1. TU Barbarians and Civilization

Part 1: The “Rise of the West”

- a. Environment and Civilization: Change in History
- b. Agriculture and theories of Civilization
 - From Pastoralism to Agriculture ... and back to pastoralism
 - The hungry farmer, hungry fields, and the hungry state
- c. The Wayward Camel and the “Silk Road”

Part 2: Barbarians

- a. “Barbarians” as described by others
- b. Pastoral production and socio-political organization: oscillations of the “headless state” and the empire
- c. Herds, Hordes, and Cities
 - Ibn Khaldun on the nature of the tribe
 - Ernest Gellner on pastoralist tribes of the modern era
 - Gellner and Khazanov on modern pastoralists of Central Asia

Read: Chris Beckwith, “The Barbarians,” *Empires of the Silk Road*, pp. 320-362, Pomeranz, “When Asia was the World Economy,” and “Woods, Winds, Shipbuilding, and Shipping: Why China Didn’t Rule the Waves,” *The World that Trade Created*, pp. 16-18 and 47-49

Research Question:

1a. What are the current states of Central Asia? What are the current “peoples” of Central Asia? What are the current languages of Central Asia? How would you group them? Repeat these questions for ca. 1700, ca. 1500, ca. 1200 and before 1000 a.d. What patterns emerge?

2. Th Resource production, trade, and state-building on the Western Steppe – from antiquity to the early middle ages

Part 1: the Scythians and Greece; the Huns and the Roman Empire

Part 2: Khazars, Jews, and Vikings

Read: Beckwith, Ch. 1 “The Chariot Warriors,” Ch. 2 “The Royal Scythians,” Ch. 3 “Between Roman and Chinese Legions,” Ch. 4 “The Age of Attila the

Preliminary (draft) syllabus – not final

Hun,” Ch. 7 “The Vikings and Cathay,” *Empires of the Silk Road*, pp. 29-111 and 163-182.

Research questions:

2.a. What evidence do coin hoards give us of ancient and medieval trade routes between Europe and Asia?

2.b. What were the ancient and medieval European slave market ties to Eurasia? Where did the slaves come from? Where were they sold? How does this compare with traffic in slaves in the near east and Eurasia?

3. Tu Cultural exchange and art in old “western China”

Visit to the Yale Art Gallery, led by David Sensabaugh, curator of Asian art, YUAG

Read: Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire*.

Research questions:

3.a. What kind of historical conclusions can we draw from material objects (such as art objects)? Use examples from YUAG collections and/ or the exhibit catalogues, Fitzhugh, Honeychurch, et al., *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire*, James C. Y. Watt, ed., or Komaroff and Carboni, eds., *The World of Khubilai Khan, the Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courty Art and Culture in Western Asia*, or exhibit websites.

3.b. Survey Pomeranz, *The World that Trade Created and Perdue, China Marches West*, for the role of silk in international exchange and balance of power. Contrast them with the story that Allsen is telling. Where are the major points of convergence or contrast? How would you explain the divergences of explanation?

3.c. Summarize Allsen’s evidence on the use (when, where, how) of textiles as symbols of wealth and power. Find visual examples of textiles (including furs) used politically from as broad a range as possible that fit the specifics of his argument. (For example, use of gold brocade in medieval or Renaissance Europe is not part of his argument. Why not?)

4. Th The “Silk Road”

Part 1: Sogdians, trade and oases

Part 2: Geography and history of the Central Asian trading cities (Bukhara, Samarkand, Merv, Kokand, Turfan, Kashgar, etc.)

Silk as money; court culture and display of power in Eurasia

Geography: places to know (quiz next session)