

Instructor
Office
Office Hours
Phone and e-mail

The Silk Road 3XX

Commerce and Culture in Eurasia

200 BCE-1498 CE

INTRODUCTION: This course will study the commercial and cultural relations among East, South and West Asian civilizations in the centuries prior to West European maritime expansion and Russian territorial conquests in Eurasia. It will be grounded in a survey of the geography, indigenous cultures and economies of these Chinese, Indian, Iranian and Roman/ Islamic civilizations in order to analyze the nature and mechanisms of the trade and artistic, religious, scientific and technological exchanges that took place along the routes known since the late nineteenth century as the "Silk Road." However, as these exchanges occurred along the monsoon-driven sea-lanes as well as over the more famous Central Asian caravan routes, both sea and land routes will comprise the "Silk Road(s)" of this particular course.

The course is not in any sense a survey of Eurasian history. It will focus on major themes, not chronologies of dynastic, administrative or military history, except in so far as these topics contribute to an understanding of Silk Road exchanges. The study of these commercial and cultural exchanges charts vibrant links among dynamic, sophisticated civilizations that are often, and incorrectly, believed to have developed in isolation prior to European expansion into Asia. It is an intellectually exciting and academically demanding exercise.

Course Objectives:

Students who successfully complete the course will acquire a fundamental knowledge of Eurasian civilizations, their political and economic structures, religious systems and their interconnections in the pre-European era that will to a significant degree serve as introductions to advanced courses for each region. This course will, therefore, serve a number of goals for historical study. In particular, it will contribute to a comparative knowledge of civilizations and lead to an understanding of the relationship between commerce and culture in the pre-modern era. In their papers (see below Course Requirements) students will develop important critical skill in the analyses of primary sources, as well as acquiring basic information about major figures associated with Silk Road History.

In General: Students will acquire a perspective on history and an understanding of the factors that shape human activity to gain knowledge of the origins and nature of contemporary issues and a foundation for future comparative understanding; develop critical thinking through the study of diverse interpretations of historical events; apply critical thinking through historical analysis of primary and secondary sources; and sharpen communications skills in essay exams, papers, and discussions.

This course satisfies Category 4, section B ("International Issues, Non-Western and global course) of the GEC Curriculum and the Non-western and Pre-1750 requirement for History majors.

Course Requirements:

Students will be asked to take one map quiz based upon class handouts (10% of grade), three short papers (4-5 pp.) on assigned topics (20% each for a total of 60 % of grade) and a comprehensive, analytical final exam (30 % of grade). The dates for the map quiz and the papers are given below in the syllabus. The final exam will be an essay exam given on the day listed for the final exam in this course. The subjects for the papers are given below at the end of the syllabus. All these assignments must be submitted to the Instructor on time, because with a course of such complexity it is critically important not to fall behind. The purpose of the essay assignments and the final examination is to develop an understanding of the critical use of primary sources, develop skills in essay composition and to develop a sophisticated understanding about the interaction of economic and cultural factors in World History.

Regular class attendance is **essential** and prolonged absences will be tolerated only if the student has become a *boddhisatva* or discovered the true meaning of the *dao*.

Please also note:

1. Students with disabilities should immediately inform the instructor of their situation and be certain to contact the Office of Disability Services in 150 Pomerene Hall. Ph. 292-3307.
2. Plagiarism is not an acceptable way to fulfill any of the requirements of this or any other university course, and certifiable cases of plagiarism will be immediately referred to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Please see the Code of Student Conduct at: <http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource/csc.asp> for information relating to plagiarism.
3. All students must be officially registered by the end of the second week of the quarter. No requests for adding the course will be approved after that time. This is not negotiable.

ASSIGNED READINGS: The following books have been ordered for the course. Additional materials will be handed out in class on a regular basis. These will generally consist of lecture outlines for subjects not adequately covered in the readings.

Luce Boulnois, Silk Road: Monks, Warriors& Merchants on the Silk Road (2005)
Richard Foltz, Religions of the Silk Road (1999).
Sven Hedin, My Life as Explorer (2003).
Ronald Latham, The Travels of Marco Polo (1958).
Xinru Liu, The Silk Road: an Introduction (1998).
Sally Wriggins, The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang (2004)

1. Week 1: Introduction.

a. Monday:

1. European Explorers and the Idea of the Silk Road.
2. Commerce and Culture.

And: Video: The Silk Road: Pt. 1: "Glories of Ancient Chang-An."

b. Wednesday:

1. Eurasian Geography.
2. Nomad and city.

And: Video: The Silk Road: Pt. 7: Where Horses Fly Like the Wind."

-Readings:

1. Hedin, My Life as an Explorer.
2. Liu The Silk Road: an Introduction.

NB: The map quiz will be given on Monday of the 2nd week of class.

2. Week 2: Land routes and Sea Routes:

a. Monday:

1. Han China and Xiongnu
2. Ferghanah Horses.

-Readings:

1. Boulnois, Silk Road, 30-97.
2. Hedin, My Life as an Explorer (complete).

b. Wednesday:

1. Land and Sea Trade.
2. China, India and Rome.
3. Silks and Spices.

And: Video: The Silk Road: Pt. 11: "Khotan – Oasis of Silk and Jade."

-Readings: Boulnois, Silk Road, 99-190. –

NB: PAPER NO. 1 IS DUE ON MONDAY OF THE 3RD WEEK OF CLASS.

3. Week 3: Buddhists, Nestorians and Manicheans:

a. Monday:

1. Rise of Buddhism.
2. Royal Patronage: Ashoka and the Kushanas.

And: Video: The Silk Road: Pt. 3: "The Art Gallery in the Desert."

b. Wednesday:

1. China – belief systems,
2. Buddhism in China: I.

-Readings:

1. Boulnois, Silk Road, 191-254.
2. Foltz, Religions of the Silk Road, 1-111.

4. Week 4: The Tang Empire:

a. Monday:

1. Tang Empire.
2. Indian Politics and Religion.

b. Wednesday:

1. Xuanzang's travels.

-Readings:

1. Boulnois, Silk Road, 255-310.
2. Wriggins, The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang

5. Week 5: West Asia and the Mediterranean

a. Monday:

1. Pre-Islamic Iran: Ideology, Politics and Commerce
2. Rome and the Silk Road.

b. Wednesday:

1. The Rise of Islam

And: Video: The Silk Road: Pt. 8: "Two Roads to the Pamirs."

-Readings: Handouts in class.

NB: PAPER NO. 2 IS DUE ON MONDAY OF THE 6th WEEK OF CLASS.

6. Week 6: Trade Diasporas and the Silk road

a. Monday:

1. Mummies of Urumchi.

c. Wednesday:

1. Sogdians.

-Readings: Handouts in class.

7. Week 7: The Great Discoveries: Aurel Stein and Dunhuang

a. Monday:

1. Aurel Stein

b. Wednesday:

2. Dunhuang and the Mogao Caves.

-Readings: Handouts in class.

1. Boulnois, Silk Road, 399-416.

8. Week 8: Turks and Mongols:

a. Monday:

1. Uighurs and religion.

b. Wednesday:

1. Rise of the Mongols.
2. Mongols: religion and culture.

-Readings: Handouts in class.

1. Boulnois, Silk Road, 311-61.
2. Latham, The Travels of Marco Polo.

9. Week 9: Mongol Conquests: Commerce and exchange:

a. Monday:

1. Conquests: China and Iran.
2. Eurasian Commerce

b. Wednesday:

1. Marco Polo and the Silk Road.

-Readings:

1. Latham, The Travels of Marco Polo (complete).

NB: PAPER NO. 3 IS DUE ON WEDNESDAY OF THE 10TH WEEK OF CLASS.

10. Week 10: China, Central Asia and India.

a. Monday:

1. Ming China and the Timurids: Diplomacy and Trade.

b. Wednesday:

1. Ma Huan and Indian Ocean Trade.

-Readings: handouts in class.

1. Boulnois, Silk Road, 363-77.

Papers: The three short papers for this course are each based on one of the readings. You may also use Internet sources to supplement these readings, but only if they are carefully and accurately cited. All quotations and paraphrases from the books and the Internet must be cited in footnotes or endnotes of your papers.

The principal sources for the three papers are the books by Sven Hedin, Xuanzang and Marco Polo. In each instance you will be asked to answer specific questions about these primary source readings in 4-5 typed pages pp. (1000-1250 words). These papers are meant to demonstrate both your analytical skills and your ability to formulate well-reasoned essays. They must be well organized and well written. They are the most important and most meaningful requirements for the course. The questions are as follows.

1. Sven Hedin: After describing Sven Hedin's background and education answer the following questions: Why did Hedin come to Central Asia and what did he hope to find? What did Hedin accomplish? What were the long-term legacies of his explorations for our knowledge of Eurasian commerce and culture? **DUE MONDAY OF THE 3rd WEEK OF CLASS.**
2. Xuanzang: First summarize the political situation in China and India during the period of Xuanzang's travels and then answer the following questions. Who was Xuanzang exactly - social and religious identity - and what personal and political influences led him to travel to India? What did he discover about the religious situation in India. Did his travels have lasting effects in China or India? **DUE MONDAY OF THE 6TH WEEK OF CLASS.**
3. Marco Polo: What was Marco Polo's principal economic/commercial motive Traveling to China? (Assuming for the moment he actually got there.) What do his travels say about commerce in the pre-Vasco Da Gama era? What topics did Marco Polo emphasize in his account - i.e. commerce?, culture?, geography? What was the long-term effect of his book for European understanding of Eurasian commerce and culture? **DUE WEDNESDAY OF THE 10TH WEEK OF CLASS.**