



XIAN ANTH 350 The Silk Road Yesterday and Today
The Alliance for Global Education Xi'an: Art, History and the Silk
Road Program, Spring 2010
Instructor: Andrew Womack

Course Introduction & Description

The Silk Road was the world's earliest transcontinental trade route, bridging East and Central Asia with the Mediterranean World through caravans, markets and trading posts, places of worship, and sometimes nothing more than footprints in the sand. It played significant roles in the interchange of commodities, ideas, religions, and artistic traditions throughout history, and it continues to reflect this today.

Accordingly, this course will take an interdisciplinary approach to the multi-dimensional history as well as the contemporary significance of the Silk Road. Through lectures, class discussions, readings, documentaries, and a 2-week long Silk Road study excursion, we will explore in detail the origin, development and decline of the Silk Road. This will include overviews of early Eurasian history, geography of Inner Asia, development of trade routes and their features, the interaction of nomadic and sedentary peoples, and the spread of art, religion, and culture.

Starting with the prehistory of the region, the course will proceed chronologically exploring the development and impact of the Silk Road up to modern times. By using the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, history, art history, and religious studies students will be able to gain an appreciation for the full impact of this trade route on world history.

Course Objectives

After completion of the course, students should be able to:

- 1) Develop factual knowledge about the Silk Road in terms of history, including the role it played in connecting the world through trade and commerce;
- 2) Develop a historical perspective on how travel, trade, and geography impacted the shaping of modern China;
- 3) Understand cross-cultural cultural and economic exchanges by focusing on specific routes during particular periods;
- 4) Understand the obstacles faced by modern governments to rejuvenate the Silk Road

region and their impacts on local ethnic communities, socio-culture, ecosystems, and the economy;

- 5) Appreciate the diversity of multi-cultural and multi-religious traditions of Eurasian Regions along the Silk Road yesterday and today;

Course Requirements, Evaluation and Grading Structure

1. Preparation and Class Discussion: 10%

Preparation means more than just being present for class, students are expected to complete required readings and actively take part in class discussions. Students are encouraged to bring a critical eye to readings, to the professor's lectures, and the comments of fellow classmates. All comments should be made in the spirit mutual respect and with the goal of achieving greater understanding.

2. Lead Class Discussion 10%

In addition to active participation in class, each student will be responsible for selecting two class sessions for which he/she will write a response paper of 2-3 pages and will then act as the discussion leader during class. The response paper must be sent by email to everyone in the class 24 hours before the session for which it has been prepared. These responses are not meant to be book reviews that summarize the readings, but instead are an opportunity for students to draw connections between themes in the readings, to provide critical feedback on ideas and arguments in the readings themselves or to simply present questions about the readings.

3. Final Exam 30%

The Final Exam will be given during the final class period. It will consist of a mixture of multiple choice, map identification, and essay questions and will last 2 hours. It will cover the course in its entirety including material from classes, readings, and site visits. A review session will be held during the preceding class period.

4. Capstone Project: 50% (Abstract 5%, Rough Draft 10%, Presentation 15%, Final Paper 20%)

Students will be responsible for completing a Capstone Project for which they will write an approximately 12-page paper and make an in-class presentation during the final weeks of class. Students will select a project theme related to their study of the Silk Road through consultation with the resident director and me. The Capstone project is designed to allow students to learn more about a topic of interest to them by combining traditional research with hands-on fieldwork in Xi'an and along the Silk Road. The work for the Capstone Project will be divided over the semester. After initial consultations with your professor and the resident director, an abstract of the project (1 page), an initial bibliography and a description of the types of research methods to be used will be due the 7th week of class. A rough draft of the final paper (8-10 pages) will be due at the end of week 11, and during the last week of class students will submit the final draft.

Deadlines, Class Etiquette and Academic Honesty

All work must be handed in on time. Late work will not be accepted. If you are ill and are not able to hand in an assignment on time, you should notify me before the deadline so that we can make alternative arrangements.

All course work must be original. You should be careful to cite and reference any work that is not your own. Plagiarism will be strictly punished with a non-negotiable F for the assignment in question, and the possibility of stricter penalties including expulsion from the class and the program. Please refer to the Alliance program rules for more details. If you have any questions about acceptable forms of citation, please ask me.

This class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. You are expected to come prepared to each class and to engage in discussions.

Readings

A Course Reader will be provided at the beginning of the course. Additional readings and handouts will be provided throughout the semester as needed.

Class & Reading Schedule

Session 1: January 21

History and Impact: Making of the Modern Eurasian World

1. Course Introduction
2. Field Work and Methodology; Discussion of Capstone Project
3. Definitions, Significance of the Silk Road
4. Major Ancient World Civilizations & Their Interactions
5. Silk Road Documentary Movie

Readings:

The History of Silk <http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/toc/index.html>

Session 2: January 28

Chinese Civilization and the Start of the Silk Road

1. Possible Pre-Han Contacts: Neolithic and Early Bronze Age
2. Warring States, Qin Dynasty and Alexander
3. The Han Empire, the Roman Empire and Everywhere in Between
4. Archaeological and Literary Evidence for Han-Roman Relations
5. Explorer Zhang Qian; Contacts with the Yuezhi

Discussion Topic: One of the top tourist attractions in Xi'an is the Terracotta Warriors, which are located outside the Tomb of the First Emperor. They are clearly an incredible achievement in Chinese history, as is the tomb itself, but could the origin of the idea's influencing their creation and the creation of such a monumental tomb lie outside China? After reading the articles by Barnhart and Ledderose what is your opinion on the subject?

Readings:

Richard M. Barnhart: "Alexander in China? Questions for Chinese Archaeology."

In Yang Xiaoneng ed. *New Perspectives on China's Past-Chinese Archaeology in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2004, pp. 328-343.

“Han Emperor Wu-ti's Interest in Central Asia and Chang Chien's Expeditions” The Silk Road Foundation; <http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/artl/wuti.shtml>

Michael Kardosis, “China and the Greek World: An Introduction to Greek-Chinese Studies with Special Reference to the Chinese Sources.” *Thessalonica*, 1992, pp.157-177; 215-217.

Recommended Reading:

Andrew Sherratt: “The Trans-Eurasian Exchange-The Prehistory of Chinese Relations with the West”, in Victor Mair ed., *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press 2006, pp 30-61.

Lothar Ledderose: *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press 2000, chapter “A Magic Army for the Emperor”, pp. 51-73.

J.P. Mallory and Victor H. Mair, *The Tarim Mummies: Ancient China and the Mystery of the Earliest Peoples from the West*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000.

Session 3: February 4

The Influx and Early Development of Buddhism in China

1. The Rise of Buddhism in India
2. The Kushan Empire – Decedents of the Yuezhi?
3. Hellenistic Influences in Kushan Art
4. The Southern Route – Signs of Buddhism in Southern China
5. The Halo Motif Along the Silk Road

Discussion Topic: What evidence is there for Buddhism entering China along a southern route (i.e. through Burma into Sichuan and other southern provinces)? Did it appear in the south before or after its appearance in the north? Look specifically at early Buddhist art in southern China. Do you think the people producing this art fully understood its implications?

Readings:

Buddhism and Its Spread Along the Silk Road.
<http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/toc/index.html>

Helmut Brinker: “Early Buddhist Art in China”. In Lukas Nickel ed.: *Return of the Buddha*. London 2002, 20-33.

Recommended Reading:

Stanley K. Abe: *Ordinary Images*. University of Chicago Press, 2002, esp. chap. 2: Small Beginnings, 11-101.

Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China-A Historical Survey*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1964, chap. 10: “Buddhist temples and popular religion”, 258-296.

Craig Benjamin: “The Yuezhi Migration and Sogdia”. In Eran ud Aneran, *Webfestschrift*

Marshak 2003. Online resource,
<http://www.transoxiana.com.ar/Eran/Articles/benjamin.html>

Liu Xinru: "The Migration and Settlement of the Yuezhi-Kushan-Interaction and interdependence of Nomadic and Sedentary Societies". *Journal of World History*. University of Hawaii Press, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2001, pp261-292.

Session 4: February 11

Dunhuang: The Mogao Grottoes

1. Brief Introduction to the History and Geography of Dunhuang
2. The Mogao Grottoes: An Example of Buddhist Architecture
3. Modern Explorers: Stein, Pelliot and the rush for Cave 14
4. What They Found
5. A Brief Introduction as to What Went Where When
6. The IDP
7. Introduction to the Modern Antiquities Trade

Discussion Topic: Was the removal of the vast majority of the Dunhuang Manuscripts from China a crime? What were the justifications for removal, if any? Does this relate in any way to the modern trade in antiquities? Are there positive or negative impacts from this? The IDP website can help you learn more about this topic.

Readings:

International Dunhuang Project; Introduction to the British Collections.
http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_en.a4d

International Dunhuang Project; Introduction to the French Collections
http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_fr.a4d

Annette L. Juliano: "Buddhist Art in Northwest China", in Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner: *Monks and Merchants – Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China*, New York, Asia society 2001, pp. 119-143.

Recommended Reading:

Schafer, Edward H. *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of Tang Exotics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: 1963, Chap. 19: 'Books'

Roderick Witfield and Anne Farrer, *Caves of the Thousand Buddhas – Chinese Art from the Silk Road*. London, British Museum Publications 1990, pp. 138-192

Peter Hopkirk: *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*. Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press 1984.

Silk Road Study Excursion (February 15 – February 24)

Session 5 – In the Field: Topic TBA

Session 6 – In the Field: Topic TBA

Session 7: March 4

Heyday of the Silk Road; Imperial Patronage of Buddhism

1. Background: From Han to Tang
2. The Growth of Buddhism During the Six Dynasties Period
5. The Development of Buddhist Art in China
6. Objects for Elites: The Rise in Popularity of Foreign Exotica
7. Fa-Hsien and Xuan Zang – Buddhist Pilgrims to India

Due: Capstone Abstract, Bibliography, and Research Methods

Museum Visit

Discussion Topic: During the Tang and the many short-lived dynasties leading up to it we see a steady increase in the amount of foreign made and foreign designed objects in China. Why were imported goods considered so valuable? What led to the rise in their popularity? What does this tell us about Chinese and Central Asian interactions?

Readings:

Schafer, Edward H. *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of Tang Exotics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: 1963, pgs. 7-32.

Angela F Howard: “Buddhist Art in China”. In James C.Y. Watt: *China-Dawn of a Golden Age, 220-750 AD*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2004, 89-99.

Travels of Xuan Zang; Travels of Fa-Hsien.
<http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/toc/index.html>

Recommended Reading:

Lukas Nickel ed.: *Return of the Buddha*. London 2002/Washington 2004.

Albert E. Dien: “Western Exotica in China during the Six Dynasties Period”. Yang Xiaoneng ed. *New Perspectives on China’s Past-Chinese Archaeology in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2004, pp. 363-379.

Roderick Witfield: “The Famen Monastery and Empress Wu.” In Yang Xiaoneng ed. *New Perspectives on China’s Past-Chinese Archaeology in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2004, vol. 1, pp. 392-409.

Boris I. Marshak: *Central Asian Metalwork in China*. In James C.Y. Watt, *China-Dawn of a Golden Age, 220-750 AD*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2004. pp. 47-55.

William Watson: *The Arts of China to AD 900*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1995. Chaps. 19-23.

Session 8: March 11

Merchants and Monks on the Silk Road, Foreigners in China

1. Early Religions of Central Asia: Zoroastrianism
2. Early Judaism and Its Spread into China
3. Religious and Commercial Transmission: The Sogdians
4. Nestorian Christians in Chang’an

5. Manichaeism: A Dead Religion In a New Light
6. Blurring Distinctions: Foreign Religions in China

Museum Visit

Discussion Topic: Now that you know a little more about the history of the Silk Road reconsider the question mentioned in the first class, namely “What is Chinese?” In class and through your readings you have learned about many foreign ideas and religions that were adopted and adapted by the Chinese. Additionally, in the museum you will see many wild depictions of foreigners, but also pieces of Chinese art that were heavily influenced by outside forces. How has the Silk Road shaped Chinese perceptions of themselves as well as others?

Readings:

Judith A. Lerner: “The Merchant Empire of the Sogdians”. In Annette Juliano and Judith A. Lerner: *Monks and Merchants-Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China*, New York, Asia Society 2001, pp. 220-229.

Frances Wood, *The Silk Road-Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press 2002, esp. chap. 5, pp. 61-74.

Recommended Reading:

Richard C. Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*. St. Martins Griffin: New York.

Yang Sen-Fu: *A History of Nestorian Christianity in China*. Herbert J. Hatcher, Trans. 2007.

Luo Feng: “Sogdians in Northwest China”. In Annette Juliano and Judith A. Lerner: *Monks and Merchants-Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China*, New York, Asia society 2001, 238-249.

S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China*, Leiden: Brill, 1998

Session 9: March 18

The Islamization of the Silk Road; Tibet Before the Mongols

1. The Rise of Islam and the Arab Conquests
2. Conversion in Central Asia
3. Pre-Mongol Kingdoms of Central Asia
4. Islam in China
5. The Tibetan Kingdom
6. The Rise of Tibetan Buddhism and Lamaism

Discussion Topic: How did Islam initially spread in China? Was it violent or peaceful? What effect, if any, did it have on Chinese natives and their religious beliefs? Think about how the early spread of Islam and diffusion of Muslims in China has affected the modern cultural and political landscape.

Required Readings:

The Other Middle Kingdom: A Brief History of Muslims in China; Betta, Chiara; 2004. Pgs 1-25.

The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia; Denis Sinor, ed. Cambridge University Press, 1990. Chapter 14: Early and Medieval Tibet. Pgs. 371-397.

Recommended Readings:

Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China; Lipman, Jonathan N. Chapter 2.

DeWeese. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*. Pgs 1-66.

The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia; Dennis Sinor, ed. Chapter 13.

Christopher I. Beckwith: *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages*. Princeton University Press, 1987.

Session 10: March 25

The Mongols

1. The Fall of the Tang Dynasty; From Tang to Song
2. Genghis Khan and the Uniting of the Mongols
3. Mongol Rule in China; The Yuan Dynasty
4. Mongols in Central Asia: The Pax Mongolica
5. Marco Polo and other Western Visitors
6. Movie Part 1 “Mongol”

Discussion Topic: The Mongols are often viewed in popular Western and Chinese history as unsophisticated barbarians that ravaged the civilized lands of China, Central Asia, and Europe. What were the advantages of the Mongol rule and what improvements did it bring to these lands? Look specifically at trade and technology.

Required Readings:

Mission to Asia; Dawson, Christopher; 1955. “History of the Mongols By John of Plano Carpini.” Pgs 2-72.

Recommended Readings:

Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China; Barfield, Thomas J.; 1992. Chapter 6.

A History of Inner Asia; Svat Soucek. Chapter 7.

The Mongols; Morgan, David; 1998.

Wood, Frances: *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* Westview Press, 1996.

Session 11: April 1

The Decline of the Silk Road

1. Tamerlane’s Conquests
2. The Decline of the Mongol Empire
3. The Ming Dynasty
4. Sea Routes and the Closing of the Silk Road
5. Movie Part 2 “Mongol”

Due: Capstone Rough Draft

Discussion Topic: What led to the decline in trade along the Silk Road? Was there more than one factor that affected its demise? Discuss what brought about the decline and which factors you see as the most significant.

Required Readings:

Cambridge History of China, Vol 8 Part II: The Ming Dynasty. Chapter 4: The Ming and Inner Asia. (Especially pgs 246-258)

When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405-1433; Levathes, Louise; 1994. Chapters 4 & 5: pgs 75-106.

Recommended Readings:

The Perilous Frontier. Thomas J. Barfield. Chapter 7.

A History of Inner Asia; Svat Soucek. Chapters 8-10.

Xinjiang Silk Road Study Excursion (April 2-10)
Session 12: April 8 – In the Field: Topic TBA

Session 13: April 15

The Great Game & 20th Century Explorers

1. Asia in 1800
2. Central Asia: Where Empires Collide
3. Intrigue in the Deserts and Mountains
4. Yakub Beg and the Tarim Basin
5. Rediscovering the Silk Road
6. Western Explorers in the 20th Century

Antiquities Market Visit

Discussion Topic: What led to foreign interest in Central Asia and the lands of the former Silk Road in the 19th century (I'm referring to the Great Game, not to later exploration for antiquities)? What were the specific factors that were driving these foreign interests? Are similar factors still at play in the region today?

Required Readings:

Frances Wood, *The Silk road-Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press 2002. Chapters 10 & 11.

Recommended Readings:

The Great Game. Peter Hopkirk.

Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia; Meyer, Karl E.& Shareen Blair Brysac; 1999.

Life of Yakoob Beg, Athalik Ghaxi and Badaulet: Ameer of Kashgar Boulger, Demetrius C.; 1878 (2003).

The International Dunhuang Project. <http://idp.bl.uk/>

Session 14: April 22

The Silk Road Today

1. Central Asia in 2009
2. Remnants of the Silk Road: Ancient Sites in the Modern World
3. Conservation and Destruction
4. Ethnic Minorities and the Chinese: An Uneasy Relationship
5. The Future of the Silk Road: Peoples and Places

Final Exam Review

Discussion Topic: Some of you may have seen the news about the unrest in Xinjiang Province among the Uighur minority in the summer of 2009. Is this uneasy relationship between the Uighurs, the Han Chinese, and the Chinese government new, or has it always been this way? Do you think it is possible for them to peacefully coexist? What is the Chinese government doing, or could the government be doing, to ease the tensions there?

Required Readings:

Under the Heel of the Dragon: Islam, Racism, Crime, and the Uighur in China; Kaltman, Blaine; 2007. Chapter 5.

The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge To Chinese Authority in Xinjiang 1944-1949; Benson, Linda; 1999. Chapter 1.

Recommended Readings:

Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China; Lipman, Jonathan N. Chapters 4-6.

Session 15: April 29

Capstone Presentations & Exam Review

1. Presentation of Capstone Projects
2. Review for the Final Exam

Capstone Final Draft Due

Session 16: May 6

Final Exam

1. Final Exam
2. Course Evaluation