

«Central Asian Studies World Wide»
Course Syllabi for the Study of Central Eurasia
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John Schoeberlein
Central Asian Culture and Society (Islamic Civilizations 124)
Syllabus for the course offered in Spring 2000
Harvard University
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

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Islamic Civilizations 124.**Central Asian Culture and Society**

Spring term, Wednesdays, 2:00 - 4:00 plus an additional meeting time to be arranged.
Coolidge Hall, Room 215.

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The course explores the diversity and continuity in contemporary Central Asian culture and society and their historical roots. After building a basis of knowledge of the pre- and early-modern history of the region and of its contemporary political context and institutions, the course will approach Central Asian culture, social structure and everyday life from a variety of angles. These will include perspectives available in various types of literature on the region, including the travel accounts of travelers to the region from pre-modern to recent time, indigenous literary folklore traditions, 19th-century Orientalist scholarship, and contemporary scholarly approaches. The course will draw on ethnographic accounts to develop a rich picture of the social meaning and cultural context of ways of life (from the historical caravan trade and pastoral nomadism to contemporary collective farm and urban life), community rituals, social institutions, religious practices, moral sensibilities and aesthetic traditions.

Note: The course is intended primarily for advanced undergraduates and graduate students; some background in the Islamic world and/or the former Soviet Union is desirable. Enrollment may be limited.

Themes and Objectives of the Course

The objective of this course is to undertake two key projects:

- 1) To understand the society and culture of a part of the world utterly different from the West;
- 2) To explore the problems associated with coming to this understanding.

We will do this in the context of former Soviet Central Asia, a region which is separated from the West by a number of circumstances, including:

- 1) Historical isolation from Europe due to its physical remoteness in the middle of Asia, and the European imperialists' marginal interest in this area.
- 2) "The Iron Curtain" which severely limited the flow of information and ideas across a line far to the west of Central Asia, and isolated the region from other parts of the Islamic world.
- 3) Central Asia's marginal position within the Soviet empire, which resulted in only limited integration into the social-political system centered in Moscow—the core system which was relatively familiar to Westerners.

- 4) The Christianity/Islam divide which looms large in Western consciousness, confusing people about what they see across these lines.
- 5) The haze of romanticism which hangs over Western experience of these parts, with their oases, turbans, dervishes, and veils.

The first meetings of the class will be devoted to ensuring that all students have a basic background knowledge about Central Asia and its historical and current regional context. Then we will proceed to an exploration of a variety of important themes in the life of Central Asia. These encompass the social, political and cultural systems which determine how Central Asians experience and act in their world. These themes will include:

- 1) Kinship, genealogy, and the social relationships on which people base their approach to everything from day-to-day family life and their understandings of the past to career development and political allegiances.
- 2) Political domination and cultural clashes resulting from Central Asia's position in the Russian/Soviet empire, and the selective adoption of "modern", "Western" culture.
- 3) Women's roles and other issues of autonomy and social order in a society where fundamentally incompatible concepts coexist which govern these things.
- 4) How people have survived and flourished economically before Soviet domination, under socialism, and following the break-up of the Soviet system.
- 5) How people interact with the state in the framework of all-encompassing bureaucracy and changing ideologies.
- 6) Names, identity, and the diverse concepts of group commonalty which govern people's lives.
- 7) Language as a medium of expression and communication as well as an arena for political manipulation of identities.
- 8) The role of history in contemporary self-conceptualization in this part of the world where history "runs very deep."
- 9) Islam in its various dimensions—as a system of religious convictions, as a set of defining principles of social order, as a cause for political mobilization, and so on.
- 10) The rhythm of daily life, the physical structure of rural and urban existence, and the rituals and events that mark life-courses and structure experience (pastoralism, caravan trade, madrasa training, war, etc.).
- 11) Modes of expression—ranging from the arts, public festivals and games to political discourse—aesthetic traditions and moral sensibilities, and the influences on these from all sides—especially from Europe via Russia and from the Islamic world at large.

This list is not final and may be added to depending on the interests of the class, which will determine how much attention we give to a particular theme. We will approach these subjects through sources of a variety of different types, potentially including:

- 1) Accounts of travelers to the region from pre-modern to recent times.
- 2) Indigenous literary and folklore traditions.

- 3) Nineteenth century Orientalist scholarship.
- 4) Ethnographic literature of Imperial Russian, Soviet and other scholars.
- 5) Western scholarly approaches, including “Sovietology” and the “Transition” literature.
- 6) Journalism and fiction.

Each of these types of sources presents us with problems of interpretation—what implications do the authors’ selectivity and perspective have for the picture we get from them? We will also draw on “live sources”—the various people around the Harvard area who either are from the region themselves, or have conducted research there.

Requirements

This course is predicated on an active role on the part of the participants. Lectures will be minimal—only providing “chunks” of background or introductory information to introduce a new theme, where necessary. The majority of class time will be devoted to discussion. The students will each define for themselves what particular areas and themes they personally wish to explore in greatest depth. There will be limited regular assigned readings on a given theme, but students will also be expected to explore the sources more deeply depending on the particular topics on which they have chosen to focus. Those who can make use of sources in Russian, Central Asian, or other languages will be have the chance to do so. Students will alternate in taking responsibility for the course topics. Those responsible for the given topic will explore the sources in greater depth, give careful thought to how the topic should be explored, and lead class discussion.

Evaluation of the student’s performance in the course will be based on the following:

- 1) Presentation/discussion leading: Several times in the course of the semester, each student will have responsibility for preparation and presentation of comments and discussion points on a given topic.
- 2) Participation: Each student is expected to keep current on the readings and to make regular, constructive contributions to discussions.
- 3) Two short papers: These will not be exhaustive studies, but rather thematic explorations. A “short” paper is in the neighborhood of 15-20 pages, though the length should be determined by what is appropriate for the chosen topic. Topics are selected in consultation with the instructor (it is your responsibility to begin early enough so you find the subject and materials which are suitable). The first paper will be due on **Friday, March 24** (which is just before Spring Break; if you don’t mind spoiling your break with it, you may submit it on Monday, April 3). The second paper is due on **May 17** (the last day of reading period; no exceptions).

Readings

Assigned readings will generally be made available as photocopies (they may be picked up in the Central Asian Studies Program Office: Coolidge Hall, room 224A). The weekly plan of

readings will be made available after we learn of the specific interests and level of experience of the students in the class. In addition to weekly readings, students may find it useful to read and/or buy the following three books:

Allworth, Edward A., ed.

1994 *Central Asia: 130 years of Russian dominance: A historical overview*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. [This is a revised and supplemented third edition of: *Central Asia: A century of Russian rule*, New York 1967].

Bacon, Elizabeth Emaline

1980 *Central Asians under Russian rule: A study in culture change*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University. [2nd edition; first edition was published in 1966].

Eickelman, Dale F.

1997 *The Middle East and Central Asia: An anthropological approach*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall. [This is a revised edition of his *The Middle East: An anthropological approach*, published in 1988].

Course Schedule

Week of February 7

What is Central Asia?

Bacon, Elizabeth Emaline

1966 Chapter I: "The land and the people," in *Central Asians under Russian rule: A study in culture change*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University.

Auerbach, Jon

1993 "In the land of the khans," *Boston Globe Magazine*, Feb. 28, 1993.

Week of February 14

Contested Identity

Schoeberlein-Engel, John

1996 "The prospects for Uzbek national identity," *Central Asia Monitor*, 1996(2)12-20.

Schoeberlein-Engel, John

1994 "Conflict in Tājikistān and Central Asia: The myth of ethnic animosity," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review*, 2:1-55.

Week of February 21***History Written onto the Present***

Caroe, Olaf Kirkpatrick [Sir]

1967 Chapters 3 (“Pattern of peoples”) and 4 (“Crucible of empires”) in: *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism*. London: Macmillan. (2nd ed.; first published in 1953).

Golden, Peter

1998 *Nomads and sedentary societies in medieval Eurasia*. Washington, DC: American Historical Association. In series: *Essays on global and comparative history*.

Porkhomovsky, Victor Ya.

1994 “Historical Origins of Interethnic Conflicts in Central Asia and Transcaucasia,” in: Vitaly V. Naumkin, ed., *Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict*, p. 1-28. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Also, refer back to your previous reading:

Bacon, Elizabeth E.

1980 Chapter 1: “The land and people,” in *Central Asians under Russian Rule: A Study in Culture Change*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. 1st ed. 1966, 2nd ed. 1980.

Week of February 28***Tribes and Names: Changing Concepts over Time***

Allworth, Edward

1990 Chapter 3: “Names and tribes,” in *The modern Uzbeks: From the fourteenth century to the present: A cultural history*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Press.

Barfield, Thomas Jefferson

1990 “Tribe and state relations: The inner Asian perspective,” in Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds.: *Tribe and state formation in the Middle East*, p. 153-182. Berkeley: University of California.

Manz, Beatrice

1992 “The development and meaning of Chaghatay identity,” in: Jo-Ann Gross, ed., *Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of identity and change*, p. 27-45. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Week of March 7***How to Think about Islam?***

Bennigsen, Alexandre, and Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay

1967 Chapter 1: “The historical background and the Russian conquest,” in: *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 3-18. London: Pall Mall Press.

Halbach, Uwe

1989 “‘Holy War’ against Czarism: The links between Sufism and Jihad in the nineteenth-century anticolonial resistance against Russia [translation of: “‘Heiliger Krieg’ gegen den Zarismus: Zur Verbindung von Sufismus und Djihad im antikolonialen islamischen Widerstand gegen Russland im 19. Jahrhundert],” in A. Kappeler, et al, eds.: : *Muslim communities reemerge: Historical perspectives on nationality, politics, and opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, pp. 251-276. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Tapper, Richard

1984 “Holier than thou: Islam in three tribal societies,” in Akbar S. Ahmed and David M. Hart, eds.: *Islam in tribal societies: From the Atlas to the Indus*, p. 244-265. London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Togan, İsenbike

1992 “Islam in a changing society: The Khojas of Eastern Turkistan,” in *Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of identity and change*, pp. 134-148. Jo-Ann Gross, ed. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press

Week of March 14

Sub-National Identities: Regions, Elites, Clans

Alimov, Kadir Z.

1994 “Are Central Asian clans still playing a political role,” *Central Asian monitor*, 1994(4)14-17.

Edgar, Adrienne

[2000] “Genealogy, Class and ‘Tribal Policy’ in Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924-34,” unpublished paper submitted for publication.

Collins, Kathleen A.

1999 Chapter 8 of “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia”: Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Stanford University.

Week of March 21

Perspectives on Perspectives

Shnirelman, Victor A.

1999 “Passions about Arkaim: Russian nationalism, the Aryans, and the politics of archaeology,” *Inner Asia*, 1(2) 267-282. Cambridge, Eng.

Khalid, Adeeb

1997 “Representations of Russia in Central Asian Jadid discourse,” in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini, eds.: *Russia’s Orient: Imperial borderlands and peoples, 1700-1917*, p. 188-202. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.

Harris, Colette

1996 "Women of the Sedentary Population of Russian Turkestan through the Eyes of Western Travellers," *Central Asian survey*, 15(1)75-95.

Martin, Virginia

1997 "Barīmta: Nomadic custom, Imperial crime," in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini, eds.: *Russia's Orient: Imperial borderlands and peoples, 1700-1917*, p. 249-270. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.

Week of March 28 - Spring Break

Week of April 3

New Approaches? Gender and Religion

Alimova, Dilarom A.

1998 "A historian's view of 'Khudjum'," *Central Asian survey*, 17(1) 147-155.

Tett, Gillian

1994 "'Guardians of the Faith?': Gender and religion in an (ex)Soviet Tajik village," in Camillia Fawzi El-Solh & Judy Mabro, eds.: *Muslim women's choices: Religious belief and social reality*, p. 128-151. Providence, R.I./Oxford: Berg.

Fathi, Habiba

1997 "Otinēs: The unknown women clerics of Central Asian Islam," *Central Asian survey*, 16(1)27-43.

Tyson, David

1997 "Shrine pilgrimage in Turkmenistan as a means to understand Islam among the Turkmen," *Central Asia monitor*, 1997(1)15-32.

Week of April 10

Forming Nationalities

Slezkine, Yuri

1994 "The USSR as a communal apartment, or How a Socialist state promoted ethnic particularism," *Slavic review*, 53(2) 414-452.

Edgar, Adrienne

1999 Chapter 6: "The creation of Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924-1938," Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of History, University of California, Berkeley.

Smith, Graham, et al

1998 "The Central Asian states as nationalising regimes," in: *Nation-building in the post-Soviet borderlands*, pp. 139-164. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press.

Suny, Ronald Grigor

2000 "Provisional stabilities: The politics of identities in post-Soviet Eurasia," *International security*, 24(3)139-178.

Week of April 17

Language and Politics

Kreindler, Isabelle T.

1995 "Soviet Muslims: Gains and Losses as a Result of Soviet Language Planning," in Yaacov Ro'i, ed.: *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting legacies*, p. 187-203. London: Frank Cass.

Schlyter, Birgit N.

1997 "Language Policy in Independent Uzbekistan" *FoCAS Working Paper*, 1. Stockholm: Forum for Central Asian Studies.

Dave, Bhavna

1996 "National revival in Kazakhstan: Language shift and identity change," *Post-Soviet affairs*, 12(1)51-72.

Week of April 24

Modernity and Post-Colonialism

Black, Cyril Edwin, Louis Benjamin Dupree, Elizabeth Endicott-West, Daniel C. Matuszewski, Eden Naby and Arthur N. Waldron

1991 "The problem: Inner Asia and modernization," in *The modernization of Inner Asia*, pp. 3-20. Armonk, NY/London: M. E. Sharpe.

Lyons, Shawn T.

1999 "Haunted: Jadid reformism's legacy of radical conventionality," excerpt from: "Uzbek historical fiction and Russian colonialism, 1918-1936," Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Languages and Cultures of Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Michaels, Paula A.

2000 "Medical propaganda and cultural revolution in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1928-41," *Russian review*, 59:159-178.

Slezkine, Yuri

2000 "Imperialism as the highest stage of Socialism," *Russian review*, 59:227-234.

Week of May 1

What Determines Central Asia's Future?

Pipes, Daniel

1992 "The politics of the 'Rip Van Winkle' states: The southern tier states of the ex-Soviet Union have moved the borders of the Middle East north," *Middle East Insight*, 1992(3)30-44.

Ochs, Michael

1997 "Turkmenistan: The quest for stability and control," in K. Dawisha and B. Parrott:
Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus, p. 312-359.
Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press.

Horsman, Stuart

1999 "Uzbekistan's involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97: Domestic considerations,"
Central Asian survey, 18(1)37-48.

Lubin, Nancy, et al

1999 *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and dialogue in the heart of Central Asia*.
New York: Century Foundation Press. Center for Preventative Action report.