Prof. Shoshana Keller
The Silk Road: Crossroads of Cultures (H124)
Syllabus for the course offered in Fall 2001
Hamilton College
Department of History

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THE SILK ROAD: CROSSROADS OF CULTURES Fall 2001

T-Th. 9 - 10:15    Prof. Shoshana Keller    Office: Kirner-Johnson 236    phone: (315) 859-4358

An introduction to the role of cross-cultural contact as a driving force in history. The Silk Road ran from China to the Mediterranean Basin, serving as a conduit for people, goods, and ideas from the Bronze Age to 1500 CE. The course will examine issues of trade, language, religion, art and political power as Chinese, Turks, Mongols, Persians, Arabs, Greeks, Romans and nomads interacted along this vital route. Students will write two short reports, one on a primary source text and one on a historical monograph, a biographical essay, and an 8-10 page research paper. There will be a map test, pop quizzes at random intervals, and a final exam.

Grade breakdown:

- Historical monograph essay 15%;
- Primary source essay 15%;
- Biographical essay 15%;
- Research paper 25%;
- Map test and quizzes 5%;
- "Alexander" project 5%
- Final exam 20%

Required Books:


August 27 - 31: Introduction


Th. The Route: the role of geography and climate

**CD Rom exercise**: intro to CD and "Journey" section (long, about 1 hour)


September 3 - 7: Defining ancient cultures

T. Nomad and settled societies

Th. Ethnicity, language, and other problems    MAP TEST


Sept. 10 - 14: Transportation, Trade and Religion

T. Zoroastrianism

Th. Camels and transportation technology    ASSIGNMENT: historical monograph report
CD Rom exercise: "Peoples" section - earn a Key to the Cave of Wisdom at the University of Dunhuang

Sept. 17 - 21: Northern Barbarians and the Middle Kingdom
T. ROSH HASHANA
Th. What was trade? Why was trade? Han China and the *ho-ch'in* policy

CD Rom exercise: "Languages" section. Earn a Key to the cave.
Reading: Christian, Chpt. 8

Sept. 24 - 28: Invader from the West
T. Alexander of Macedon       PAPERS DUE
Th. YOM KIPPUR

October 1 - 5: How does history work?
T. Alexander and the historians [needs two sessions]
Th. Material culture "Alexander" essays due
Reading: Alexander material Liu, Introduction Christian, Chpt. 9

CD Rom exercise: "History" section. Earn a Key.

October 8 - 12: Buddhism on the Silk Road
T. FALL BREAK
Th. Buddhism comes to China

CD Rom exercise: "Religion" section. Earn a Key.

Oct. 15 - 19: From west to east
T. Manichaeism and Nestorian Christianity
Th. What is a primary source?     ASSIGNMENT: primary source report
Reading: Liu, Chpt. 3 Richard Frye, excerpt from *The History of Bukhara*. [pp. vii-xiii, 3-27 and endnotes, pp. 103-123.]

Oct. 22 - 26: Mechanisms of exchange
T. Paper and printing: trade in technology
Th. Turks and the Tang Dynasty

CD Rom exercise: "Religion" section. Earn a Key.
Reading: Christian, Chpts. 10, 11  Whitfield, pp. 55-112.

Oct. 29 - November 2:  In the Arabian Peninsula

T. Trade and the rise of Mecca

Th. Islam       PAPERS DUE


November 5 - 9: Around the edges

T. Rus' and the steppe peoples

Th. From the `Umayyads to the Mongols      ASSIGNMENT biographical essay

Reading: Christian, Chpts. 13 and 14     Whitfield, pp. 113-225

Nov. 12 - 16: Cause and effect in history

T. The "great man" vs. "Histoire et Longue Durée"

Th. Temuchin and the rise of the Mongols      PAPERS DUE

**CD Rom exercise:** "Explorers" section. Earn a Key. Earn your last key and find the scroll hidden in the cave!


Nov. 19 - 23:

T. MESA

Th. THANKSGIVING BREAK

Reading: none. Work on your research papers

Nov. 26 - 30: Mongol Empire

T. Methods of governing

Th. Conquests east and west      *Research papers due*

Reading: Christian: Chpt. 15 Morgan: Chpts. 4-5

December 3 - 7: Last Conquerors along the Silk Road

T. Tamerlane and Babur

Th. Close of the Silk Road

Reading: Christian, Chpt. 16 Morgan: Chpts. 6-8 Liu, Chpt. 8
PRIMARY SOURCES

Travelers' accounts


Fa-Hsien.  *The Travels of Fa-Hsien (391-414 AD) or Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms.*  Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1923.  3 copies.  Chinese monk seeks Buddhist scripture in India


Komroff, Manuel.  *Contemporaries of Marco Polo,* consisting of the travel records of the eastern parts of the world of William of Rubruck (1253-1255); the journal of John of Plano de Carpini (1245-1247); the journal of Friar Odoric (1318-1330)...  New York, Boni & Liveright [c1928]


Ancient histories


**Historical surveys and monographs**


**Other teaching resources**

Video series: *The Silk Road.* Central Park Media, 1990. DS 712 .S54 vols. 1 - 6. OK, but features too much cheesy New Age music by Kitaro. Ep. 4 is unusable because the sound was mixed so badly you can't understand the dialogue.


