Prof. James Millward  
The History of Central Eurasia (History 221 [now 108])  
Syllabus for the course offered in Spring 2001  
Georgetown University  
Department of History  

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HISTORY 221: THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL EURASIA

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Spring 2001  
Tu/Th. 11:40-12:55  
WAL 398  
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Course description:
Through lectures, primary and secondary readings, class discussion and audio-visual material, this course will survey the ecological, cultural, social and political dynamics of the peoples of Central and Inner Asia (Central Eurasia) from the origins of the steppe-pastoral economy up to the present. Our geographic scope will take in those regions which today comprise Mongolia, Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan), Tibet and the former Soviet Central Asian Republics, and will venture at times into neighboring zones, including Turkey, Russia, Siberia, Iran, India, Afghanistan, and China. Needless to say, both the time-frame and geographic area under consideration are very great, but this is justified--indeed, required, by the larger purpose of this course: to highlight ways in which Central Eurasia and its peoples have been central to world history. Linking our examination of particular eras and peoples will be an overarching concern with the dynamics of the relationship between the peoples of the steppes and deserts at the core of the Eurasian continent and the sedentary societies around the rim. We will likewise pay close attention to ways in which political, commercial and cultural linkages across the Eurasian steppe connected Europe, Persia, Mesopotamia and China from times predating the opening of direct maritime communications between Europe and Asia.

Requirements and grading (please read carefully!)

Complete all assigned readings, and as much suggested reading as you can, in time for each class meeting. Attend class, and be prepared to discuss the readings and the issues raised by that session’s topic; engage intelligently in class discussions. (5%)

Map exercise (5%)

Midterm (20%) and final exams (25%)

Two 5 page source reports, chosen from four topics to be distributed (20%). These are due on dates specified in the syllabus

One 10-15 page research paper on a topic to be chosen by you in consultation with Prof. Millward. (25%)

Grading: Content and style count equally in all your written work for this course. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, and include accurate and complete footnotes of sources consulted (separate bibliographies are necessary for the final paper). Notes should be in a standard style (see the Chicago Manual of Style, Turabian’s Handbook, or the MLA style manual for
examples); **points will be subtracted for improper footnote and bibliographic style!**¹

Internet sources (if any) must be cited with the proper HTTP address and date the site was last updated or, failing that, the date you accessed them (remember that content of websites often changes) The Lauinger website has citation formats for you to study. Late papers without a good excuse (e.g. medical or family emergency) will be docked one third-grade (+/-) per day. For the purposes of calculating final grades, letter grades will be assigned numerical values according to the following scale; the verbal definitions, which I take literally, are those of Georgetown College as printed in the Undergraduate Bulletin:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 = Superior</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>0 = Failure</td>
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**Collaboration:** You are allowed--indeed, encouraged--to collaborate by discussing issues and readings (including those of source reports), having joint study sessions before exams, and so on. You are, however, bound by the Georgetown Honor System to make sure that all work turned in on papers or written in exams is your own or, if heavily influenced by the ideas of another, that it be adequately cited. Thus, while you may discuss with classmates what you are planning to write on a report or paper, you must write the report entirely by yourself. Any significant ideas or interpretations from another source (authors you read, professors or your classmates) must be footnoted. The one exception to this is widely available factual information, such as the life and death dates for historical figures or basic geographic information, which generally need not be footnoted. Such things require honest, case-by-case assessment.

**Books and readings:**
The following books have been ordered and are or available for purchase in the bookstore. Remember to buy them early, as the bookstore returns unpurchased books soon after midterms. Online book sellers are often cheaper.


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¹ At this point in your education, you should know how to do this; if not, find out!


Readings listed below **not marked with an asterisk are also required readings**, and will be on reserve and in a course packet available for purchase. Readings **marked with an asterisk** below are **recommended reading**. Some are on reserve, some not; check the library online catalog. Delving a bit further on topics that interest you will help you understand lectures, write papers and display the kind of erudition on the subject that earns A grades. You might find these sources useful for papers and in preparing for exam questions. The general bibliography distributed in class will also help in these ways.

**Schedule:**

1/16 Introduction: Preliminaries; Central Eurasia and world history

1/18 Where is Tartary? Introduction to the geography of Central Eurasia and its historical import

Soucek, "Introduction" (1-45)
Christian, David. “Inner Eurasia as a Unit of World History.”
* Gronbech, K. “The Steppe Region in World History.”

• **Consider**: what defines Central Asia / Inner Asia / Inner Eurasia to these authors?

1/23 Pastoral nomadism and the nomadic peoples of Eurasia

Krader, L. “The Ecology of Nomadic Pastoralism.”
Khazanov, Anatoly. *Nomads and the Outside World*, 15-84
* Simakov, Georgii N. "Hunting with Raptors in Central Asia and Kazakhstan."

• **What is your image of a pastoral nomad? How are they defined in these readings? Do these images correspond? What is unique about the pastoral nomadic economy?**

1/25 The languages of Central Eurasia and what linguistics can tell us (wherein some of your questions about spelling and pronunciation are answered)

Allworth, *Central Asia*, pp. 61-91 (skim pp. 72-82)
* Bosson, "Scripts and Literacy in the Mongol World"
* *American Heritage Dictionary*, supplement on Indo-European linguistics
• Who is an “Indo-European”? If there were Indo-European speakers in what is now western China 2,000 years ago, does that mean there were “Europeans” there? What is the relationship between the spread of languages (language families) and human migrations?

1/30 From earliest origins to the first nomadic power
MAP QUIZ TODAY!
David Christian, A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia, 46-115

• What do we know about the earliest inhabitants of Inner Eurasia?

2/1 The Scythians
Herodotus, The Histories, Book 4
Christian, A History, 123-82
*Rice, Tamara Talbot. Ancient Arts of Central Asia

• What was the relationship of Central Asia (and the Sakas and Scythians) to the Persian empire? To the Greeks?

2/6 The Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu) and Han China: Emergence of a Pattern
REPORT 1 DUE!
Readings in Sima Qian, Shiji (Records of the Historian), ch. 110
EITHER Christian, A History, 183-208
OR Thomas Barfield, The Perilous Frontier, 32-84 (OR BOTH)
* Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, pp. 469-530

• What was the nature of Han (Chinese) - Xiongnu relations? What dynamics were involved? How do they compare to those of the Achaemenids with the Sakas (Scythians)?

2/8 The Bactrian Pivot of Asia (Achaemenids, Macedonians, Yuezhi, Kushans, etc.)
Richard Frye, The Heritage of Central Asia, 77-150
*Holt, Frank, Alexander the Great and Bactria
*Sinor, Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia, chapter 6

• What is the historical significance of the Greco-Bactrian epoch of Central Asia? Why was this region, now considered a backwater, so important to Alexander and others?

2/13 Religious traditions and Central Eurasian History
Foltz, Religions of the Silk Road, vii-87
*Explore the following websites, noting especially Buddhist art, and any others you find:
http://idp.bl.uk/idp.html (Dunhuang and the cave of manuscripts)
http://www.lzu.edu.cn/dunhuang/index.html (the art of Dunhuang)
http://www.textile-art.com/dun1.html (DUNHUANG: Caves of the Singing Sands, Buddhist Art from the Silk Road)
What role does the Central Eurasian region play in the spread of world religions? What role do these religions play in Central Eurasia? How is religion related to trade?

2/15 Tarim Basin cities and the “Silk Road”
Franck and Brownstone, The Silk Road, chapter 7, “Pilgrims and Proselytizers”
*Hopkirk, Foreign Devils on the Silk Road
*Sinor, ed. The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia, chapter 6

What does the term “Silk Road” refer to? What are its implications? What is its historical significance? How connected were the fates of Han and Rome?

2/20 The Rise of the Türks, the first pan-Eurasian empire
Whitfield, Life Along the Silk Road, ix-95
* Sinor, Denis. Ch. 11 in Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia
*Golden, Peter. An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples

Who are the Xiongnu, Hun, Xianbi (Hsien-pi), Tuoba/Tabghach, Ruanruan (Juan-juan), Türk (Tu-chueh) and Uighur peoples? Are distinctions between these groups made on racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, geographic, religious or other lines? Why are they distinguished in history?

2/22 Rise and Fall of the Türk Khaghanate
REPORT 2 DUE
Orkhon Inscriptions--TO BE DISCUSSED TODAY
Whitfield, Life Along the Silk Road, 96-188
* Golden, Peter B. An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples

Can the Türkic khaghanate be said to have an imperial ideology? How would you describe some of its elements?

2/27 The Tang empire in China and Central Asia
Whitfield, Life, 89-225 (end)
Soucek, A History of Inner Asia, ch. 4
* Beckwith, Christopher. The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia, 11-83
* Schaefer, Golden Peaches of Samarkand

3/1 MIDTERM EXAMINATION

3/5-10 SPRING BREAK
See readings under 3/13--there are a lot!

3/13 The Islamic Wave
FINISH Foltz, Religions of the Silk Road (88-end)
Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, Chapters 1-3, 5-6
Start Kahn, *Secret History of the Mongols*, including “Introduction,” and / or
Morgan, *The Mongols*
* Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, 108-172

- How and why did Islam spread so rapidly in Central Asia? What were the effects on Transoxiana? What were the effects on Islam?

3/15 Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Explosion
Soucek, Ch. 7
Morgan, *The Mongols* (Introduction-Chapter 3)
Keep reading the *Secret History*--Report due next week!

- What was the socio-political background from which the Mongol empire emerged?

3/20 The Mongol convergence, I: the empire in the East
REPORT 3 DUE (REQUIRED OF ALL STUDENTS)
Kahn, *Secret History* -- FINISH, FOR DISCUSSION TODAY
Morgan, chapters 4-5
* Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*

- As a modern reader, what strikes you about the *Secret History of the Mongols?* What light does this text shed on the remarkable emergence of the Mongols onto the world stage?

3/22 The Mongol convergence, II: the empire in the West
Morgan, chapters 6-8
Soucek, ch. 8

- How did the Mongols conquer and rule in China, Turkestan, Persia and the Russian steppe? Were they effective rulers? Why are they so reviled today?

3/27 Mongolian legacies: The structure of early modern Central Eurasian history
Joseph Fletcher, “The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives.” (Important!)
Soucek, ch. 9-11
* Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*

- What is the legacy of the Mongol period in world history? Is the Washington Post right that Chinggis Khan is properly “The Man of the Millennium?” (If not him, then who?)

3/29 TBA

4/3 Tibet in Central Eurasian History--from the empire to reunification under the Great 5th
Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, ch. 6, "The Late Empire"
Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, pp. 56-83
What was the nature of Tibet’s “foreign relations” from the 7th through the 17th century? Does this fit with current image of Tibet? How would you characterize Tibet’s relationship with China?

The Qing as an Inner Eurasian Empire
Evelyn Rawski, “The Qing Empire During the Qianlong Reign”
Soucek, ch. 13
Rahul, R. “The Role of Lamas in Central Asian Politics” (skim Bhutan, Sikkim sections)
*Joseph Fletcher, articles in Cambridge History of China, vol. 10
* Millward, Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Central Asia

What does it mean to stress that the Qing was an “Inner Eurasian” or “Inner Asian” empire as opposed to just another “Chinese” dynasty? What implications does this have for understanding Chinese history?

The Original Great Game: geopolitics of Tibet, Russia, Zunghars, Mongols and Manchus
Soucek, ch. 12, 14
* Stein, Tibetan Civilization 83-91
*Barfield, Thomas. The Perilous Frontier, chapters 8-9

How and why did the Manchus come to control Mongolia, Eastern Turkestan and, indirectly, Tibet? What role did Tibetan Buddhism play in that process? How about Chinggisid legitimacy?

EASTER HOLIDAY
Spence, Emperor of China, excerpts--
Thaxton, Baburnama, excerpts--discuss on 4/17

Muscovite expansion
REPORT 4 DUE; DISCUSSION OF KANGXI AND BABUR
Soucek, ch. 15-16
* Krader, Peoples of Central Asia
* Carrère D'Encausse, Helen. Islam and the Russian Empire

Characterize the process whereby Russia came to control Siberia and Central Asia. How does it compare to Qing imperialism? to American manifest destiny? To the maritime expansion of other European powers? What were its effects on the peoples of the steppes and oases of Central Asia?

Stalinism in Central Asia
Soucek, ch. 17
WORK ON FINAL PAPER!
* Krader, Peoples of Central Asia
* Carrère D'Encausse, Helen. Islam and the Russian Empire
* Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia*
* Allworth, *Central Asia*

*How did socialism come to Central Asia? What were its effects? Is it appropriate to call communism, “the extraordinary Inner Eurasian backlash against capitalism”?*

4/24 From Empire to Nation: Inner Asia under Chinese Rule
Mackerras, *China’s Minorities*, pp. 139-190
* Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*
* Benson and Svanberg, *China’s Last Nomads*

*How did the two 20th c. Chinese republics deal with the legacy of the Qing empire? Compared Chinese policies towards Inner Asians with those of the Soviet Union.*

4/26 Case study: The Uyghurs of Xinjiang

FINAL PAPER TOPICS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE
Soucek, ch. 19

* Who are the Uyghurs? Are they the native people of Xinjiang? Why do they, like many Tibetans, want to separate from China?*

5/1 The 1990s--a New Central Eurasia?
Soucek, ch. 20-21
John Schoeberlein-Engel, "The Boundaries of "Nations" and Unbounded Peoples"

* What have been the political, economic and foreign policy results of the break-up of the Soviet Union on the Central Asian Republics? On Xinjiang? Has “Central Eurasia” become a viable regional concept again?*

5/3 Tartary today: from Central Asia to Middle Earth
Khan, Almaz. “Chinggis Khan: From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero.”
* Donald Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-la*

FINAL EXAM: Weds. May 9, 4:00-6:00 p.m.
FINAL PAPER DUE: Monday May 14, by 5:00 p.m. in my box in the history department front office. (The Office closes at or a few minutes before 5:00.)
HISTORY OF CENTRAL EURASIA--REPORT TOPICS

GENERAL NOTE: You are required to write three reports in the course of the semester. There are five topics and you may chose among them, with the exception that the third report, on the Secret History of the Mongols, is required of all students. Because we will discuss in class the issues raised by the report readings, reports must be handed in in class.

REPORT ONE:
Consider the views of two “fathers of history,” the Greek historian Herodotus and the Chinese historian Sima Qian (Ssu-ma Ch’ien), towards nomadic peoples. Herodotus’ The Histories are an important source about the Scythians, and Sima Qian in the Shiji (Records of the Historian) tells us about the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu). What sort of sociological or anthropological information do they provide? What insights into the organization of these nomadic societies can be gathered? How can we distinguish fact from fiction? Do the authors share any perspectives? Work with the texts themselves, but feel free to consult other materials as necessary--just indicate what they are in footnotes. (Book 4 of Herodotus and chapter 110 of Sima Qian are in your packets and on reserve. The whole books may be found in the library.)

REPORT TWO:
Contextualize and analyze the Kül Tigin Orkhon inscription. Work with the text of the inscription itself (in your packet and on reserve) and whatever secondary materials you find useful to put this document in its historical context and interpret its content. You might find it useful to think of its various purposes as eulogy, political manifesto, historical record, ideological statement, and so on. What does it tell us about the people who produced it? Is it a valuable source?

The text itself is taken from Kemal Silay, ed., An Anthology of Turkish Literature. You might also consult Grousset, Empire of the Steppes, Sinor, ed., The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia, and P. B. Golden, An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples, for more information but the main purpose of this exercise is for you to read and analyze the text of the inscription yourselves.

REPORT THREE (required of all students):
Write on either of the following topics.

1. Using the Secret History of the Mongols as your principal text, what can you tell about the roles and images of women in Mongol society of the thirteenth century? How are they treated in the story? How are they depicted? What can you glean from the Secret History about their status?

2. Much has been written since the thirteenth-century about the destructive power of the Mongols, and many--not without cause-have called them barbaric. Were the Mongols amoral? What can you tell from the Secret History about the Mongols’ value system (or at least about the value system of the authors of this text)?
As with other reports, you are welcome but not required to use outside secondary sources, as long as you cite them properly and stress your own active interpretation of the text rather than the ideas of other authorities.

REPORT FOUR:
Based on the excerpted passages from Spence's "autobiography" of Kangxi and Thaxton's translation of the Baburnama, as well as on what you have learned in the class so far, comment on how the Kangxi emperor and Babur padishah, both rulers of large agrarian states, feel about Inner Eurasia. How are these emperors alike or different? Do they reflect an Inner Asian tradition? What are its characteristics? Feel free to consult these books in their entirety.

GENERAL REFERENCES AND SURVEYS

Adshead, S. A. M. Central Asia in World History.
Barfield, Thomas. The Perilous Frontier.
Basilov, Vladimir N. Nomads of Eurasia.
Clubb, O. Edmund. China and Russia: the Great Game
Fairbank, John King and Denis Twitcher, eds., The Cambridge History of China, vol. 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, and (Fairbank, ed.) vol. 10, Late Ch’ing, part 1. (See Fletcher’s chapters)
Grousset, Rene. Empires of the Steppes.
Krader, L. Peoples of Central Asia.
Kwanten, Luc. Imperial Nomads.
Lattimore, Owen. Inner Asian Frontiers of China.
Phillips, E. D. The Royal Hordes
Rossabi, Morris. China and Inner Asia, from 1368 to the Present Day.
Sinor, Denis. Inner Asia: a Syllabus
Sinor, Denis. The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia.
Thorday, Lazlo. Mounted Archers: The Beginnings of Central Asian History

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Lattimore, Owen. *Inner Asian Frontiers of China.* Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988; originally published in 1940.


Thomsen, V. *Inscriptions de l’Orkhon déchiffrées*. Helsinki, 1896.


