Prof. Michaela Pohl  
**Central Asia in Transition (History 386)**  
Syllabus for the course offered in Spring 2002  
Vassar College  
History Department

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Prof. Miki Pohl  
Department of History  
Vassar College  
Box 711, 124 Raymond Avenue  
Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12604  
U.S.A.  
mipohl@vassar.edu
Syllabus

History/International Studies Seminar 386

CENTRAL ASIA IN TRANSITION

Vassar College, Spring 2002
Thursday, 3:10-5:10 p.m.
Swift 16

Professor Miki Pohl
Office: Swift 36
Office Phone: 437-5676
E-mail: mipohl@vassar.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This multidisciplinary seminar explores Central Asia during several great transitions, focusing on former Soviet Central Asia or the "orient" of the Russian Empire. We explore five distinct experiences: Muslim society and tradition, the epoch of the emirates, how Central Asia and the Caucasus became part of the Russian empire, Central Asians under Soviet rule, and the new states of Central Asia after independence in 1991. We explore three broad geographic areas: oases (Transoxania - Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), mountains (the Caucasus), and steppe (Kazakhstan), and we consider our own location in the USA. The last third of the course focuses on the challenges facing the transition societies of Central Asia. Topics include the cultural and spiritual lives of Central Asians, politics and civil society, war, ethnic conflict, and foreign relations. The course draws on primary and secondary source readings in history, political science, anthropology, memoirs and literature, music and musicology, and travelers’ accounts. Seminar participants explore the existing literature on Central Asia as well as online government, media, NGO, and business resources through several graduate-seminar style exercises (oral book report, bibliographic essay, review essay, individual oral final exam).

REQUIRED BOOKS


REQUIRED RESERVE READINGS
Bibliographies (Allworth, Brower and Lazzerini, ICARP, Richter).


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Attendance and participation. Complete the readings listed in the schedule each week and participate regularly in discussions. Hand in assignments when they are due. Late assignments and more than two unexcused absences will result in lowered grades (half of a letter grade each day after the deadline or missed day). Informed and active participation accounts for 20% of your grade.

**Assignments.**

Four brief responses, on the following topics: Week 2 - Jamila, Week 4 - Shamil, Week 5 - Communism in Central Asia, Week 10 - Holy Fools. 3 pp. each.

Oral book report. Copy title page, introduction or preface, maps, table of content, and bibliography of one Central Asian studies book (choose a book from the list Central Asian Transition Readers posted on Blackboard, in Course Material, folder "Week 3"). Bring the copies to class and present a brief description of the book to the class. TOC's to be posted on Blackboard course web. Week 3.

Bibliographic and on-line resource essay. First version to be posted on course web by March 7 (Week 7) and updated after NYPL trip (Weeks 9-10) and at end of semester (final revision accepted May 7). 10-15 pp. Details on Blackboard.

Review Essay. Comparative review essay on three monographs or comparable works (scholarly articles, films, memoirs). One must be from Review Essay Book List, see Blackboard course web. 10-15 pp. Week 11.

Seminar field trip to NYPL. Group research for the bibliographic and review essays and for the short paper in the Edward Allworth Central Asian collection. After Spring break, Week 9.

Short Paper. 8-10 p. Week 14, May 7. Details on Blackboard.
Oral Final Exam. - May 15-17, 2002, Exam week. Details on Blackboard and in class.

Please set up an appointment early in the semester (weeks 5 and 6, February 19 and 26) to discuss your plans for the bibliographic and review essays, and for your short paper. Check the Blackboard site for this course http://blackboard.vassar.edu for more detailed instructions on each of these assignments.

Grade distribution. Attendance and participation 20%, Response Papers 10%, Bibliographic Essay 20%, Review Essay 20%, Short Paper 20%, Final Exam 10%.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with Disabilities. Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities who are registered with the Office of Disability and Support Services. Please schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course which have been approved by the Director of Disability and Support Services as indicated in your accommodation letter.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

The format of the classes will usually be a lecture, including visual materials and film clips, followed by discussion of the readings. Assignments are due at the beginning of class during the week listed, unless otherwise noted.

Week 1

Thursday, January 24
Introductory Meeting

Week 2

Thursday, January 31
Self and adat

RESPONSE PAPER - JAMILA

Week 3

Thursday, February 7
Dastarkhan
Physical geography, regions, populations
Americans and Central Asia
Maps (distributed week 2 and in Central Asian readers).


**MAP QUIZ**

**ORAL BOOK REPORT**

**Week 4**

Thursday, February 14
The mountains and the steppe
Resistance to Russian colonial expansion


**RESPONSE PAPER - SHAMIL**

**Week 5**

Thursday, February 21
The Oases
Jadidism


Abdujabbar A. Abduvakhitov, "The Jadid Movement and Its Impact on Contemporary Central Asia," in Malik, Central Asia, ch. 4, pp. 65-75.

Week 6

Thursday, February 28
Storm over Asia
Bolsheviks and Stalinism


RESPONSE PAPER - COMMUNISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Week 7

Thursday, March 7
Frozen Planet


FIRST VERSION OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

SPRING BREAK MARCH 8-24

Week 8
Thursday, March 28
Afghanistan

Malik, *Central Asia*, chs. 5-7, pp. 77-128.

**Week 9**

NYPL - Visit to Edward Allworth Collection


**UPDATE BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY**

**Week 10**

Thursday
Spiritual and musical life in transition


**RESPONSE PAPER - FOOLS OF GOD**

**Week 11**

Thursday
Politics, civil society, and economy since 1989/1991
Central Asia's glasnost period


**REVIEW ESSAY**

**Week 12**

Thursday
Islam and ethnic relations

Week 13

Thursday
TBA, reading: Rashid if available

SHORT PAPER

FINAL UPDATE OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

MAY 7, 2002, 5 p.m., Swift 36

ORAL FINAL EXAM, MAY 15-17, 2002 (DETAILS TBA)