

THE SILK ROAD: CROSSROADS OF CULTURES H124 F 2003

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Office Hours:

An introduction to the role of cross-cultural contact as a driving force in history. The Silk Road ran from China to the Mediterranean Sea, 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, an oral presentation and short paper on Alexander the Great, and a final exam.

Attendance policy: I do not take attendance. I assume you are responsible adults. It is in your best interests to attend class every day, or get notes from someone if you must miss a session. If you choose to skip classes, I will not track you down. Be warned, however, that you will pay for it on assignments.

Grade breakdown:

Historical monograph essay	15%
Primary source essay	15%
Biographical essay	15%
Research paper	25%
Map test	2%
Alexander project	8%
Final exam	20%

Required books:

Christian, David. *A History of Russia, Inner Asia, and Mongolia*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1998.

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

Morgan, David. *The Mongols*. Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1990.

Whitfield, Susan. *Life Along the Silk Road*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1999.

Other readings will be on reserve or handed out in class

September 1 – 5 Introduction

M. Introduction to course. Video: *China's cosmopolitan age: the T'ang, 618–907*.

W. The Route: the role of geography and climate

Reading: Christian, Intro. and Chpt. 1. Whitfield, Introduction and “The Merchant’s Tale”

September 8 – 12 Defining ancient cultures

M. Nomad and settled societies

W. Ethnicity, language, and other problems      MAP TEST

ASSIGNMENT: historical monograph report

Reading: Rudi Paul Lindner, "What was a Nomadic Tribe?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 24, No. 4(October 1982): 689–711. on electronic reserve      Christian, Chpt. 6.

Sept. 15 – 19      Transportation, trade and culture

M. Zoroastrianism

W. Camels and transportation technology

Reading: Richard Bulliet, *The Camel and the Wheel* Chpts. 3 [from page 67], 4, 6.

Sept. 22 – 26      Northern Barbarians and the Middle Kingdom

M. What was trade? Why was trade? Han China and the *ho-ch'in* policy

W. Buddhism comes to China      \*\*PAPERS DUE\*\*

Reading: Christian, Chpt. 8      Arthur Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1959, Chapters 2 and 3.

Sept. 29 – October 3:      Invader from the West

M. Material culture

W. Alexander of Macedon

Reading: Xinru Liu, *Silk and Religion: An exploration of material life and the thought of people, AD 600–1200*. Introduction and Chapter 2, "Silk and Buddhism"

Christian, Chpt. 7      Packages on Alexander distributed in class [A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: 1988. Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great*. Penguin: 1973. Excerpts from Joseph Roisman, *Alexander the Great: Ancient and Modern Perspectives*. D.C. Heath, 1995]

October 6 – 10      Historical evidence and narrative

M. YOM KIPPUR      no class      Group meetings, reading

W. Alexander and the historians

Reading: Alexander material

October 13 – 17      Greeks and Persians

M. FALL BREAK

W. finish presentations “Alexander” essays due

Reading: Alexander material

Oct. 20 – 24 From west to east

M. What is a primary source?  
ASSIGNMENT: primary source report

W. Silk and barbarians

Reading: Richard Frye, excerpt from *The History of Bukhara*. [pp. vii-xiii, 3-27 and endnotes, pp. 103-123.] Christian, Chpt. 9 Liu, Chpt. 3, “Silk in Byzantium”

Oct. 27 – 31 New religions, new people

M. Manichaeism and Nestorian Christianity

W. Turks and the T’ang Dynasty

Reading: Whitfield, pp. 55–112. Christian, Chpts. 10 and 11

November 3 – 7 Mechanisms of exchange

M. Paper and printing: trade in technology **\*\*PAPERS DUE\*\***

W. Trade and the rise of Mecca

Reading: Christian, Chpt. 12. Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988, Chpts. 2 and 3. Liu, Chpt. 6, “Rise of Islam and the Tiraz System”

Nov. 10 – 14 Eurasia west and north

M. Islam  
ASSIGNMENT: biographical essay

W. Rus’ and the steppe peoples

Reading: Liu, Chpt. 7, “Silk Trade Under Islamic Rule” Whitfield, pp. 113–225  
Christian, Chpt. 13

Nov. 17 – 21 Cause and effect in history

M. From the `Umayyads to the Mongols **\*\*PAPERS DUE\*\***

W. The “great man” vs. “Histoire et Longue Durée”

Reading: Christian, Chpt. 14 Gareth Jenkins, “A Note on Climatic Cycles and the Rise of

Chingiss Khan.” *Central Asiatic Journal* Vol. 18, No. 4(1974): pp. 217–226. Anatoly Khazanov, “Muhammed and Jenghiz Khan Compared: The Religious Factor in World Empire Building,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 35, No. 3(1993): pp. 461–479. on electronic reserve

Nov. 24 – 28      The Mongols

M. Temuchin and the rise of the Mongols

W. THANKSGIVING BREAK

Reading: Morgan, Chpts. 1–3

December 1 – 5      Mongol Empire

M. Methods of governing

W. Conquests east and west

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

December 8 – 12      Last Conquerors along the Silk Road

M. Tamerlane and Babur

W. Close of the Silk Road      **\*\*RESEARCH PAPERS DUE\*\***

Reading: Christian, Chpt. 16    Morgan: Chpts. 6–8

FINAL EXAM    Wednesday, December 17    2 p.m.