
Silk Road

OSHER 552-001**Dates:** Tuesdays, 9/23/14-11/04/14, no class 10/14**Times:** 11:30AM-1:00PM**Location:** Commander's House, Fort Douglas**Instructor:** Dr. Ewa Wasilewska

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Course Overview

The most famous highway of antiquity, the Silk Road, has never lost its importance as one of the most strategic areas in the world. While many ancient cities and stops on the Silk Road no longer enjoy their days of glory, many new ones have emerged and become destinations themselves. Central Asia's enormous reserves of oil and gas make this region more than desirable for all major world powers and as volatile as it was in the past. Though natural resources and commodities traded along this Road have changed, the importance of the heartland controlled by nomads and/or those of nomadic traditions has remained constant. "Whoever controls the Heartland controls the world" as Halford Mackinder, a founder of the so-called Geopolitics (1904, "The Heartland Theory") stated many years ago. Since then this axiom has been adjusted and modified by others but its main message is the same: whoever controls the ancient road(s) from China, through Central Asia and the Middle East, to Europe controls the world.

This course will introduce students to this Heartland, its people and their customs, and its strategic importance in the world.

Week #1: September 23, 2014

Course information.

Eurasia: defining the region. Geopolitics.

Week #2: September 30, 2014

Defining nomadism: different land, different forms of nomadism.

Week #3: October 7, 2014

The Hsiung-nu and their impact on the rise of China Proper. The Silk Road. Part 1.

Week #4: October 14, 2014

NO CLASS

Week #5: October 21, 2014

The Hsiung-nu and their impact on the rise of China Proper. The Silk Road. Part 2.

Week #6: October 28, 2014

Monotheism, henotheism, and polytheism of the Heartland. Ancient traditions and modern delivery.

Week #7: November 4, 2014

Odds and ends: "Afghanistan is a land on everyone's way, to someplace else" (Charles Norchi)

Suggested readings:

For introduction to geography and geopolitics of the area see:

Iseri, Emre: The US Grand Strategy and the Eurasian Heartland in the Twenty-First Century. In *Geopolitics*. 14 (2009). Pp. 26-46.

Major, John: Geographical Setting of the Silk Roads. In *Asia Society*. 2013.

<http://asiasociety.org/countries/trade-exchange/geographical-setting-silk-roads?page=0,0>

For the importance of the region in modern politics see:

Cohen, Ariel, ed.: *Eurasia in Balance: the U.S. and the Regional Power Shift*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, U.S.A. 2005.

For the importance of the region in politics of oil and energy see:

Mehdi Parvizi Amineh & Henk Houweling, eds.: *Central Eurasia in Global Politics. Conflicts, Security, and Development*. Brill: Leiden Boston. 2005.

For understanding nomadism see:

Barfield, Thomas J: *The Nomadic Alternative*. Prentice Hall. London. 1993.

Castillo, Jorge Silva: Nomadism through the ages. In *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*. Daniel C. Snell ed. Malden MA: Blackwell. 2005. Pp. 126-140.

For connecting nomads with the Silk Road and Silk Road itself see:

Barfield, Thomas: Steppe Empires, China, and the Silk Route: Nomads as a Forces in International Trade Politics. In *Nomads in the Sedentary World*. Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink, eds. Curzon Press. 2001. Pp. 234-249.

Boulnois, Luce: *Silk Road. Monks, Warriors & Merchants on the Silk Road*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.: New York. 2006.

Di Cosmo, Nicola: *Ancient China and Its Enemies. The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. Cambridge University Press. 2002.

Franck, Irene M. & David M. Brownstone: *The Silk Road: A History*. Facts on File Publications: New York. 1986.

Interactive website about silk art -- <http://weavesilk.com/>

For religions along the Silk Road:

Foltz, Richard C.: *Religions of the Silk Road. Overland Trade and Cultural exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*. St. Martin's Press: New York.

Frye, Richard N.: *The Heritage of Central Asia. From Antiquity to the Turkish Expansion*. Markus Wiener Publishers: Princeton. 1998