

Anthropology 335

CULTURES OF CENTRAL ASIA

Spring Semester 2010

Monday, 10:20 am – 1:20 pm

Anthropology Building, Room 214

Professor: Cynthia Werner

Office: Anthropology Building, Room 224

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Office Phone: 847-9254

E-mail: werner@tamu.edu

Website: www.cynthiawerner.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Central Asia is situated in a key geo-strategic position between China, Russia, Iran, India and Turkey. In addition, Central Asia has valuable natural resources, including oil and gas. Historically, the region is best known for the infamous Mongol ruler Genghis Khan and the legendary Silk Road trade route. In more recent years, Central Asia is best known for the seemingly inexplicable development of Islamic-based terrorism, especially in Afghanistan. News headlines in the U.S. often pose the question: “Why do THEY hate US?” This course attempts to address who “they” are, and to explain how “they” are actually much more complex than we might first imagine. To begin, they are very diverse set of people, and not all of them “hate us.” But, that is only the beginning. This course covers the anthropological research that has been conducted in the region, and thus should provide students with the cultural knowledge necessary to understand contemporary social and political events in Central Asia. Geographically, this course covers the peoples and cultures of post-Soviet Central Asia (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), Afghanistan, western China (Xinjiang province), and Mongolia. Course topics include colonialism and post-colonialism in Central Asia; ethnicity and nationalism; religious beliefs and practices; ethnic conflict; gender relations; nomadic pastoralism; and the impacts of urbanization, modernization, and globalization.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, you will become familiar with the cultural diversity within Central Asia. Second, you will learn how the cultures of Central Asia are constantly changing and being actively reconstructed in response to colonialism, post-colonialism, modernization and globalization. Finally, you will be able to apply an anthropological perspective for understanding ethnic conflict, religious tensions and gender inequities that are often misunderstood in popular representations of Central Asia.



COURSE FORMAT

This course will be conducted as a seminar with a mix of lecture and discussion. While the lectures will provide the broad social and historical context for understanding the assigned readings, each of the readings focuses on a specific topic. Much of the class time will be devoted to the discussion of the course readings and related topics, as well as progress on your independent research projects. As a seminar, the emphasis is on collaborative and interactive learning, rather than the direct transfer of information from professor to students. For this reason, you will be required to lead the discussion for one of the assigned readings. It is critical, however, that you do all of the assigned reading before coming to class each week.

COURSE READINGS

Everyday Life in Central Asia. Edited by Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca. Indiana University Press. We will read the majority of essays in this book.

Anth 335 Course Reader. The reader, which contains a selection of articles and book chapters, can be purchased at Notes and Quotes. Electronic copies of the articles will also be available at elearning.tamu.edu.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Exams (40% of final grade)

There will be two exams for this course: a midterm and a final. Each exam counts for 20% of the final grade. Both exams will consist of short essay questions. The first exam will include a geography component where you will be expected to identify key geographical features in Central Asia (countries, capitals, rivers, deserts, and mountains). The final exam is not comprehensive, and will take place before finals week.

Writing Assignment One – Review Paper (15% of final grade)

Popular culture (including movies and novels) provides an important avenue for understanding how people in another culture view the world and what issues they find to be important. For this assignment, you will write a 4-5 page (typed and double-spaced) review of either a popular film produced in Central Asia OR a novel written by a Central Asian writer. A list of approved films and books will be provided on the course website at elearning.tamu.edu. All of the books on the list are available at the library. Several of the films are available in the library, while others may require rental from Blockbuster or Netflix.com.

Writing Assignment Two – Research Paper (35% of final grade)

You will be expected to write a 10-12 page (typed and double-spaced) research paper on a topic related to Central Asia. Your paper must be narrowly focused on a contemporary social or cultural issue. Your paper should have a central research question and a main argument which is supported by “evidence” that you will find in other written sources. You should get some more ideas for paper topics from the course readings and syllabus. If you find a particular article interesting, think about how you could develop a paper around this topic. Your paper can utilize a variety of sources such as academic articles and books (mandatory); government statistics; newspaper articles on Central Asia; and relevant websites (i.e. the UN website, the U.S. AID website). You are encouraged to include readings that are part of the assigned reading, but you must also include additional academic sources (i.e. journal articles and/or books). Before the final paper is due, you will turn in a paper proposal, and a paper outline and bibliography. You have the option of turning in a paper draft before the deadline in order to receive feedback on your paper. The paper proposal and outline/bibliography assignments will be graded, and the grade will be incorporated into the final paper grade. The paper proposal should be a one paragraph description of your paper topic and your research question. The paper bibliography should include at least 8 sources that you will use for your final paper.

Critical Review of Article and Leading a Class Discussion (10%)

You will be responsible for leading the discussion for one of the class readings during the semester. This assignment involves the preparation of a 1-page paper (typed and double-spaced) that will be presented in class and turned into the instructor.

- (a) Who wrote the article or chapter? What is their discipline and specialty? What, if any, bias do they bring to the topic?
- (b) Does the article indicate what methods were used to research this article? In other words, did the author conduct research in a library or an archive, or did the author spend time interviewing people and conducting participant observation?
- (c) What did you learn from this article? In other words, what was the main message that you took away from this piece?
- (d) What did you find to be the strengths and weaknesses of this article? Do you think the author had enough evidence to support the conclusion? Do you think the article was well-written and understandable? Did the author convince you that the article made an important contribution to the field? Etc.
- (e) If you could meet with the author, what questions would you ask him or her about their research? What more would you like to know about this subject?

Although you only have to turn in one review paper, you should read each article with these same questions in mind. This is the best way to prepare for the exams.

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Dishonesty

The Aggie Honor Code states: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” Please refer to the new Aggie Honor Code (www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/newcode.pdf) for the various definitions of academic misconduct. All cases of plagiarism and cheating in this class will be handled according to university policies. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, you will automatically receive a zero for the assignment and you may receive an F for the class. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated.

Late Papers

Late papers will be penalized two points for each weekday late. If the paper is more than 25 days late, you will receive up to half of the total points for the assignment. For example, instead of an 80, you would receive a 40 for the assignment.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities are guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Special accommodations can be made for students with disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Office of Support Services for Students with Disabilities (Room 126, Koldus Building, 845-1637).

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

I have been teaching at Texas A&M since 2001. After finishing high school in The Woodlands, Texas, I received my B.A. (1989) in Political Science from Texas Christian University, and my M.A. (1993) and Ph.D. (1997) in Anthropology from Indiana University. I am a cultural anthropologist who specializes in the region of Central Asia. Most of my research has been conducted in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, where I have studied rural survival strategies, gift exchange, bazaar merchants, bride kidnapping, the impact of nuclear testing, international tourism development, and transnational migration. I have also conducted research in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, and I have traveled to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week	Date	Topic and Reading Assignment
1	1/25	<p>Part I: Introduction to the Course</p> <p>Part II: Overview of the Cultural Geography of Central Asia</p> <p><i>Mike Edwards, "Central Asia Unveiled"</i></p>
2	2/1	<p>Part I: History of Central Asia from the Silk Road to the Great Game</p> <p><i>S&Z, Scott Levi's "Turks & Tajiks in Central Asian History"</i> <i>S&Z, Adrienne Edgar, "Everyday Life among the Turkmen Nomads"</i> <i>Gregory Gleason, "Legacies of Central Asia"</i></p> <p>Part II: Soviet Colonialism in Central Asia</p> <p><i>S&Z, Marianne Kamp, "Living the New Uzbek Life in the 1930s"</i></p>
3	2/8	<p>Part I: Parallel Encounters with Socialism in China and Mongolia</p> <p><i>Melvyn Goldstein and Cynthia Beall, "The Negdel"</i> <i>Thomas Allen, "Xinjiang"</i> <i>Ildiko Beller-Hann, "Crafts, Entrepreneurship and Gendered Economic Relations in Southern Xinjiang in the Era of 'Socialist Commodity Economy'"</i></p> <p>Part II: Daily Life in Mongolia</p> <p>Film: <i>The Story of the Weeping Camel</i></p>
4	2/15	<p>Part I: Key Historical Events in 20th Century Afghanistan</p> <p><i>S&Z, Robert Canfield, "Trouble in Birgilich"</i></p> <p>Part II: Daily Life in Afghanistan During and After Taliban Rule</p> <p><i>Larry Goodson, "Perverting Islam: Taliban Social Policy Toward Women"</i> <i>P. Hunte, "Some notes on the livelihoods of urban poor in Kabul"</i></p> <p>Film: <i>The Taliban and Global Terrorism, Inc.</i></p>

5	2/22	<p>Part I: The Fall of the Soviet Union and the End of Colonialism</p> <p>Part II: Coping with Post-Socialist “Transitions” in Central Asia</p> <p><i>Cynthia Werner, “Household Networks and the Security of Mutual Indebtedness in Rural Kazakhstan”</i></p> <p><i>David Sneath, “Lost in the Post: Technologies of Imagination and the Soviet Legacy in Post-Socialist Mongolia”</i></p> <p><i>Tomasso Trevisani, “After the Kolkhoz: Rural Elites in Competition”</i></p> <p><i>Colette Harris, “Coping with Daily Life in Post-Soviet Tajikistan: The Gharmi Villages of Khatlon Province”</i></p> <p><i>S&Z, Victoria Clement, “Alphabet Changes in Turkmenistan, 1904-2004”</i></p> <p>Paper Proposal Due</p>
6	3/1	<p>Part I: Gender Politics and Veiling</p> <p><i>S&Z, Douglas Northrop, “The Limits of Liberation: Gender, Revolution, and the Veil in Everyday Life in Soviet Uzbekistan”</i></p> <p><i>S&Z, Elizabeth Constantine, “Practical Consequences of Soviet Policy and Ideology for Gender in Central Asia and Contemporary Reversal”</i></p> <p><i>Julie McBrien, “Mokada’s Struggle: Veils and Modernity in Kyrgyzstan”</i></p> <p><i>Deniz Kandiyoti, “The Politics of Gender and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Old Dilemmas or New Challenges”</i></p> <p>Part II: Domestic Violence and Bride Abduction</p> <p><i>Cynthia Werner, “Bride abduction in post-Soviet Central Asia: marking a shift towards patriarchy through local discourses of shame and tradition”</i></p> <p><i>Film: Peter Lom’s “The Kidnapped Bride”</i></p>
7	3/8	<p>Part I: Exam One</p> <p>Part II: Gender Relations in Soviet Uzbekistan</p> <p><i>Film: Revolt of the Daughters-in-Law</i></p>
		<p align="center">** SPRING BREAK – March 13-21 **</p>

8	3/22	<p>Part I: Ethnic Identity & the Complexity of New National Borders <i>S&Z, Madeleine Reeves, "Travels in the Margins of the State: Everyday Geography in the Ferghana Valley Borderlands"</i> <i>S&Z, Morgan Liu, "A Central Asian Tale of Two Cities: Locating Lives and Aspirations in a Shifting Post-Soviet Cityscape"</i></p> <p>Part II: Case Study of Violence in Andijan (Uzbekistan) & Xinjiang <i>Nick Megoran, "Framing Andijan, Narrating the nation: Islam Karimov's Account of the Events of 13 May 2005"</i> <i>Sarah Kendzior, "Poetry of Witness: Uzbek Identity in the Andijan Massacre"</i> <i>Matthew Teague, "The Other Tibet"</i></p>
9	3/29	<p>Part I: Transformation of Ethnic Relations and Political Institutions <i>Edward Schatz, "Reconceptualizing Clans: Kinship Networks and Statehood in Kazakhstan"</i> <i>Saulesh Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity and Ethnicity in Central Asia: Historic Narratives and Kazakh Ethnic Identity"</i> <i>Judith Beyer, "Revitalization, Invention and Continued Existence of the Kyrgyz Aksakal Courts"</i></p> <p>Part II: Ethnic Minority Groups: Koreans, Uighurs and Tatars <i>Sean Roberts, "The Uighurs of the Kazakstan Borderlands: Migration and the Nation"</i> <i>Greta Uehling, "The Crimean Tatars of Uzbekistan: Speaking with the dead and living homeland"</i></p> <p><i>Film: Koreans of Kazakhstan</i></p> <p>Review Paper Due</p>
10	4/5	<p>Part I: Islam and the State in Central Asia <i>S&Z, Erin McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan"</i> <i>Johan Rasanayagam, "Post-Soviet Islam: An Anthropological Perspective."</i> <i>Russell Zanca, "Believing in God at Your Own Risk: Religion and Terrorisms in Uzbekistan"</i></p> <p>Part II: Religious Diversity in Central Asia <i>S&Z, David Montgomery, "Namaz, Wishing Trees, and Vodka: The Diversity of Everyday Religious Life in Central Asia"</i> <i>S&Z, Sebastian Peyrouse, "Christians as the Main Religious Minority in Central Asia"</i></p> <p>Paper Outline and Bibliography Due</p>

11	4/12	<p>Part I: Food, Feasting and Hospitality</p> <p><i>S&Z, Russell Zanca, "Fat and All That: Good Eating the Uzbek Way"</i></p> <p><i>S&Z, Paula Michaels, "An Ethnohistorical Journey Through Kazakh Hospitality"</i></p> <p>Part II: Music and Cultural Politics</p> <p><i>S&Z, Michael Rouland, "Music across the Kazakh Steppe"</i></p> <p><i>S&Z, Laura Adams, "Public and Private Celebrations: Uzbekistan's National Holidays"</i></p> <p><i>Eva-Maria Dubuisson, "Culture and Critique in Kazakh Aitys Poetry"</i></p>
12	4/19	<p>Part I: Health and Healing</p> <p><i>Ildiko Beller-Hann, "Rivalry and Solidarity among Uighur Healers in Kazakhstan"</i></p> <p><i>Craig James and Oyuntsetseg Chulunundorj, "Free Markets and Dead Mothers: The Social Ecology of Maternal Mortality in Post-Socialist Mongolia"</i></p> <p><i>Johan Rasanayagam, "Healing with spirits and the formation of Muslim selfhood in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan"</i></p> <p>Part II: Environmental Legacies of Soviet Rule</p> <p><i>Cynthia Werner and Katie Purvis-Roberts, "Unraveling the Secrets of the Past: Contested Versions of Nuclear Testing in Kazakhstan"</i></p> <p>Draft Paper Due (Optional)</p>
13	4/26	<p>Part I: Exam Two</p> <p>Part II: Research Paper Workshop</p>
14	5/2	<p>No Class Meeting – Final Papers Due</p>