The fabled Silk Roads were a series of networks that connected peoples and regions from Europe to China. Advances in communication, technology and transportation coupled with the trade of goods and ideas transformed the way nomads and oasis-dwellers interacted. This exchange brought wealth and prosperity to many merchant families and oasis towns as well as power to those who controlled the routes. This course will explore the economic, social, and cultural history along the Silk Roads of Eurasia from the time of the Han and Roman empires to modern times where we will encounter an on-going exchange and a heritage of the Silk Roads in popular culture.

**Goals**

1. Discerning how histories are written across different cultures and ages—thinking about intentions of authors, common methodologies, intended audiences, the ways in which history has been used—both in the past and in the present.

2. Distinguishing between strong and weak historical arguments through a close analysis of primary and secondary texts.

3. Learning to craft our own historical arguments in discussion and writing assignments.

**How to succeed**

**Be Prepared.** This course will consist of interactive lectures accompanied by class discussions of assigned texts. During lecture I will draw attention to specific issues and themes to focus our discussion. Since lectures are interactive—do not be passive. You are not expected to have any prior knowledge of the history of the regions we will discuss, however a positive attitude and curiosity will be welcomed.

You will be best prepared for class if you take detailed notes during lectures, ask questions, and participate fully in class discussion. Taking notes with reference page numbers while
reading will facilitate your contribution to class discussion and provide you with valuable information for papers and exams. Bring your notes and the daily assigned reading to class with you for reference during discussion.

**Participate.** History is an ongoing discussion about the past. Consistent attendance and participation in discussing the past are key elements of this course. Participating in discussion means engaging in conversation, not just answering questions: it is not being afraid to disagree, debate, take a controversial stance, or play the devil’s advocate. Everyone in this course has something to contribute to the learning process and you are expected to share your questions, thoughts, and ideas with your fellow students (and do it thoughtfully and respectfully). The best way to participate is to engage in discussions. If you have questions about how you can best participate, please see me during office hours.

**Collaborate.** This is a small course, so get to know your peers and recognize that they can be a valuable resource in helping you think about the material covered in the course. Positive, supportive, and productive learning environments will lead to better and more innovative results.

**Grading and Assignments**

1. Concept Map (10%)
2. Two Exams (25% each)
3. Material Culture Project (30%)
4. Class Participation (10%)

Please note that you will be given detailed instructions for exams, the concept map, and the material culture project. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for the course.

**Grading Questions**

If you have any questions about the grades or written comments you receive from me, please make an appointment to see me or stop by during office hours as soon as possible to discuss your work. If you are objecting to a grade, I require that you 1) wait at least 24 hours before meeting with me, 2) bring a brief written description of your concerns, and 3) bring the assignment in question. This will insure that our discussion is efficient and productive.

**Academic Honesty**

You are assumed to be familiar with the university’s policies on cheating and plagiarism and the potential penalties involved. A link to those policies can be found at: http://www.washington.edu/uaa/advising/help/academichonesty.php You should know that, in the event that there is a question about your work, you may be asked to produce any notes and outlines you used, identify your sources, and to provide an electronic copy of your paper. It is also my policy to forward any incidents of probable academic misconduct to the College of Arts and Sciences’ Committee on Academic Conduct for investigation and resolution.
Students with Disabilities
The university is committed to providing access and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education, and employment for individuals with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect your work, see me during office hours as soon as possible. More information on accommodations for students with disabilities can be found at: http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/

Contact
Email is the best way to reach me. I always try to respond within 24 hours, but will not answer on weekends, holidays, or within 24 hours of any exam or paper deadline. NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED BY EMAIL.

Required texts
2. PDFs that will be available on CANVAS.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1:
Thursday, Jul 21—Introduction to course: Geography and natural history; Concept Maps
Film viewing: Wild China, Beyond the Great Wall
Reading – Whitfield 1-13; Selections from Herodotus on the Scythians

Week 2:
Monday, Jul 25— The rise of nomadism and the technologies of the steppe
Reading—Whitfield 15-37; “The Account of Dayuan” from Sima Qian’s Shi Ji

Tuesday, Jul 26— Early empires and oasis dwellers
Film viewing: Ancient Chang’an
Reading—Whitfield 38-56; Selections from Faxian

Wednesday, Jul 27 — Guest lecture: Beasts of burden
Reading—Whitfield 57-72; Selections from Xuanzang

Thursday, Jul 28—Religion on the silk roads: Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Christianity
Reading—Whitfield 73-102; East Asian History Sourcebook: Ch’ing-Tsung: Nestorian Tablet: Eulogizing the Propagation of the Illustrious Religion in China, composed by a priest of the Syriac Church, 781 A.D.
Week 3:

Monday, Aug 1 — The rise of Islam.
Reading—Whitfield 103-125; selections from Islamic source book on Central Asia

Tuesday, Aug 2 — Sea trade and the fate of overland routes
Readings – Whitfield 126-137; Sulayman al-Tajir’s *Travels to India and China*

Wednesday, Aug 3 — Exam 1
Genghis Khan and Mongol dominance
Film viewing: Excerpts from *Mongol*
Readings – Travels of Ch’ang Ch’un to Central Asia

Thursday, Aug 4 — Field Trip to Seattle Asian Art Museum
(Admission free for first Thursday)

Week 4:

Monday, Aug 8 — Kublai Khan
Readings – Whitfield 138-152; Selections from Marco Polo; Selections from William of Rubruck

Tuesday, Aug 9 — The Mongols and conversion to Islam
Readings – Whitfield 153-168; Rashid al-Din, Ghazan Khan’s Conversion and a Banquet Scene

Wednesday, Aug 10 — The legacy of Amir Temur
Readings – Whitfield 169-181; Selections from Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo

Thursday, Aug 11 — Field Trip to Henry Art Gallery

Week 5:

Monday, Aug 15 — Guest lecture: Depictions of the silk road in Russian art
Lecture: Exploration in the modern age
Readings— Whitfield 182-201; Selections from travellers to Central Asia

Tuesday, Aug 16 — Connections across Eurasia today: religion, land, water, and resources
Film viewing: Excerpts from *Bakshi*
Extra time in class to make final preparations for exhibition

Wednesday, Aug 17 — Exhibition Day for Material Culture Projects
Exam review

Thursday, Aug 18 — Exam 2
Please upload concept map write up to CANVAS

***Please note that this syllabus is subject to change at anytime.***