"Silk Road" is a romantic metaphor for the network of long-distance trade routes that have crossed Eurasia from east to west for two millennia, made famous by the writings of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta. In this class we will look at the arts and ideas of various cultures that interacted along the Eurasian trade routes from the Mediterranean to China in pre-modern times. This course take advantage of the Smithsonian’s Freer and Sackler Galleries of Asian Art, one of the world’s finest Silk Road collections. The class will further require a cheerful willingness to tackle unfamiliar times, names and places.

This course may be used to fulfill the University Global Understanding Mason Core requirement or the CHSS Non-Western Culture requirement. It may also be used to fulfill requirements for interdisciplinary minors; please consult your advisor about that. It does not, alas, fulfill the University’s Mason Core requirement in Arts. Oh well.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES. The student will gain:**
- Familiarity with the historical geography of the Eurasian trade routes.
- Familiarity with the premodern visual arts and material culture of the region.
- Familiarity with DC’s major collections of Asian and Islamic art.
- Familiarity with the UNESCO World Heritage Program
- Basic familiarity with Buddhism, Islam, and traditional Chinese cultural ideas.
- Understanding the historical impact of cultural encounters on art and ideas.
- Greater experience with the use of primary sources in historical study.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
- Class attendance. Participation in class discussions is noted and encouraged.
- Assigned readings, including websites and documents on the Internet.
- Required map exercise.
- Two visits to the Smithsonian’s Freer and Sackler Galleries of Asian Art.
- Two short papers based on museum visits and class readings
- Two midterm tests and a final exam.

**TEXTBOOKS. The first three are required books:**
- **Recommended, not required:** Marco Polo, *Description of the World*, translated & edited by Sharon Kinoshita (Hackett, 2016).

Additional readings will be on the course website on Blackboard.

**HOW TO REACH ME:**
- Best method: Email: lbutler@gmu.edu
- Phone: leave a message with the History and Art History Dept. at (703) 993-1250.
- Office: **Robinson B340**, deep in the History and Art History Department maze.
- Office hours: **Mon, Tues. and Weds.1:30 to 3:00 PM**; or other times by appointment.
TENTATIVE LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE, subject to revision

Class meets on Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:00 to 1:30 PM, in Art & Design Building, Room 2026. All supplemental readings will be posted to the Blackboard class website for you to read. Weekly lecture summaries will also be posted to Blackboard at the end of each week for you to review. Due dates for the two papers will be set in class.

PART 1: EURASIAN TRADE IN ANTIQUITY

Week 1: Introduction to Central Asia
Geography of Central Asia
Prehistoric puzzle: The Tarim Basin mummies

Reading:
- Foltz, Chapter 1: “The Silk Road and its Travelers”
- Blackboard: Butler, “The Silk Road,” from Cornerstone, Spring 2010

Map assignment will be handed out in class.

Week 2: Central Asian Trade in Antiquity
Achaemenid Persia and the Scythian nomads
Alexander and the Greco-Bactrian states

Reading:
- Liu, pp. 7-10, and 2. Rome’s Trade to the East, 1st cent. BCE –2nd cent. CE.
- Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul (National Geographic, 2008), excerpt on Blackboard.

Week 3: Buddhism and the Trade Routes of Gandhara
Buddhism in North India
Kushan Empire and Gandhara

Reading:
- Liu, 10-15 and 3. “The Kushan Empire and Influence of Buddhism”
- Stokstad & Cothren, Art History (5th ed), chapter 10: Art of South and Southeast Asia before 1200,” excerpt on Blackboard.

Week 4: Review and test
Monday: Catch-up and review

Reading: “Back to Bamiyan, Ten Years Later,” from Archaeology (July/Aug 2011)

Wednesday, February 15: Test 1 on Eurasian trade and arts in antiquity
PART 2: CHINA AND CENTRAL ASIA

Week 5: Han China and the West
Silk and wool
Han China and the Xiongnu nomads
  Reading:
  • So & Bunker, Traders and Raiders on China’s Northwest Frontiers (Smithsonian exhibition catalogue, 1995), excerpt on Blackboard.
  • Harvey, Traditional Textiles of Central Asia, chapter 1, on Blackboard.
  • Liu, pp.4-7, and 1. China’s Trade on the Western Frontier, 2nd.-1st c.
  • Recommended for background on China: Stokstad & Cothren, Art History, chapter 11: “Chinese and Korean Art to 1279.”

Week 6: China, Buddhism, and the Art of the Oases
Buddhist Cave Art in China & the Tarim
“Journey to the West”: Xuanzang, Monkey, and all that.
  Reading:
  • Liu, pp.15-22; 4. “Oasis Towns of Central Asia and the Spread of Buddhism” and 5. “The Byzantine Empire and Silks in Royal Purple, 6th.-9th cent.”
  • Xuanzang and The Journey to the West: excerpts

Week 7: Tang Dynasty China and the Soghdians
Chang’an, today’s Xi’an, capital of Tang China
The Soghdians of Samarkand
  Reading:
  • Foltz, 4: “A Refuge of Heretics: Nestorians and Manichaeans on the Silk Road”
  • Annette L. Juliano et alia, Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China (Abrams, 2001). Excerpt on Sogdian merchants & art.
  • Liu: pp. 22-26; and 6: “The Tang Empire and Foreign Traders and Priests…”
  • Susan Whitfield, “The Merchant’s Tale,” from her Life Along the Silk Road.

Week 8: No classes the week of March 9-15: Spring Break!

Week 9: Dunhuang, The Mogao Caves at the desert’s edge
Art of Mogao Caves at Dunhuang
Preservation and World Heritage
  Reading:
  • Susan Whitfield, “The Artist’s Tale,” from Life Along the Silk Road.
Week 10: Dunhuang as World Heritage
UNESCO’s World Heritage program
Review on Monday, March 27

Reading:
- Butler (hey, me!), “Silk Road Buddhist Cave Art in American Collections: Recovering the Context,” East-West Connections, 5/6 (2005/6).
- Frances Wood, on the Dunhuang project, in Whitfield, The Silk Road (2004).

Test 2 on China and the Silk Road, Wednesday, March 29.

PART 3: MONGOL EMPIRES AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Week 11: Islam in Central Asia
Islam and its arts
Caravan cities

Reading:
- Foltz, 5: “The Islamization of the Silk Road”
- Eleanor Sims, “Travel and Trade: Markets and Caravanserais” on Blackboard.
- Recommended for background on early Islam and its arts: Stokstad & Cothren, Art History, chapter 9: “Islamic Art.”

Week 12: Mongol Empire and World Trade
The Mongol empires of Eurasia
Mongol achievements in Islamic art & architecture

Reading:
- Marco Polo, Description of the World, transl. S. Kinoshita, excerpt.

Week 13: Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta
Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, their journeys and their books
Kubilai Khan (Yüan Dynasty) in China

Reading:
- Marco Polo, Description of the World, transl. S. Kinoshita, excerpt.
- Foltz, 6: “Ecumenical Mischief”
- John Larner, Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World, Ch. 7: “Marco, Merchants and Missionaries.”
**Week 14: The Silk Roads in the Early Modern World**
Venice, Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Iran, and the Sea Routes of the Indian Ocean
"The Great Game": Europeans and the Russian Empire in Central Asia

**Reading:**
- Foltz, 7: “A Melting Pot No More”

**Week 15: Memories and Future of the Silk Road**
Echoes of the Silk Road in contemporary Eurasia

**Reading:**

Review in class on Wednesday, May 3.

**Final exam: Monday, May 15, 10:30 to 1:15 PM.** Please note the earlier time.

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**SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES**

First map assignment due in class, first or second weeks.
Last day to add classes: Monday, January 30.
Last day to drop classes without tuition penalty: Monday, January 30.

**TEST I: Wednesday, February 15.**
Last day to drop without the dean’s permission: Friday, February 24.
Selective withdrawal period: Monday, February 27 through Friday, March 31.

**TEST 2: Wednesday, March 29.**
Final exam: Monday, May 15, 10:30 to 1:15. Please note the earlier time.

Due dates for the two papers will be decided in class when assigned.
CLASS POLICIES

Attendance is necessary; much of the material will only be covered in our slide lectures. You are responsible for getting notes, and for all consequences of missed classes. Class participation will affect your grade, if it is conspicuously good, conspicuously lacking, or continually disruptive. Since this is a once-a-week class, absences are a problem. I will overlook one unexcused absence. Two and more absences will result in a lower grade.

Classroom atmosphere. Courtesy and common sense, please. We’re all adults; sometimes emergencies come up. However, talking during lectures, wandering in and out, cell phones, and eating food are all badly distracting to everyone else. Chronic chatterers are disruptive, and will be asked to leave the classroom (Oh yes I can do that—University policy).

Written work is a major part of the course, and will count heavily towards your final grade. Please study the explanation of my writing standards, attached to this syllabus. In short: Papers must be written in good formal English, with full documentation in either MLA or Chicago style. All students are expected to use word-processors with spell-checkers. Spelling and grammar count. Please submit papers typed, double-spaced, and PROOFREAD. Badly written work will be downgraded, returned for a rewrite, or flunked, as I see most appropriate.

No email submissions of papers, except in special cases with my prior permission. Sorry—I’ve tried—it causes too many problems. Written work is due in hard copy in class on the due date. Papers will not be considered “on time” unless and until I receive them in hard copy.

Late work will be graded down five points per day and ten points over a weekend. Plan ahead—last-minute hard-disk and printer failures are your problem, and do not constitute legitimate excuses. By the final exam, all missing work becomes F work.

Make-up tests for medical reasons will require verification with a physician’s excuse.

English as a Second Language: If English is not your first language, I will be happy to help you do your best in the writing assignments—by previewing papers, offering extra help, that sort of thing. But the final result must be written in good standard English. Please work with The Writing Center in Robinson I, Room A116. Call them at (703) 993-1200, or see their web page for English language help, at: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/.

Learning disabilities. If you are a student with disabilities, and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) or 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. visit their website: www.gmu.edu/student/drc/.

Religious holidays. I have planned this course according to the George Mason University calendar. If you observe a religious holiday that the University does not, please let me know and I will make necessary accommodations for you (but not for the whole class).

Auditors are welcome to sit and listen, if there is room. If you would like to participate more actively, that’s fine with me if you are keeping up with the assigned class reading. Otherwise, please be quiet.

Gifts. Thanks, but I cannot accept gifts. I appreciate the thought, but they complicate things.

Academic honesty is expected in all tests and writing. Please respect the Honor Code, our classroom standards, your fellow students, and yourself. The Honor Pledge will be required on all tests. Please report violations to the Honor Committee. See the explanation of plagiarism in the guidelines for writing. Plagiarized papers will be sufficient grounds for failing the course.
GRADING POLICIES

TESTS must be taken on the scheduled date. If there has been an emergency, it must be documented by a note from the dean’s office or your doctor. In those cases, there will be one make-up test given, probably during the subsequent class. Tests will be graded by percentage.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

- **A** = 100% to 93%, or 4.00
- **A-** = 92% to 90%, or 3.67
- **B+** = 89% to 87%, or 3.33
- **B** = 86% to 83%, or 3.00
- **B-** = 82% to 80%, or 2.67
- **C+** = 79% to 77%, or 2.33
- **C** = 76% to 73%, or 2.00
- **C-** = 72% to 70%, or 1.67
- **D** = 60% to 69%, or 1.00
- **F** = below 60%. No credit.

I may award a final A+ in rare instances: 4.0 plus unusually good writing and class participation.

WRITTEN WORK may be graded by points, or by the following criteria, as appropriate:
- **A** = Startlingly good, exceeding our expectations, and well-written. Must be imaginative; NOT given for simply following directions.
- **B** = Good effort with a good result.
- **C** = Perfunctory; or, tried but missed the point; or, did something well but it wasn’t the assignment; or, good idea but careless or sloppy writing and presentation.
- **D** = Warning: accepted under protest. Please see me for advice.
- **F** = Unacceptable as college-level work.

Paper grades will be lowered for lateness, sloppiness, lack of proofreading, bad English, lack of necessary documentation, faulty logic, or failure to follow directions for the assignment. Late papers will be graded down five points a day (including weekends, yes).

Ungraded work: Maps and other ungraded exercises will be given checks, pluses or minuses only; when figuring up your final grade, these will help us determine borderline grades. Missing maps will result in a lowering of your final grade by 5 points per item.

Class participation grade: Normal participation—showing up on time, keeping up with classwork, participating in group activities, not causing problems—will be figured as “B” level. Great class participation will be graded “A”. Disruptive behavior, poor attendance, or chronic problems with lateness and deadlines will be graded “C” or lower. I will overlook one unexcused absence. Two and more will result in a lower grade.

FINAL GRADES will be based on the average of your paper, test and class grades. Each assignment will be weighted thus:

- **Test 1:** 10%
- **Test 2:** 20%
- **Final exam:** 20%
- **Paper 1:** 20%
- **Paper 2:** 20%
- **Class participation:** 10%

Final grades may be raised or lowered from strict average in the following circumstances:

- A pattern of pluses or minuses on ungraded assignments;
- I may raise or lower your grade in recognition of significant change over the course of the semester.
- **TWO MAJOR (20%-worth) PIECES OF GRADED WORK MISSING AT THE END OF THE COURSE WILL BE GROUNDS FOR FAILING THE COURSE REGARDLESS OF YOUR PRECISE AVERAGE.**
- **IF YOU FLUNK THE FINAL EXAM, WITH AN F ON ANOTHER MAJOR PIECE OF WORK, YOU WILL RECEIVE A FAILING GRADE FOR THE WHOLE COURSE.** To pass this course you must demonstrate some mastery of the material from all parts of the course.
DIRECTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There will be two short papers required for this class. Specific directions will be handed out when the papers are assigned. In general, all written work for me, or for Art History in general, should be finished, professional-looking, and must observe the following rules:

**Organization:** College-level essays are to be carefully constructed and presented as finished products. They are not just journal entries or stream-of-consciousness. This means they must have a thesis of some sort, and present reasoned arguments through the examination of evidence. There should be an introductory thesis statement and a conclusion. Paragraphs should be used as a way to structure the argument so a reader can follow your thinking. An interesting or informative title is expected.

**Mechanics:** All papers must be typed and double-spaced, using a standard font in 10, 11 or 12-point size. Please stick to plain old white paper and standard fonts. Handwriting is not OK. Single-spacing is not OK. Triple-spacing is not OK. Writing the whole darned thing in italics or some cute font you like is not OK. Pictures are nice, but strictly optional. Pictures cannot be a substitute for writing. Nice presentation is always welcome, but please be clear that adding pictures will not affect your grade unless they are explicitly part of the assignment.

**Spelling and grammar** are expected to be excruciatingly correct. Use the spell-checker. I will mark down work for sloppy spelling and grammar. If the writing is really awful—ungrammatical, no evidence of proofreading, horrible spelling, or laughably short—I will not read it. I’ll return it as unacceptable, with an F. I may allow rewrites, depending on the class, but the highest grade for a rewritten F paper is C.

**Page limits** should be observed, and should be your guide to the depth of writing: a one-to-two page paper is pretty much a quick observation, with thesis and conclusion. Three-to-five pages means there is time to develop a thesis and argue it through several paragraphs, considering several different questions, angles or pieces of evidence. An eight-to-ten page paper usually includes research, as will be made clear.

**Citations.** All papers, whatever length, must include the complete and correct citation of any sources of information to avoid the appearance of plagiarism. Generally-known facts are not normally cited. Anything else is, including a long summary of facts from one source, a single opinion stated by another author, and any direct quote. If you are using information from museum labels or pamphlets, cite that too.

When you do citations, please one of these two standard forms, as you have learned here in college:

- **MLA style,** using parenthetical page references and list of works cited at the end of the paper.
- **Chicago style,** using correctly-done footnotes and a bibliography.

Both of these are explained in detail in the Infoguides available on the University Libraries website: [http://infoguides.gmu.edu/humcites](http://infoguides.gmu.edu/humcites)

Do citations carefully and correctly! Points will be deducted for missing citations of information, missing page numbers, missing list of “works cited” at the end, or just messed up mechanics. **Plagiarized papers will be flunked, and may be sufficient cause for failing the course.**

**Plagiarism** is a serious academic offense. Here is how the GMU Honor Code defines it, as quoted from the University Catalog, [http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/0203/apolicies/honor.html](http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/0203/apolicies/honor.html):

> “B. Plagiarism encompasses the following:
> 1. Presenting as one's own the works, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement.
> 2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement.”

That means **you must acknowledge your source of information.** Museum labels, anonymous pamphlets, and websites all count as sources, and must be acknowledged—even if you are summarizing them with word changes. **Plagiarism is cheating, and will be reported to the Honor Committee for action.** For more on the procedures, see [http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/)