

LIBA 497 and LBST 590 --The Silk Road: East & West, Then & Now

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the various interactions between cultures that were facilitated by the trade corridor in Asia commonly known as the “Silk Road.” Some of the issues that we will be focusing on include: determining national identity, the global economy, ethnic and sectarian divisions, colonialism, and cultural conservation. In order to examine the various motivations behind the creation and use of the “Silk Road” throughout history, we will be discussing the physical geography of the region, the texts and artworks that were created under the religions that operated there, the differing social and political systems, and the economic issues surrounding not just silk, but the wide range of commerce that occurred across this region. Scientific methods of examining material and their effect on interpretation will also be discussed. The effects that these interactions have had, not only on the region itself, but also on the major civilizations at either end of the Silk Road will be taken into consideration as well.

II. REQUIREMENTS

General

This is an advanced, upper-level course, and as such, I expect that everyone will attend each; absences will be excused only under the direst of circumstances. Because of the vast territory—geographical, cultural, and chronological—it is imperative that you do the assigned readings before class. Also, since participation will play a major role in determining your grade, it is essential that you be prepared and in class.

Undergraduate

This course fulfills the D: Synthesis category of the UCC. As such, students should be able to bring a wide range of experiences in the arts, sciences, and business fields to the discussion of the course material and to the discussion of some of the contemporary problems surrounding both the study of this material and the problems that have arisen out of the particular history of this region.

Class participation	20%	Midterm exam	20%	Final exam	20%
15-minute Presentation & 12--15 page paper	25%	5 Short response papers	15%		

Graduate

Graduate students are expected to help set the tone and level of discussion. They should be able to draw on a greater level of expertise in their respective fields of study to provide stimulating questions and insightful answers.

Class participation	20%	Midterm exam	20%	Final exam	20%
20-minute Presentation & 18-20 page paper	25%	8 Short response papers	15%		

III. TEXTS and READINGS (in addition to readings from books, there will be several articles to read)

Required Books:

- Tucker, Jonathan. *The Silk Road: Art and History*. Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2003.
- Hopkirk, Peter. *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Treasures of Central Asia*. Oxford Univ. Press/Johns Hopkins Press, 2001.
- Liu, Xinru. *Connections Across Eurasia: Transportation, Communication, and Cultural Exchange on the Silk Road*. McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Optional Books:

- Foltz, Richard. *Religions on the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*. New York: St. Martin's, 1999.
- Crile, George. *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History*. Grove/Atlantic/Perseus, 2004.