

Spring 2021

History of Central and Inner Asia (HIST 336/536)

Instructor: Ferenc Csirkés

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Office hours: by appointment

Zoom:

Monday, 11:40-13:30: <https://sabanciuniv.zoom.us/j/98578676624>

Tuesday 8:40-9:30: <https://sabanciuniv.zoom.us/j/99055178507>

The course surveys the history of Central and Inner Asia (the territory of the former Soviet Central Asian republics, Kirgizstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as Eastern Iran, Mongolia and Northwest China) from the beginnings to the present, also including in the discussion the South Russian steppen region, when appropriate. While we will be looking at this vast geographical space as part of various imperial configurations (the Hun, Türk, Kazar, Mongol, Timurid, and Russian Empires, as well as the Muslim Caliphate and the Soviet Union), we will also discuss local historical processes and dynamics, addressing the question of in what sense the region can be considered a separate historical-geographical entity.

Progressing chronologically, the course will be divided into three larger units. The first unit will concentrate on the steppe empires down to the Mongol period (3rd century BC to 1200 CE); the second unit will discuss the Mongol empire and its successors down to the 19th century; and the last unit will be dedicated to the period of colonialism in the Russian and Soviet empires, as well as China, making short forays into the present, too.

Week set-up: lecture and discussion of weekly readings.

Evaluation: midterm (50%) and final (50%) exam, each consisting of a short in-class quiz and a take-home exam, both parts being mandatory. The quiz part of the exam will take place orally, each student getting 3 questions 2 of which s/he has to answer correctly. The list of the terms and names that are the subject of the oral quiz will be available before the exam.

As to the take-home part, at a prearranged time, students receive via email a question regarding the reading and lectures; they have 2.5 hours to write and email the instructor a discursive essay answering it with the use of the primary readings as evidence for their arguments. They are allowed to use their lecture notes and scholarly sources; of course, in the latter case, they are required to use proper academic conduct and cite it. Wikipedia and similar online resources are not considered proper sources. Graduate students taking the course as HIST 536 are also required to submit a research paper which should be developed in conversation with the instructor, and the subject of which has to be confirmed by week 8 at the latest. They only have 2 hours to complete the take-home essay assignment. For both the undergraduates and the graduates, the completion of the quiz is a prerequisite for the written exam.

Failure to complete any of these assignments or receiving an “F” for any of them will result in a final “F” grade. Students who fail to show up for the exams indicated in this syllabus without a valid and documented excuse and who do not take the make-up examinations for such exams will receive N/A as their final grade. Students are required to connect to the Zoom link for the

course with their official Sabancı University e-mail account, and not utilize other email accounts.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will

- acquire broad familiarity with the main events, concepts, processes of Central and Inner Asian history
- demonstrate the use of principles to analyze human societies
- recognize and reflect on the contingency of analytical frameworks concerning human societies
- demonstrate the ability to develop research methods and questions, and start using coherent analytical frameworks to broach historical phenomena through primary and secondary sources

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is taken very seriously. Plagiarism will result in an “F” grade on the assignment in relation with which the plagiarism was detected.

Attendance policy

Attendance is mandatory. Absence without a documented medical or other well-founded *and* documented reason may result in a half grade decrease. Two unfounded absences may result in exclusion from the course. Attendance shall be taken on a regular basis.

Students with special needs

In order to accommodate a student’s special needs and determine whether they are entitled to adjustments in the academic requirements of the course, they have to contact the Disabled Students’ Unit of the Center for Individual and Academic Development at specialneeds@sabanciuniv.edu.

Weekly schedule

UNIT I

Week 1: The concept of Inner and Central Asia; historical methodology; the beginnings; Inner and Central Asia before the Turkic Empires I: the Scythians

Reading: Bregel 1-13, Golden 39-57, Herodotus: Book Four (§ 1-76, pp. 1-24 in the pdf The Scythians)

Only for HIST 536: Herodotus: Book Four (§ 1-142, The Scythians)

Week 2: The Xiongnu, the Hsien-pi and their successors

Reading: Golden 57-84; “Selections from the Han Narrative Histories,” 2-10.

Week 3: The Early Turkic peoples; The rise of the Turkic Qaghanate

Reading: Bregel 14-19, Golden 115-154.

Week 4: The Turkic Qaghanates and their Imperial Tradition: Uyghurs, Volkswanderung, and the Arab Conquest

Reading: Tekin 261-273; Levi-Sela, Part 1, 5-44, Golden 155-188; Bregel 20-23.

Week 5: Islam and the Turks: Qarakhanids, Seljuks, Qarakitan, Khwarazmians

Reading: Bregel 24-35; Levi-Sela, Part 2, 45-108; Golden 189-232.

Unit II

Week 6: Seljuks, Qarakitan, Khwarazmians,

Reading: Bregel 24-35; Levi-Sela, Part 2, 45-108; Golden 189-232.

Week 7: Western Inner Asia: Kazars, Bulgar, Hungarians

Reading: Golden 85-114

Week 8: Midterm exam – quiz and take-home exam

Week 9: Chingis Khan and the Mongol Empire

Reading: Levi-Sela, Part 3, 109-158; Bregel 36-39.

Week 10: Mongol Appanages: the Golden Horde and Timur

Reading: Bregel 40-49; Levi-Sela, Part 4, 159-196; *Cambridge History of Inner Asia* 26-88, 182-221

Reading: Levi-Sela, Part 5, 197-240

Week 11: An age of introspection? Central and Inner Asia in the 18th century; Reading: Levi-Sela, Part 5/A, B, 197-240

Unit III

Week 12: Central and Inner Asia in the Russian Empire

The Timurids; Chingisid and post-Chingisid polities down to the 19th century; Levi-Sela, Part 5/A, B, 240-264

Week 13: Central Asia in the 19th century; Afghanistan

Levi-Sela, 264-305; relevant chapters in Bregel; *Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, 392-411; Runion, Meredith L. *The History of Afghanistan*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007, 67-105.

Bibliography:

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- Baumer, Christoph. *The History of Central Asia*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012.
- Bregel, Yuri. *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003.
- DeWeese, Devin A. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden. *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Golden, Peter B. *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*. Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1992.
- Herodotus. *Histories*. Trans. Robin Waterfield. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Levi, Scott Cameron, and Ron Sela. *Islamic Central Asia: An Anthology of Historical Sources*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Runion, Meredith L. *The History of Afghanistan*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007.
- Tekin, Talat. *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*. Bloomington, Indiana University [1968].
- Vásáry, István. *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185-1365*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Vásáry, István. *Turks, Tatars and Russians in the 13th-16th Centuries*. Aldershot, England: Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007.