COURSE OVERVIEW

Although in many ways central to world history, Central Asia has largely been relegated to the margins of contemporary consciousness and world history narratives. In the past ten years, the only "meaningful" interaction the global audience had with Central Asia came via the outrageous Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan. Even then, however, the critics and pundits kept insisting that Central Asia wasn't the point - America was. As Central Asian scholar par excellence Paula A. Michaels pointed out: "Like the nineteenth-century orientalist scholars whose writing established the image of the east in the European imagination, Borat hijacked Kazakhstan's ability to define itself to the western world. The mass media then further silenced Kazakhstan by circumscribing the debate about the film in such a way as to place Kazakhstani concerns outside the frame of the discussion." Thus even when at the center of attention, Central Asia remains largely invisible/marginal.

This course seeks to redress this imbalance by analyzing both the ways in which and the extent to which the peoples of Central Asia have defined their national histories and the history of the surrounding regions/countries. In addition to focusing our attention on the general chronology of Central Asian history, we will study how the so-called "Great Powers" have affected Central Asia and how, in turn, Central Asian peoples have responded to the outsiders' interventions. In other words, we will be examining the ability of Central Asian communities to define themselves in the face of constant foreign encroachment. On a more abstract, theoretical level, we will ask questions about the nature of "empire" and how to best define the relationship between the ruling and the ruled, the colonizer and the colonized.
CENTRAL THEMES

- The history of the Mongols, their conquest, and legacy
- The gradual occupation of Central Asian lands by the Russian Empire in the 19th century
- The first Great Game between the Russian and British Empires
- The occupation of Central Asia by the nascent Soviet forces
- Collectivization and industrialization of Central Asia
- The impact of Soviet power on women's lives
- The resurgence of nationalism in Central Asia during perestroika and glasnost
- The region's foreign policy predicament and the second Great Game
- The role of Islam in contemporary Central Asian politics

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

I. Content:

By the end of the semester, students should be familiar with:

- the political, social, economic, and cultural development of Central Asia from 1813 to the present.
- the general chronology of Central Asian history.
- basic theories, generalizations, and debates regarding Central Asian history.
- the fundamental ideas underpinning E. Said's theory of Orientalism

II. Cognitive skills:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- identify and relay an argument of a specific readings concisely and precisely
- think critically about an author's approach and execution of a historical problem.
- think historically about events, processes, and significant individuals.

III. Communication skills:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- present their point of view concisely and persuasively while staying on topic.
- participate in a group discussion in a productive and collaborative manner.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the Oberlin College Bookstore):

- Peter Hopkirk, Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin's Dream of an Empire in Asia (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Hamid Ismailov, The Railway (London: Harvill Secker)
- Chingiz Aitmatov, The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years (Bloomington: Indiana University Press)
- All other readings will be available on BB.

HONOR CODE

"The word plagiarism derives from Latin roots: plagiarius, an abductor, and plagiare, to steal. The expropriation of another author's work and the presentation of it as one's own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship." [American Historical Association, Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct]. Presenting the work of others as one's own goes against everything that a liberal education is about. It is a serious
affront to the other students in the course, to me as a member of the course, and to the plagiariser him/herself. The College requires that students sign an "Honor Code" for all assignments. This pledge states: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." For further information, see the student Honor Code which you can access via Blackboard->Lookup/Directories->Honor Code. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, particularly in the context of joint or collaborative projects, please see me or raise it in class.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see me or the Office of Disability Services so that such accommodations may be arranged.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

* Weekly Writing Assignments (25%)

To help you/motivate you to keep up with the readings, you will turn in fifteen (15) reading responses that should be between approximately 300-350 words in length. These assignments will be graded individually. In the writing assignment, your task is to identify the central argument of the day's readings. In other words, I am not asking what the article "is about" but what the author's argument is. In addition to identifying the author's argument, methodology, and sources, you are encouraged to reflect on and probe/problematize the author's contentions. Theses assignments are meant to help you precisely and concisely express your thoughts in any academic/professional setting. These assignments must be turned in at the beginning of each class; no assignment can be turned in after a reading has been covered in class.

* Attendance and Participation (20%)

Attendance is mandatory. Although I will keep track of your attendance, I primarily rely on your observance of the Honor Code when you miss class due to illness/family emergencies/extenuating circumstances. I will do everything in my power to make class a productive and enjoyable endeavor and your attendance and participation are crucial elements of this goal.

Although some class sessions will be lectures, for much of the time we will collectively discuss the assigned readings. Throughout the semester I will keep track of your participation—both in terms of quality and quantity. The ability to engage meaningfully—to engage your colleagues in a way that will add depth and dimension to an evolving discussion—is a crucial skill in both academic and professional settings. I will provide you with individual feedback regarding this aspect of the course after weeks 4 and 8 but I encourage you to come speak with me if you have questions or concerns. Moreover, I will do everything in my power to create an environment in which all members of this learning community feel welcome and encouraged to vocalize their views and ideas.

* 2 Short Analytical Essays (20%)

These two analytical essays—one due before Spring Break and one due before the end of the semester—are intended to give you an opportunity to deal with the BIG questions of the course: How can we best characterize the relationship between the Central Asian peoples and their so-called conquerors? In other words, is this relationship best described as one in which the colonizer plays the role of the oppressor and the colonized the role of a defenseless dependant? Or is something more complicated at work here? If the latter, is the agency of the colonized tied to the colonizer's approach to colonial administration or to the colonized's resistance? These essays should be between 500-600 words.

* Final Wikipedia Project (25%)

It's no secret that Wikipedia has become the go-to source for information—despite the fact that we all know these entries are incomplete or not always accurate (but more accurate than generally believed). In this final mini-research assignment you will choose an aspect of Central Asian history and add/modify an existing one. The
assignment should be around 1000-1250 words. In addition to allowing you to explore an aspect of Russian history you find most fascinating, this assignment will also allow you to consider the implications and responsibilities involved with creating and “publishing” publicly-accessible information. I will hand out more detailed instructions and a suggested time-line for your project after the second week of classes.

**POLICIES ON TARDINESS AND MAKE-UP WORK**

* All written work **must** be turned in to receive a passing grade.

* Final Wikipedia project and film reviews—The grade for the assignment will drop one-third of a letter grade (from a "B" to a "B-", for example) for each 12-hour period. You will also not be allowed to turn in further assignments until late work has been submitted. These further assignments will also be penalized for late submission.

* Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be given in the case of emergency/illness or if you ask for an extension because of a heavy workload during a week when an assignment is due in this class. In the latter case an extensions will be given provided you give me **no less than** a ten-day notice.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Reading/Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>Overview of course themes and chronology. Discussion of class expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>Feb 14</td>
<td>Issues facing Central Asia Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.</td>
<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>Edward Said &amp; Orientalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Week 4 |          |                           | J. J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests*, 73-195 &
|        | W. Mar 9  | The Great Game             | Discussion on how to conduct research on secondary sources for your wiki project
|        | W. Mar 16 | The Making of the USSR      | Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze*, 1-94
| Week 7 |          | The Making of the USSR      | Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze*, 95-242
|        | M. Mar 21 | The Making of the USSR      | Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze*, 184-242
|        | W. Mar 23 | The Making of the USSR      | SHORT ESSAY 1 DUE
| Week 8 |          |                           | Spring Break!!!

5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. Apr 6</td>
<td>Soviet Nationalities Policy and Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 11</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| W. Apr 20 | No Class | **Start reading Hamid Ismailov's *The Railway***  
**Email me your wiki proposal to me at the beginning of class on Wednesday.** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| M. Apr 25 | Hamid Ismailov's Central Asia | Discussion of Hamid Ismailov's *The Railway*  
Discussion of the mini-documentary of the Glasnost Film Festival on Russian veterans from Afghanistan and an episode from the CNN Cold War Series on the Afghan War  
Material on reserve @ Mudd:  
2. VIDEO 8 Homecoming / directed by Tatyana Chubakova (17 min.) 1987  
**SHORT ESSAY 2 DUE** |
<p>| W. Apr 27 | War in Afghanistan |                                      |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 15</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. May 2</td>
<td>No Class</td>
<td>Be ready to discuss Chingiz Aitmatov's <em>The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years</em> on Wednesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. May 4</td>
<td>Chingiz Aitmatov’s Central Asia</td>
<td>Discussion of <em>The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Turn in your first polished draft for your wiki entry at the beginning of class.*