

Manas – Texts, Contexts, and Tradition
American University of Central Asia
Fall 2019

Instructor and course information

Instructor Dr. James Plumtree
Office hours Monday 12.00-14.00 Room 415
 Other times by appointment
Course code HUM/ART-273
Time Monday 14:10-15:25
 Wednesday 14:10-15.25
Location NC 434

Course abstract

Since 1856, when Chokan Valikhanov transcribed the first known recorded story relating to the epic hero Manas, Kyrgyz epic oral poetry has been the subject of academic investigation. This course will examine the Manas Epos through its four major stages and notable texts: the mid-nineteenth century (Valikhanov's transcription of Nazar Bolot uulu; the anonymous performances recorded by Radloff), the 'Twilight Age' from 1869-1917 (Maldibay Borzu uulu, Kenje Kara, Tinibek Japıy uulu), the Soviet era (Sagimbay Orozbekov and Sayakbai Karalaev), and the post-Independence period. Given the greater accessibility for scholarly work, focus will be orientated towards the early variants. The texts – written (manuscript and print) and recorded (sound and video) – will be used to explore questions of collection, collation, canonization, audience, intent, adaptation, and to consider cultural heritage concerns of change and continuation.

Course rationale and marking

The aim of the course is for the students to appreciate the diversity and range of the Manas epos, understand and incorporate a wide variety of approaches to the material, and develop the skills required for textual scholarship: contextualisation, higher criticism, and commentary. Throughout the class, students will be engaged with primary and secondary literature, in manuscript and in edited versions, in Kyrgyz and in translation. In addition to having a more thorough and nuanced appreciation of the Manas epos, students will complete the course with an understanding and grounding with the methods of textual (and contextual) scholarship. The grade is calculated as follows: class participation (30%), reflection papers (35%), and exams (35%).

Course Outline (subject to change)

Week 1:	Introduction/The Mid-Nineteenth Century
Week 2:	Valikhanov's 'Memorial Feast' (1856)
Week 3:	Radloff's 'Bok-murun' (1862)
Week 4:	Same story/Different texts?
Week 5:	Radloff's 'The Duel between Manas and Er K����'
Week 6:	Radloff's 'The Birth of Semetey'
Week 7:	Radloff's 'Semetey'
Week 8:	Radloff's 'Birth of Manas'
Week 9:	'Twilight Age' Manuscripts, Recordings, Print
Week 10:	Kenje Kara's 'Semetey'
Week 11:	Maldıbay Borzu uulu's 'Semetey', Tınıbek Japıy uulu's 'Semetey'
Week 12:	<i>Qissa</i> or <i>Tarikh</i> :
Week 13:	Orozbekov and Karalaev
Week 14:	Post-Independence Manas (Reichl)
Week 15:	The Birth(s) of Manas by Bakchiev and Sydykov
Week 16:	Managing a Tradition

Requirements and Grading

- Attendance is mandatory. Absences must be explained in advance, and paperwork required afterwards.
- Many resources will be made available via the e-course and the library.
- Active participation is required. Responses and note-taking is required.
- Use of mobile phones and laptops in the classroom is not permitted, since active engagement with the texts and the discussions is required.
- No 'extra work' to improve the final grade is offered; the final grade is established by the quality of your work and participation during the semester.
- The quality of the classroom experience requires input from the student. Therefore, the syllabus is tentative, and open to suggestions that are sound, thoughtful, and productive for the course.
- The grading is as follows:

A: 94-100%	A-: 90-93%	Excellent work	
B+: 87-89%	B: 84-86%	B-: 80-83%	Good work
C+: 77-79%	C: 74-76%	C-: 70-73%	Competent work
D+: 67-69%	D: 64-66%	D-: 60-63%	Poor work deserving some credit
>60&		Failure to reach minimum requirements for credit	