

## **CORC 3206: Development of the Silk Road**

The City University of New York, Brooklyn College

### **Study Abroad in China Program**

Instructor: Andrew Meyer, Ph.D./Shuming Lu, Ph.D.

#### **Required Texts**

1. Valerie Hansen. (2012). *Silk Road: A New History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
2. Xinru Liu. (2012). *The Silk Roads: A Brief History With Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Additional Documents:

1. Relevant articles available for download at blackboard website under "Course Documents"
2. Watch the full program of "*In the footsteps of Marco Polo*" at <http://www.thirteen.org/marcopolo/>

#### **Overview**

The history of the Silk Road is long and rich, spanning many centuries and cultures. This great trade route allowed travelers to transport more than goods and wealth. Philosophical and religious ideas and technologies were carried along the route, as well, among many Eurasian empires and regions. This course will investigate the development of several such ideas in some real sites in China, especially Xi'an as the starting point of the ancient overland Silk Road, and Nanjing & Yangzhou as the starting point of the maritime Silk Road.

#### **Course Outcomes**

1. Students should be familiar with important names, dates, and places of the development of the ancient Silk Road
2. Students should be able to identify the most important philosophies and religions that traveled along the Silk Road, and major features of these religions
3. Students should understand some of the most distinctive aspects of the Silk Road and how the development of the Silk Road influenced trade, technological innovations, exchange of ideas, and interactions among social & political groups along the Silk Road, and how the Silk Road actually transformed cultures both east and west
4. Students should be able to think critically about historical events and reason through different explanations for causes and effects on the basis of evidence
5. Students should be able to read historical documents with a sensitivity to their temporal and cultural context

Course lectures and readings will be supplemented by field trips to the historical sites relevant to the topics under study. Some sessions and lectures will be held during our trips to Beijing and Xi'an. In Nanjing & Yangzhou, class discussions may also be held in Buddhist monasteries & temples, Muslim businesses and mosques, silk trade locations, etc.

#### **Side Trip to Yangzhou**

In addition to Xi'an and Nanjing, Yangzhou is also an important site for the ancient Silk Road (with information in the museums about merchants of the Silk Road, China Block printing, Marco Polo, Buddhism, Islam, etc). Each student in this class should plan for some additional fees for transportation, admissions and tour guide of the side trip to Yangzhou not covered in the main program.

#### **Course Approach & Schedule**

The course will be conducted in two parts. The first part will combine readings with online assignments based on the readings. *This portion of the course can be regarded as a structured learning experience that can (and should) be completed, as much as possible, before departure for China.* The second portion of the course will combine close observations of relevant sites in China, journal writing, lectures and classroom discussions.

Fifteen class sessions will be scheduled, with each session for 3 hours. Most sessions will take place in physical class settings, and some will be delivered on the blackboard website and during field trips to historical sites in the Chinese cities. Students will be placed into small groups to facilitate discussions in class and online.

A lot of this course will be based on your observations while touring China. It will be a good idea to have a notebook and pencil or voice recorder with you all the time. Your notes will be useful when you are writing your journal, participating in class discussions, and completing the assignments.

It is in the nature of the study abroad program that it will be a little hard to anticipate the schedule of the class meetings in Nanjing. The specific schedule of visits and discussions probably won't be known until we arrive in Nanjing and may be subject to change, sometimes at short notice. Class sessions will probably vary in both day and time. The class may meet on weekend and evenings if necessary. The instructor reserves the right to make necessary adjustments in the class schedule and evaluation in response to the changing circumstances during the course of the program in China.

Students are required to complete the readings as soon as possible, no later than the day before our scheduled arrival in Nanjing.

### **Written Submissions**

All written submissions must be typed and documented in accordance with the APA style requirements. Written submissions will be evaluated by the instructor for responsiveness to the assignment, theoretical sophistication, rigor, coherence, and ingenuity of the position developed, organization, and correctness as well as clarity of expression. As regards evaluation of the mechanics of expressive correctness, students are advised that for every ten errors in spelling, grammar (including capitalization and punctuation), and documentation, the overall evaluation of a submission will be lowered by one grade. All submissions are due as specified in the syllabus and late submissions will be penalized with one grade lowered for each day late.

Non-Brooklyn College students are required to keep a course portfolio of all work and assignment submissions for this course, to be evaluated by the appropriate office and committee for equivalent credits at the home institution.

### **Course Evaluation**

- |                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Participation       | 20% (online, trip, and in-class) |
| 2. Group projects      | 20%                              |
| 3. Interpretive Papers | 30%                              |
| 4. Final exam          | 30%                              |

As this course is part of the study abroad program, students are advised that their behavior during the program may affect their final grade for the course.

Participation includes meaningful contribution to the class discussions in class and online. For class meetings in Nanjing, students may be asked to submit discussion questions and/or short reflection essays based on the assigned readings the day prior to the class meeting. If students are asked to present on relevant chapters, a one-page outline is required from each speaker the day before presentation.

### **Written Assignments:**

1. There will be two short papers (3-4 pages each) on assigned questions. Each will count for 15% of your final grade. The first paper is due at 5:00 pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> day after our arrival in Nanjing and the second due at 5:00 pm on the 10<sup>th</sup> day after our arrival in Nanjing. The papers are to be submitted in both hard copy and electronic version at the blackboard Safe-Assign links.
2. At the end of the course, there will be a final exam with comprehensive questions covering the whole course. The final exam should be at least 5 pages in length and is due 10:00 pm the day before the group departs Nanjing (in both hard copy and electronic version at the blackboard Safe-Assign link).

### **Questions for Short Papers:**

Choose one question and write a well-reasoned answer in response, drawing upon primary evidence from the sites you visit and from the textbooks. You can argue either side of the case, and you will be graded on how well

you back up your position with evidence. Each answer should have a clear thesis and draw upon at least three pieces of evidence. You should take good notes when reading the texts and when visiting the sites in China.

#### Paper #1

1. What things did you see at the sites in Beijing, Xi'an, Nanjing and Yangzhou as evidence of the influence of development of the Silk Road in the area of **art** and how do you interpret such influence?
2. What things did you see at the sites in Beijing, Xi'an, Nanjing and Yangzhou as evidence of the influence of development of the Silk Road in the area of **religion** and how do you interpret such influence?

#### Paper #2

1. How did the development of the Silk Road change people's ways of life?
2. How did the Silk Road play a role in the transfer of technology?

Students are strongly advised to read the CUNY and Brooklyn College's policies regarding academic dishonesty, attendance and sexual harassment.

#### Topics of Class Activities

1. Introduction to Course
  - a. An overview
  - b. Evidence and interpretation; history
  - c. Archeology and ethnography; scientific research
  - d. Assignments and readings
2. Culture and intercultural exchanges
  - a. Cultures east and west
  - b. Dimensions of cultural variability
  - c. Culture and religion
3. Life along the Silk Road
  - a. The Silk Road in North China: Beijing and Northeast
  - b. Silk Road in Western China--Xinjiang, Dunhuang (Gansu), Xi'an and Tibet
  - c. The Silk Road in ancient and modern China
4. The Silk Road and Influence
  - a. Trade and Travel
  - b. Language
  - c. Exchange of Ideas and Religion
  - d. Art
  - e. Technology
5. Marco Polo and the Silk Road
  - a. Discussing the movie: *In the footsteps of Marco Polo*
  - b. East-West exchanges
6. Major Groups along the Silk Road
  - a. Iranians, Indians, Chinese, Tibetans & etc.
  - b. War, conflicts and political interactions
7. The Silk Road & Eurasian Market System
  - a. China's Trade on the Western Frontier
  - b. Rome's Trade to the East
  - c. Kushan Empire and the Influence of Buddhism
  - d. The Oasis Towns of Central Asia and Spread of Buddhism
  - e. The Byzantine Empire and Silk Trade
  - f. The Tang Empire and Foreign Traders and Priests
  - g. Muslim Baghdad in the Eurasian Market
  - h. Trade Networks from the Mediterranean to the South China
8. Major Locations along the Silk Road
  - a. Kroraina
  - b. Kucha
  - c. Turfan

- d. Samarkand and Sogdiana
- e. Chang'an (Xi'an)
- f. Dunhuang
- g. Khotan
- 9. Religions of the Silk Road
  - a. Zoroastrianism
  - b. Manichaeism
  - c. The Christian Church
  - d. Buddhism and Islam
  - e. Confucianism and Daoism
  - f. Syncretism along the Silk Road
  - g. Islamization of the Silk Road
- 10. Extension of the Silk Road in East & South China
  - a. Buddhism and Islamic culture in Nanjing and rest of China
  - b. Field trip: Yangzhou Museums (Marco Polo, Arab Merchants in Yangzhou, Block Printing, Art; Buddhism)
  - c. Field trip: Nanjing Jiming Buddhist Temple
  - d. Field trip: Maxiangxing Muslim restaurant in Nanjing
  - e. Nanjing, Yangzhou, Quanzhou, Guangzhou: Maritime Silk Road
- 11. The Silk Road and Intercultural Communication
  - a. Inter-cultural and inter-ethnic interactions
  - b. Inter-faith
  - c. Peace and co-existence
- 12. Summary & review
  - a. Influence of the Silk Road in Suzhou
  - b. Shanghai and the Silk Road: Building links of past and present, East and West
  - c. Rethinking the Silk Road in the age of globalization

The instructor reserves the right to make any changes to this syllabus based on changing circumstances. Prepare to be flexible.