Attention!

This is a representative syllabus. The syllabus for the course you are enrolled in will likely be different. Please refer to your instructor’s syllabus for more information on specific requirements for a given semester.
“Culture and Politics in Central Asia”
NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES & CULTURES (NELC) 5204

Course Mechanics (Syllabus)
The Ohio State University

Meeting Time:
Meeting Location:

Instructor:
Email & Website:
Phone:

Office Hours:

Office Location:
Mailbox:

Course Description:

Central Asia. Explore an understudied but globally significant region at the nexus of Islamic revival, post-communist democratization, Eurasian geopolitics & security, vast energy reserves, and millennia of historical connection with world markets and culture.

About the size of Western Europe, Central Asia sits at the juncture of the Turkic, Persian, Russian, Chinese, and Indian worlds, but was almost unseen by outsiders before the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. It is the land of the “stans”: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and northwest China (Xinjiang).

We will look at Central Asia under and after Soviet-Russian rule, focusing on 20th century through recent developments in culture, society, politics, and everyday life. Topics include its rapid modernization, experience under communism, changing role of women, the state creation of ethnicity, distinctiveness of its Islam, and recent post-Soviet trends in the region after 9/11 and the emergence of neighbor China.

The format is seminar, with lecturing. Course materials center around in-depth analyses of a few books, articles, and in-class films. Course requirements include: writing 2 drafts of a term paper, presenting your paper to the class, leading class discussion once, writing a short book review, and active participation throughout the course.

Prerequisites:

Minimum rank 3 or graduate standing (but depending on your background, I can be flexible here). What is required is a college-level ability to read academic writing critically and express yourself clearly in writing. One or two upper level undergraduate courses in the Humanities or Social Sciences are highly recommended, but not required.
All readings in English, no other language skills are required. No special background in Central Asia or the Soviet Union is presumed, but any knowledge about those, or about the Middle East, or about China, would allow you to get more out of the course.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Leading</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay, Conference Draft</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay, Final Draft</td>
<td>50%</td>
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❖ **Participation** is the key to doing well in the course. It means:

- *Do the assigned readings.* I cannot overstate the importance of this.
  - Pace yourself between our class meetings. No last minute reading.
  - Read “proactively” and selectively. Refer to my handout, *How to Read an Academic Book or Article*, on course website under Contents tab.

- *Actively participate in class discussion.*
  - Be prepared to talk about the readings in class. You should jot down notes as you read, and bring them to class.
  - Our goal is to interpret the material critically together and respond to others’ arguments. Much of our learning in this course will come from class interactions. **You’ll be graded for your conscientious engagement with the material and other students, not how much you already know, or how smart you appear in discussion.**

❖ **Discussion Leading**

- You will be required to *sign up for 2 days* during the semester to lead the discussion on the readings due for that day. If there is more than one person leading discussions, prepare them collaboratively (meet outside of class, feel free to come talk to me as a team if you wish).
- Come to class with an outline of the discussion questions, or email ahead of time to class.
- This means reading the materials thoughtfully, identifying the important themes, and crafting productive questions for class discussion, which you will lead. Link the current reading to past readings, lectures, and themes of the course.
- You’ll be graded on your preparedness and grasp of the significance of the readings. Refer to my handout *How to Lead Discussion*, on course website under Canvas>Essential Files.

❖ **Course Essay**

- Choose your own topic and material focus, based on your own research interests and plans. I must approve your essay idea by Class 3. Start thinking now.
  - Talk to me before/after class or at office hours about your initial ideas.
  - Post your **Essay Proposal** outlining:
    - The question, context, and motivation (where, when, why this problem?)
    - A preliminary thesis (argument or claim you hope to make)
    - Source materials in addition to our course readings (mostly secondary sources). **This is NOT a primary-source research paper.** You can use a few primary sources if you’ve already begun that work and want to analyze them in light of this course.
Write the Course Essay in two drafts over the semester with me.
- The Conference Draft is for our mini-conference near the end of the quarter, and will be due 1 week before you are scheduled to present. Post a copy of the draft on our course website Canvas>Discussions>“Course Essay Postings” forum. Also email the entire class with a notice.
- Present your paper at the conference. You will be graded for the draft’s:
  - Clarity of stating the central argument – 35%
  - Quality of argumentation and evidence – 35%
  - Thoughtful use of sources (course and outside) – 30%
  - The oral presentation itself will not be graded, although if you make your points better verbally than in writing, that will only increase your grade!
- Read the other students’ drafts and be ready to discuss them during the conference. You will also be assigned one other student’s paper to be a formal discussant.
  - Your active participation in the conference (including as discussant) counts as part of your overall Participation grade.
- Gather comments of your work from the students and from me, and revise your draft.
- The Final Draft will be due at the end of the quarter, and will be expected to incorporate recommended changes, be longer and more substantive than the 1st draft, and take into account readings over the entire course.
- You will be graded for the Final Draft’s:
  - Strength of supporting the central argument – 40%
  - Thoughtful analysis of sources – 40%
  - Writing clarity and organization – 20%

The essay needs to incorporate the perspectives and debates of the courses readings and discussions, evaluated critically and applied to your materials. The course coverage should not be comprehensive (or forced). How much coverage depends on your topic. Talk to me about that, if in doubt.

For details, see handout, Course Essay Guidelines, on course website, Canvas>Essential Files.
- I urge you to submit the final draft for the encouraged early deadline (see Course Schedule). You will receive a small grade boost and will have incentive to pace your writing wisely throughout the short quarter.
- Please include YOUR NAME in the FILENAME of anything you post, so use a filename like: “Mary Doe, NELC 5204 1st Draft”.

Grading Scale for Course Essay & Reading Responses:
- If this scale looks different from what you are used to, don’t worry. All grading will be on this scale, and your final grades will also be computed on this scale. So if you do “A” work on a paper, you’ll get a 95-100 on it. That’ll put you on the road to an “A” for the course if you also do the same level of work on the other parts of the course. And so forth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91 – below 95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88 – below 91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85 – below 88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81 – below 85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78 – below 81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75 – below 78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C -</td>
<td>71 – below 75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68 – below 71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65 – below 68%</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>below 65% (fail)</td>
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Policies

Absences: you are allowed 2 absences to class without penalty. This is meant to cover illness, family situations, job interviews, etc.

- Beyond that, absences will negatively affect your overall grade, up to 5% per unexcused. This is a lot! Just one absence beyond the 2 allowed can make an A- into a B+, for example. You can fail just by missing a few too many classes!
- For absences after the 2nd one, email me (ahead of time if possible) with your reasons. Email me even if you tell me verbally in class, because I need a record. I will use my discretion to decide how much grade penalty (up to the 5% per incident) applies, but probably at least some penalty will apply.
- If an unusual, lasting situation arises, you are responsible to let me know as soon as possible (or have someone else contact me). Disappearing (even with good reason) without telling me does not look good for you in terms of getting a reduced penalty.
- Also, let me know now about expected absences from religious holidays ahead of time. These are excused without counting to the no-penalty limit of 2.
- I will take attendance (but that’s also so we’ll get to know each others’ names). Make sure I know you’re here if you’re late. Perfect attendance may get a grade boost!

Lateness: repeated lateness (every 3 or 4 instances) will be counted as absence. Leaving class early (without telling me ahead verbally) is treated as lateness. Doing inappropriate activities during class is treated the same (see below on class conduct).

Incompletes: I don’t like to give incompletes. But if feel you need one, you must request this before the final exam, and give good reasons. I have discretion about whether to grant this, and it would mean some late penalty on the exam and/or makeup work even if I grant the incomplete.

Class Cancellation: In the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note by place on the classroom door. Afterwards, I’ll email you about what I expect you to do for the following class. It is a good idea always to check your email the morning before each class.

Plagiarism: I take plagiarism very seriously.

- All suspected cases will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct, in accordance with university rules.
- Substantiated cases would mean a failing grade in this course.
- I may use new anti-plagiarism software to check for undocumented source material.
- Plagiarism is the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.
- Collaboration and sharing ideas from others, however, is a good thing. We learn by building on each other’s ideas. Just make sure you acknowledge your sources with footnotes in your writings, or orally in class. (Also do something with the ideas of others: evaluate them, relate them to other ideas, argue for or against them, give your own examples illustrating them, etc. Don’t just cite them.)

Students with disabilities, please make your needs known to me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS in 150 Pomerene Hall at 2-3307.
**In-class conduct:** I expect we will treat each other with respect in the classroom, both in behaviors and manner of discussions.

- Digital devices are permitted only for notetaking. *No texting during class.* I may check what you are doing and confiscate devices that violate this for the remainder of the class. Repeat offenders get an absence to their record.
- No newspapers, non-course books, texting, email, websites, etc. during class.
- Keep any talk to each other to a quiet minimum.
- I reserve the right to ask students whom I judge is disrupting the classroom environment to leave, resulting in an instant absence deduction of 5% of total grade.

**Suggestions**

- **Check email & course website** throughout the week for any course news or updates.

- It’s best to contact me by email, (liu.737@osu.edu). I try to reply to email within 24 hours. For longer questions, see me before/after class or at my office hours. To get class assignments if you missed class, check your email or course website, or ask a friend in class before you ask me.
- Email me questions about what we did in class or read. “No question is stupid” – I mean it. I can answer them at the beginning of next class, because probably other students have the same question.

- Get the phone/email of 2 others in the class, so you can get notes or updates if you miss class.
- It’s great to talk about the course material outside of class and share insights.

- Clear, concise, **effective writing** in the essays is the key to doing well in this course. I highly encourage you to use the free services of the Writing Center, which works with you one-on-one, confidentially, to improve your writing. Send them a draft of your paper. Check them out at: [http://cstw.osu.edu](http://cstw.osu.edu), 614-688-4291.

- I unfortunately cannot give feedback on your writing by email outside of the two scheduled drafts. But I’ll be glad to look at your paper in-progress drafts with you during my office hours.
- **Do come see me in my office hours** during the term. I’ll be glad to chat with you about questions, or any topics of your interest. *You don’t have to have a “problem” to see me!* But please email me to tell you’re coming, so that you don’t come when other students are talking with me.

- **Use bibliographic software**, like Endnote or ProCite. They can maintain all your references for all your course papers, theses, conference presentations, research prospecti, funding proposals, etc. for the rest of your career. You can automate importing references from libraries, and from article websites. And you can output them in any format instantly. *You can take notes on each reference and use this as a research database.* They are inexpensive with student discount at WiredOut, the campus tech store: [http://wiredout.osu.edu](http://wiredout.osu.edu). Just get one!
Disclaimer

I have intentionally chosen readings & films that offer a range of different interpretations and viewpoints, some of which argue against each other. The points of view expressed in the course material do not necessarily reflect my views or those of the University.

Our common task is to evaluate everything thoughtfully, because an opinion you disagree with is instructive to all of us. You are NOT required to agree with what you read or hear (including from me), but ARE required to give every idea careful consideration and respect for those expressing them.

You are welcome to argue for your own point of view in a constructive manner. You will be graded not for which side you come down on in a debate, but how well you argue for it (using well-documented facts, materials from our course, methodical reasoning, etc.).

Readings

The course readings listed by the dates they are due are in the Class Schedule, a separate document on the course website. What’s listed below are the required and optional course readings by category.

Required Books:

All readings for this class are contained in 4 required books below in the box, and in articles available on the course website as PDFs. The books can be bought at SBX Bookstore, 1806 N. High Street (across from Ohio Union), phone 614-291-9528, www.sbx-osu.com. If SBX runs out, let me know immediately, and search for these books at other campus bookstores, like UBX, Barnes & Noble at South Campus Gateway, online, etc.

Some of these are also on reserve at the Thompson Library (for borrowing up to 2 hours at a time).

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Required Books</th>
<th>Edition Details</th>
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**Required WEB readings** (listed in Class Schedule, and posted on our CARMEN website):


**Optional Background Readings:**

**Recommended book**, especially for those with no Central Asia background, and for undergraduates. This is NOT required, and is not at SBX, but will be on reserve at the library (can borrow up to 1 day).


Some suggested articles within this book (a few are posted as PDFs for optional reading):  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P. Michaels, &quot;Ethnohistorical Journey through Kazakh hospitality&quot;, pp. 145-159</th>
<th>15</th>
<th><em>Everyday Life in CA</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. Keller, &quot;Going to school in Uzbekistan&quot;, pp. 248-265</td>
<td>17</td>
<td><em>Everyday Life in CA</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Adams, &quot;Uzbekistan's National Holidays&quot;, pp. 198-121</td>
<td>23</td>
<td><em>Everyday Life in CA</em></td>
</tr>
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Other recommended resources for your research projects or curiosity:

Under Soviet rule:
or 2000 edition, The new Central Asia: the creation of nations, DK859.5 .R6813 2000 [on reserve with our course]

Economies:

Central Asian Islams:


Ethnographies of Central Asian Lives: Youth


The Political


Markowitz, Lawrence P. 2013. State erosion: unlootable resources and unruly elites in Central Asia.


Northwest China (Xinjiang), Uyghurs, Hui (Chinese Muslims):

Infrastructures & Energy

Health

Migration

Music

Analytical Reports

Journalistic Accounts