Syllabus

Instructors
Rune Steenberg Reyhe, rsr2151@columbia.edu [as of #9, October 4]
(consultation: Th, 4-6PM, IAB 1235)
Joseph MacKay, djm2223@columbia.edu (consultation: Th xxx, IAB 1228)
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Bulletin Description
Inner Asia, positioned at the intersection of many great historical civilizations; is a region historically in flux, featuring great mobility of people, material, and ideas. This course explores the dynamic interactions, both historical and contemporary, of politics, identity and economy in Inner Asia in a transnational interdisciplinary framework.

Requirements (Undergraduate)
- Class participation (20%)
  - Includes the preparation of three questions per week for the class readings (to be handed in by Monday each week)
- Mid-term exam (October 18) (20%)
  - Graded response by October 20
- One oral presentation in class of a reading (ca. 8–10 min) (20%)
  - One text is summarized orally in class and related to the session's general theme (graded response by instructor following the session)
  - Will be assigned and graded by Rune Steenberg in Oct. and Nov.
- Final take-home examination (ca. 15 pages) (40%)
  - There will be a limited choice of questions to discuss in writing
  - Students have three weeks (Nov 17–Dec 8) to fulfill the assignment

Required Textbook:
All other readings will be available online on CourseWorks.

Statement on Academic Integrity
Please see http://bulletin.columbia.edu/sipa/academic-policies.

Disability Accommodation:
For information about accommodation, contact: Disability Services at 212-854-2388 or disability@columbia.edu.

Meetings
Tu, Th 2:40–3:55 (Tu September 6 through Th December 8, 2016)
<1> **Tu 6 September**

**INNER ASIA: INTRODUCTION, GEOGRAPHY, PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES**

Alan Timberlake, Joseph MacKay

Introduction to the course and the region, with an overview of its geography and history.
Introduction to peoples and languages of the region.

*Readings*


<2> **Tu 8 September**

**THEORIES OF STATE AND EMPIRE**

Joseph MacKay

This session will provide a theoretical overview of types of states and empires, considering how such large social orders may be thought of in the abstract. We will consider the concept of the state as a political, administrational, ideological, and social construct, and contrast it with empire as a mode of social organization. We will then begin to locate these accounts in Inner Asia and its history.

*Readings*


*Suggested further reading*


<3> **Tu 13 September**

**NOMADIC STATES AND EMPIRES. PERSPECTIVES FROM WITHOUT**

Joseph MacKay

Nomadic people have often been seen and described as the cultural Other by sedentary cultures, a result of the fact that the written sources left by the sedentary cultures outnumber those left by nomadic cultures. This session will closely consider such canonical accounts of nomadic state and empire-building written by settled peoples—texts that often among the most widely read historical accounts of these societies.
Readings


Suggested further reading


4) **Th 15 September**

NOMADIC STATES AND EMPIRES. PERSPECTIVES FROM WITHIN

Joseph MacKay

Much Inner Asian history can be read as a dynamic and symbiotic, but at the same time often agonistic interdependence between nomadic and sedentary cultures. The hierarchical relations between the two was not fixed or stable, and surprisingly, often favor nomads. This session will consider alternate accounts, attempting to reconstruct regional history from the nomadic point of view.

Readings


[Of additional interest: discussion file]


Suggested further reading


5) **Tu 20 September**

FROM THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE TO THE SOVIET UNION

Alan Timberlake

During the 19th century the Russian Empire expanded rapidly to conquer the Central Asian steppes and city states. As the Russian (Tsarist) empire evolved into the Soviet Union, some political practices of regulating nomadic populations, religion, settlement, language, taxes and political evolved as well, but we see at least as many continuities as differences.
Readings


Suggested further reading


**Menges**, Karl. 1994. Languages and Migrations. In: E. Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia. 120 Years of Russian Dominance, a Historical Overview*. Durham, N.C: Duke UP, [Ch. 2]


〈6〉 TH 22 SEPTEMBER
FROM THE QING DYNASTY TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Joseph MacKay

Breaks and continuities in state building are likewise seen in the transformations of China from the Qing Dynasty through the republic of China to the People's Republic of China. This session will locate Xinjiang (and seconarily Tibet) in the context of a series of political ruptures, from the Qing decline to the rise of Chinese communism.

Readings


Suggested further reading


**Ho**, Ping-Ti. In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's "Reenvisioning the Qing. The Journal of Asian Studies 57 (1).

〈7〉 TU 27 SEPTEMBER
NATION STATES
Alan Timberlake
The newest form of state structure in Inner Asia is the nation state. The Central Asian
Republics declared at the collapse of the Soviet Union are recent and prominent examples.
Also/ in old empires like Russia and China, the ideal of the nation state lingers beneath the
surface and offers an imperative model both for national politics around the state apparatus
and its self-legitimation and for ethnic groups or nations within the state's boundaries that
do not have their own designated state territory. Ironically this is happening in an era of
globalized finance where the nation state has been declared obsolete by many observers.

Readings
Jones-Luong, Pauline. 2002. Institutional Change and Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia,
Cambridge: Cambridge UP. [Ch. 1: The Continuity of Change. Old Formulas, New
Institutions, pp. 1–25]
NYU P. [Ch. 7, From Nationalism to State, pp. 125–145]

Suggested further reading
Jones Luong, Pauline. 2002. The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from
Soviet Rule to Independence, Cornell UP, Ithaca.
Seattle.

8 SEPTEMBER
RESISTANCE AND RIOTS
Joseph MacKay
States in Inner Asian history, which rely on violence to a greater or lesser extent, have been
challenged by popular or elite responses resistance and rebellions. Three prominent and
recent examples of this trend are the two Kyrgyz revolutions in 2005 and 2010 and the
unrests and violent government clampdown in Andijan in 2005.

Readings
Dwyer, Arienne M. 2005. The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and
Olcott, Mary B. 1981. The Basmachi or Freemen’s Revolt in Turkestan 1918–24. Soviet
Haven, Conn.: Yale UP.. [Ch. 1, Hills, Valleys and States. An Introduction to Zomia, pp.1–
39]

Suggested further reading
Yale UP.
Chinese Central Asia. New York: Columbia UP.

4 OCTOBER
CONCEPTS OF ETHNICITY
Rune Steenberg
This session gives basic insight into anthropological conceptualizations of ethnicity and identity. This first session covers the more classical grounds from Clifford Geertz's primordial over Fredrik Barth's game theory to newer, more constructivist approaches. Especially relevant for Inner Asia are the adaptations and utilizations of concepts of ethnicity and nation by the Russian and later Soviet states as well as by the Chinese Republic and later the People's Republic of China.

Readings

Suggested further reading

<10> TH 6 OCTOBER:
CRITICAL APPROACHES
Rune Steenberg
The second session on theories of ethnicity takes a critical stance with respect to the classical approaches by introducing power and history into the equation and questioning the epistemology of the concepts of identity and ethnicity more generally. Post-colonial and radical critical theories are introduced.

Readings

Suggested further reading


Tu 11 October

NON-ETHNIC CATEGORIZATION

Rune Steenberg

Ethnicity and nation have become a self-evident part of most people's self-assertion in Inner Asia. But they have not always provided the main concepts for identification or classification of people, nor are they today the only ones. This session focused primarily on means and concepts for classifying populations that have historically played important roles, but also opens up the debate of what alternative classifications co-exist with those of nationhood and ethnicity today. Some of the important historical categories are: Oasis Identities, local communities, *Alte Sheher* (the Six Cities): Transoxania, Pax Mongolia, Turkestan, Dar al-Islam, kinship, lineage, tribe, clan, membership, guilds, the nomad/sedentary-divide. The session is also meant to give a glimpse into the living worlds of historical populations of Inner Asia now disappeared, dissipated or transformed, as the Soghdians, Zunghar Mongols, Kipchak and Sart. The different empires involved in Inner Asia, from the Mongolian Empire and the Chinese Dynasties over Tibetan and Turkic Empires to the Russian and British colonial powers all had their own ways of classifying and administering populations. Arguably the policies of the Qing Dynasty and the Russian Empire have been the most influential on contemporary Inner Asia. Including various administrative designations of “foreign” or “barbarians”.

Readings


Suggested further reading


Th 13 October

MANAGING POPULATIONS IN COLONIAL EMPIRES

Rune Steenberg
Following the revolutions of the early 20th century, nationalism became a central dogma in the establishment of new modern states. The Soviet Union and Republican China both introduced ethnic categorizations and policies as a scheme in their administration. This effort was supported by linguistic and ethnographic research, and the categories were pervasively introduced into public and quotidian discourse via propaganda, the educational system and not least, the administration of access to resources.

Readings


Suggested further reading


**Mullaney**, Thomas. 2010. *Coming to Terms with the Nation. Ethnic Classification in Modern China*. Berkeley: U California P.


**TU 18 OCTOBER**

IN-CLASS MID-TERM EXAM

Rune Steenberg

You will be asked to discuss class readings in relation to larger themes and questions treated in class so far. Specifics to be announced.

**TH 20 OCTOBER**

POPULATION POLICIES IN THE USSR AND REPUBLICAN TO MAOIST CHINA

Rune Steenberg

After the revolutions of the early 20th century, nationalism became a central dogma in the establishment of new modern states. The Soviet Union and Republican and Maoist China both introduced ethnic categorizations and policies as a scheme in their administration. This effort was supported by linguistic and ethnographic research, and the categories were pervasively introduced into public and quotidian discourse via propaganda, the educational system and not least, the administration of access to resources.

The local populations were not passive objects to these changes. As violent resistance to new measures was crashed, more subversive measures were utilized to express dissent. At the same time many of the new concepts and categories were adapted into local ideologies and local progressive movements. Some of the most important movements are covered in this session, possibly including: the Basmachi, the Jadids as well as Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic movements and philosophies.
Readings


Mullaney, Thomas. 2006. *Coming to Terms with the Nation. Ethnic Classification in Modern China.* Berkeley, Calif.: U California P. [Ch. 1: Identity Crisis in Post-Imperial China, pp. 18–41]


Suggested further reading


Tu 25 October

ETHNICITY AND NATION BUILDING IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA AND POST-MAO PRC

Rune Steenberg

The decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union became an era of nationalism in many parts of Inner Asia. Building upon administratively strengthened categories both new governments and local groupings used ethnic and national sentiments as a means of mobilization. This included a great deal of invention of tradition, neo-traditionalism and folklorization of culture mainly in the name of the titular ethnicities of the former administrative system. “Tribes,” “clans” and regional solidarity groups became central focus points on a sub-national level.

During the reform era in post-Mao China, identity politics developed into one of the main battlefields for access to state resources. It was seen as a scheme of integration of peoples of different cultural background into the great all-Chinese family of nations, but during the 1980s and 1990s as political control was eased and new groups came to prosperity, ethnicity came to play a crucial role for forming trust networks, opposing assimilative pressures (often more modernist than typical of any particular ethnic group) and phrasing discontent with the government.

Readings


Doi, Mary M. 2002. *Gesture, Gender, Nation: Dance and Social Change in Uzbekistan,* Bergin & Garvey, Westport, Connecticut. [Ch. 5. Independence, pp. 113–128]

Mullaney, Thomas. 2011. *Coming to Terms with the Nation.* Berkeley: U California P. [Ch. 5: Counting to 56, pp. 120–133]

*Suggested further reading*


<16> TH 27 OCTOBER

ETHNIC CONFLICT

Rune Steenberg

Ethnic conflict has become a buzzword and something like an explanation unto itself in both international politics and media. Yet, by this session, the critical historical treatment of ethnicity should provide the students with a more informed understanding of the complexity behind these clashes of mini-civilizations. We look here more closely at the Uyghur case in Xinjiang and the clashes in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. In 2010 in order to apply what we have learnt about political institutions and ethnic identity thus far.

*Readings*


*Suggested further reading*


<17> TU 1 NOVEMBER

ANALYZING ECONOMIC PRACTICES

Rune Steenberg
Here we go beyond abstract models of optimal free market systems of Western capitalism to examine economic practices of Inner Asia. We include: an introduction to political economy (modes of production, commodity exchange), economic anthropology (theories of the gift, embeddedness), and Bourdieu's capital forms. These analytical tools will be applied to Inner Asia throughout the rest of the course.

Readings


Suggested further reading


〈18〉 Th 3 NOVEMBER

THE ANCIENT SILK ROAD TRADE

Alan Timberlake

The ancient so called Silk Road was one of the earliest and largest trade networks of the premodern world. It was both the testing ground for various commercial schemes and models and a “total social institution” in Marcel Mauss' sense of being much. more than a mere economic endeavor in our contemporary limited understanding of the word: the Silk Road was both a transporter and generator of religions, identities and political ideologies and systems.

Readings


Suggested further reading


Nomadic economies never existed in isolation but were always tied into some kind of agricultural system. In the history of Inner Asia we find several non-modern long term symbiotic systems of economic exchange and political dominance. Using the basic analytical tools from the sessions above, we take a closer look at the inner dynamics of these economic systems and their relation to political and social institutions. We also look more closely at what has been deemed “peasant economies”, their corporate kinship groups and the exploitative relationship between political elites and a toiling population.

**Readings**


**Suggested further reading**


**Cribb**, Roger 1991: *Nomads in Archaeology*. Cambridge UP [Ch. 3 Nomad pastoral economy, pp. 23–43]


MODERNIZATION. PLANNED CENTRALIZED ECONOMY AND ITS INFORMAL SHADOW
Rune Steenberg
The modernization efforts of various colonial powers in Inner Asia, directed at both agriculture, industry and commerce, took on new dimensions in the Soviet modernization campaigns of the early 20th century. The Soviet Union and later the PRC established centralized plan-economies in the "shadows" or cracks of which, developed informal or secondary commercial systems based on personalistic ties and social relations: the so called "shadow economies".

Readings

Suggested further reading
Yang, Mai-fair Meihui. 1994: Gifts Favors and Banquets. The Art of Social Relationships in China. Ithaca: Cornell UP. [Part 1, Introduction; Ch. 1, Guanxi Dialects; Ch. 4, Recent Past].
— VIDEO: On Sedenterization/Urbanization in Mongolia 2000: Icy Winds of Change [17 min.]
TU 22 NOVEMBER
MARKETS, TRADE AND CRAFTS
Rune Steenberg
As we have already seen, trade has longstanding traditions in Inner Asia. Traditionally, depending heavily on trust networks, trade was dominated by certain ethnic elites. Actually, returning to the radically constructivist approaches to ethnicity above, it may be argued that trade helped define and construct these groups as categories later to be given ethnic labels. We explore how these developments continue in the contemporary nation-state setting with strong national ideology and with trade more than ever tied to state resources and control albeit often in informal ways. Besides trade, the session will also explore the tradition for artisanship and the challenges it faces from cheap industrial mass production, not least imported from eastern China.

Readings

Suggested further reading
As a part of new international trade routes and not least China's ambitious plan of creating a new Silk Road infrastructural belt across Central Asia, many Inner Asian regions have achieved new political and possibly economic relevance. Tibetan Caterpillar Fungus exported en mass at orbitant prices to the Chinese luxury consumer market is a case in point. Yet, as they become increasingly tied into the world market and international economics, they also become increasingly vulnerable to the fluctuations and crises of the world economy. The US sub prime crisis and financial collapse of 2008 and the world wide phenomenon of financialization have impacted the Inner Asian economies, as has the fall in oil prices and Russia's political fall-out with the West. All this is felt most strongly by the most vulnerable population on the ground in Inner Asia, thousands of miles away from the crises' epicentres. E.g. the Caterpillar Fungus trade slumped as the result of slowing growth in the Chinese economy which, slowly moves away from its export focus and even more directly by Xi Jinping's vehement anti-corruption campaigns.

Readings

Suggested further reading

CORRUPTION: VALUE AT THE NEXUS OF STATE, MONEY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS
Rune Steenberg & Joseph McKay
This session combines the earlier big topics of state, identity, social networks and economic practices in looking at the discourse of corruption and the practices around it, both from a state and a non-state perspective. We use this focus to reiterate some of the central points of the course. The students will also have a chance to ask questions.

Readings

*Suggested further reading*


〈25〉 **Tu 6 December**

Discussion of papers, open questions, wrapping up

〈26〉 **Th 8 December**

Guest speaker Prof. Alexander Cooley on *Great Games, Local Rules*

We will discuss the book's main arguments, the students will have a chance to ask questions before we discuss the most recent developments in the region.

*Suggested Reading*


**PAPERS DUE: Sunday 11 December, 12pm.**