

POLITICS OF CENTRAL ASIA

PIA2492, Spring 2012
Monday 9-12
3911 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

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INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Despite the strategic importance of Central Asia, scholars had very little access to the region—until recently. As a result, the region has been quite poorly understood by policymakers and the public at-large.

This is an advanced research seminar that considers the politics of Central Asia. There is great debate over what constitutes the geographic contours of Central Asia. In recent years, the United States Department of State and most international organizations have moved their administration of Central Asia out of Eurasian or European bureaus to South Asian bureaus. The Department of State recently created the Bureau of Central and South Asia, for example. For the purposes of this course, I define Central Asia quite broadly to include the five former Soviet Republics in the region, as well as Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Due to time limitations, however, we will focus primarily on Afghanistan and the five former Soviet Central Asian Republics. We will discuss Iranian and Pakistani politics throughout the semester.

The reading and workload in this class is commensurate with that of an advanced research seminar. The approach taken here is truly inter-disciplinary, drawing heavily from the fields of anthropology, political science, sociology, economics, and history. We will even read some first hand, primary source accounts in English. In terms of method, the course relies on a framework of comparative analysis. We will think seriously about dynamics in the countries in the region and seek to explain many of the divergent outcomes we witness.

In the past couple of decades, scholars and policymakers have had much better access to the countries of Central Asia. On the one hand, greater access to the region has promoted some truly outstanding scholarship and analysis. On the other hand, because the region is the site of international intervention and growing conflict, it has also attracted a fairly large group of

“helicopter” journalists and scholars who draw broad conclusions about the region or particular countries based on either faulty assumptions or lack of understanding of the region. As a result, much of the contemporary discourse on Central Asia is fraught with inaccuracies or simple romanticizing. In this course, you will be exposed to some of the most important scholarly work on the region by people who have spent significant time on the ground in the region.

This course will not only introduce you to political issues in the region but will also show students how to approach politics through the lens of historical analysis and political economy. As such, we will spend significant time discussing the political, economic, and social history of the region to gain a more nuanced understanding of current affairs.

The first part of the course will focus on the emergence of states in the region. We will compare the trajectories of the former Soviet Central Asian Republics, which found themselves first under the specter of Russian colonial rule and then under banners of Soviet Communism to that of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is one of the few countries in the developing world that never fell—formally—under the control of a colonial power.

The second part of the course will explore the “long peace” in the region. This is the period of Central Asia under Soviet control and Afghanistan during the reign of the *Musahiban* dynasty (that ended just prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan).

The third and final portion of the course will focus on sources of conflict and other current issues in the region.

EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to come to class prepared. Proper preparation requires that you not only read the materials, but that you also spend significant time reflecting and dissecting the materials for that week. As this course is a research seminar, this course depends on active participation by students. There will be minimal lecturing.

EVALUATION

There will be five written assignments in the course: four short papers that allow you to synthesize and evaluate course readings and a final research or policy paper. Class participation will also be evaluated as part of your final course grade.

- Four short analytical papers (10% each, or 40% total)
 - Paper 1 due January 30
 - Paper 2 due February 20
 - Paper 3 due March 12
 - Paper 4 due April 2
- Final paper and its components (50%)
 - Final due in class on April 16
- Class participation (10%)

The final paper and its components, constitutes 50 percent of your course grade. This paper may be either a research paper or a policy paper. A research paper asks a question that is driven by theory or an empirical puzzle. A policy paper seeks to draw attention to an issue of significance in the region, provide background to the issue or problem, and then provide a series of recommendations to deal with these issues.

- Week 4 (January 30): One paragraph description of paper topic (5% of course grade)
- Week 8 (February 27): Two page outline and bibliography (5% of course grade)
- Weeks 10-15 (Individual dates, TBD): In-class presentation of research paper (5% of course grade)
- Final Paper: Due

Each of these assignments account for 5 percent of your course evaluation. Thus, the elements that constitute your paper account for 60 percent of your grade.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Required texts can be found at any number of retailers online. Other documents and articles have been placed on Courseweb.

- Abazov, Rafis. 2008. *Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Central Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Barfield, Thomas. 2010. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Crile, George. 2004. *Charlie Wilson's War*. New York: Grove Press.
- Edwards, David B. 2002. *Before Taliban: genealogies of the Afghan jihad*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Khalid, Adeb. 2007. *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
- Roy, Olivier. 1990. *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roy, Olivier. 2007. *The New Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Birth of Nations*. New York: NYU Press.

Course Topic and Reading Schedule

1. January 9 **Thinking Comparatively about Central Asia**

The Comparative Method

- David Collier, "The Comparative Method," in *Political Science: State of the Discipline II* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1993), 105-119.

Introducing Central Asia, Its People, and History

- Heathershaw, John, and Nick Megoran. 2011. "Contesting danger: a New Agenda for Policy and Scholarship on Central Asia." *International Affairs* 87(3): 589-612.
- Barfield, Thomas. 2010. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1
- Roy, Olivier. 2007. *The New Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Birth of Nations*. New York: NYU Press. Chapters 1-3
- Levi, Scott. 2007. "Turks and Tajiks in Central Asian History." In *Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present*, eds. Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 13-31.

2. January 16 **Martin Luther King Day**

3. January 23 **State Formation I: Afghanistan**

- Barfield, Thomas. 2010. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 2 and 3.

- Khān, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. 1900. *The Life of Abdur Rahman, Amir of Afghanistan*. ed. Mir Munshi Sultan Mahomed Khan. London: J. Murray. Excerpts
- Ahmed, Akbar S. 1980. *Pukhtun Economy and Society*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 1 and 3
- Hanifi, Shah Mahmoud. 2011. *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan: Market Relations and State Formation on a Colonial Frontier*. Stanford University Press. Introduction
- Shahrani, M. Nazif. 2005. “King Aman-Allah of Afghanistan’s Failed Nation-Building Project and its Aftermath (review article).” *Iranian Studies* 38(4): 661-675.

4. January 30 **State Formation II – Forming National Soviet Republics**

Short Paper 1 Due

- Hirsch, Francine. 2000. “Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities.” *Russian Review* 59: 201-226.
- Poliakov, Sergei. 1992. *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. Pages 1-30, 76-80.
- Khalid, Adeb. 2007. *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 1-4
- Edgar, Adrienne L. 2001. “Genealogy, Class, and ‘Tribal Policy’ in Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924-1934.” *Slavic Review* 60(2): 266-288.
- Kamp, Marianne. 2002. “Pilgrimage and Performance: Uzbek Women and the Imagining of Uzbekistan in the 1920s.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34(2): 263-278.

5. February 6 **Afghanistan – Before the War**

Paper topic due

- Barfield, Thomas. 2010. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 4.
- Edwards, David B. 2002. *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

6. February 13 **The Soviet Experience**

- Roy, Olivier. 2007. *The New Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Birth of Nations*. New York: NYU Press. Chapters 4-6
- Critchlow, James. 1988. “‘Corruption’, Nationalism, and the Native Elites in Soviet Central Asia.” *Journal of Communist Studies* 4: 142-161.

- Khalid, Adeb. 2007. *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 5-6
- Davé, Bhavna. 2007. *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 3-4.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1996. "Modernization without the Market? The Case of the 'Soviet East'." *Economy and Society* 25: 529-542.

7. February 20 The First Wave of Political Islam --Pakistan and Afghanistan
Short Paper 2 Due

- Roy, Olivier. 1990. *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Emergence of a New Central Asia?

8. February 27 Collapse of the Soviet Union and Emergence of New Nations
Paper Outline and Bibliography Due

- Roy, Olivier. 2007. *The New Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Birth of Nations*. New York: NYU Press. Chapters 7-9.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51-65.
- Yaacov R'oi, "Central Asian Riots and Disturbances, 1989-1990: Causes and Context," *Central Asian Survey* 16 (3): 21-54.
- Heathershaw, John. 2009. *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order*. New York: Routledge.
- Radnitz, Scott. 2006. "What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?" *Journal of Democracy* 17(2): 132-146.

9. March 5 Spring Break

- Crile, George. 2004. *Charlie Wilson's War*. New York: Grove Press.

10. March 12 Taliban and Neo-Taliban

Short Paper 3 Due

- Rashid, Ahmed. 2010. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia, Second Edition*. 2nd ed. Yale University Press. Chapters 6 and 7
- Giustozzi, Antonio. 2007. *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapters 1-3
- Tarzi, Amin. 2008. "The Neo-Taliban." In *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, eds. Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 274-310.
- Sinno, Abdulkader H. 2008. "Explaining the Taliban's Ability to Mobilize the Pashtuns." In *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, eds. Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 59-89.

11. March 19 Local Politics

- Collins, Kathleen. 2004. "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories." *World Politics*.
- Ilkhamov, Alisher. 2003. "The Limits of Centralization: Regional Challenges in Uzbekistan." In *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*, ed. Pauline Jones Luong. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, p. 159-181.
- Bichsel, Christine. 2005. "In Search of Harmony: Repairing Infrastructure and Social Relations in the Ferghana Valley." *Central Asian Survey* 24(1): 53-66.
- Robertson, Graeme, and Grigore Pop-Eleches. 2011. "Cross-Cutting Cleavages and Ethnic Conflict: Evidence from Survey Experiments in Kyrgyzstan." *Working Paper*.
- Murtzashvili, Jennifer. 2011. *The Informal Ties that Bind: Understanding State-Society Cooperation in Rural Afghanistan*. Working Paper

12. March 26 Economic Reform and Resources

- Pomfret, Richard W. T. 2006. *The Central Asian Economies since Independence*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 9
- Luong, Pauline Jones, and Erika Weinthal. 2010. *Oil Is Not a Curse: Ownership Structure and Institutions in Soviet Successor States*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4 and 8
- Simpson, Sarah. 2011. "Afghanistan's Buried Riches." *Scientific American* 305(4): 58-65.

- Starr, S. Frederick, and Andrew S. Kuchins. 2010. *The Key to Success in Afghanistan: A Modern Silk Road Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program.

13. April 2 Foreign Policy

Short Paper 4 Due

- Roy, chapter 10
- Finke, Peter, Central Asian Attitudes towards Afghanistan: perceptions of the Afghan war in Afghanistan
- Blank, Stephen J. 2011. *Challenges and Opportunities for the Obama Administration in Central Asia*. Army War College.
- Deyermond, Ruth. 2009. "Matrioshka Hegemony? Multi-levelled hegemonic competition and security in post-Soviet Central Asia." *Review of International Studies* 35(01): 151.
- Aris, Stephen. 2009. "The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: 'Tackling the Three Evils'. A Regional Response to Non-traditional Security Challenges or an Anti-Western Bloc?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 61(3): 457-482.

14. April 9 Presentations

15. April 16 Presentations

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All students are expected to adhere to the standards of academic honesty. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty would be subject to disciplinary action. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity <http://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ail.html>. This may include, but is not limited to the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating the University Policy.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you have a disability, contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

STATEMENT ON CLASSROOM RECORDING

To address the issue of students recording a lecture or class session, the University's Senate Educational Policy Committee issued the recommended statement on May 4, 2010. While it is optional, the Committee recommends that faculty consider adding the statement to all course syllabi.

“TO ENSURE THE FREE AND OPEN DISCUSSION OF IDEAS, STUDENTS MAY NOT RECORD CLASSROOM LECTURES, DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTIVITIES WITHOUT THE ADVANCE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR, AND ANY SUCH RECORDING PROPERLY APPROVED IN ADVANCE CAN BE USED SOLELY FOR THE STUDENT’S OWN PRIVATE USE.” READINGS