

# Central Eurasia Studies: A Short Introduction

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# Course Scope

## I. Independent *-stans* as the Eurasian core:

- 5 states of post-Soviet Central Asia
- States of Greater Central Asia (Afghanistan & Mongolia)

## II. Independent South Caucasus:

- Armenia, Azerbaijan & Georgia

## III. (Cultural) Central Eurasia:

- Turkey, Russia (esp. indigenous Siberia, North Caucasus & Volga Region), China (esp. Xinjiang/East Turkestan, Manchuria & Inner Mongolia) & Iran (esp. Khorasan & Iranian Azerbaijan)

# Course Structure

## I. State-centric geographically-defined perspective:

### 1<sup>st</sup> Part: Post-Soviet Central Asia:

- (1) Uzbekistan, (2) Kazakhstan, (3) Kyrgyzstan, (4) Tajikistan & (5) Turkmenistan

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Part: Greater Central Asia & Independent (South) Caucasus:

- *'Non-Soviet' Central Asia:* (6) Afghanistan & (7) Mongolia
- *South Caucasus:* (8) Georgia, (9) Armenia & (10) Azerbaijan

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Part: Greater Central Eurasia:

- (11) Russia, (12) China, (13) Turkey, & (14) Iran

**II. Issue-specific perspective**, separately dealing with a principal politically relevant (both national and international) topic

# Theoretical and Practical Significance: Theses

- ‘Nomadic barbarian threat’, that is known all across the Periphery (!) by its many regional variations (e.g. ‘Yellow Peril’ in Europe, but what about the Indo-Europeans themselves?)
- ‘Silk Road’, that determined continental economic and trade system not only in goods, but also ideas (and even diseases)
- ‘Golden Age’ (esp. from the creation of the Abbasid Caliphate in 750 to Ghazali’s reaction in 1150), that established a “great link between antiquity and modern world” (Starr 2013: 4)
- ‘Great Game’, that described a regional contest for primacy between the Russian and the British empires in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with crucial theoretical implications for geopolitical theories and practical ones for the present-day resource quest

# Case-Study #1: The Scythians as the First Major Eurasian Nomads (followed by Sarmatians)

- People of Indo-European (Iranic) stock, who were the first mounted archers & created the first nomadic (proto-)empire in Eurasia in the 1<sup>st</sup> mil. B.C., interacting with settled powers - Persia, Greece, India & even China
- A. Blok's *Scythians* (1918): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgPMQ\\_BjSCA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgPMQ_BjSCA)
- The source for Sarmatism of Poland-Lithuania (*sarmata* – propriety, sense of shame)

## Marija Gimbutas (-ienė)'s Kurgan Hypothesis (1950s)



*Picture 1: Ovide chez les Scythes (1862) by E. Delacroix*



# Evaluation Criteria

## **30% - participation in class:**

- 10% - attendance (missing no more than 3 seminars without a truly important and officially certified reason)
- 20% - personal contribution: active participation in discussion (approx. 30 minutes every seminar; short essay as a possibility for amends) + previously undeclared test-question evaluation

**30% - research paper on previously agreed upon topic** (min. 10 academic sources, incl. 3 books, with strict quotation rules)

**40% - examination** (digital, open-book, open-question) in June (no possibility to have an exam in the end of May)

# Some Open Access Web Sources

## Media Digest:

- <https://eurasianet.org/>
- <https://thediplomat.com/category/crossroads-asia>
- <https://jamestown.org/programs/edm/>

## Research Links:

- <https://www.silkroadstudies.org/>
- <http://centralasiaprogram.org/publications>
- <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ens>
- <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia>