

Contemporary Central Asian Politics (JSISA 479/579, POL S 479/579)

Tuesday/Thursday 11:30-1:20
SAV 166

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***This syllabus can be found at <https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/srad/24964/>

This course is an overview of the politics and society of Central Asia (defined as the post-Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan). It covers pertinent issues in contemporary politics, including democratization, religion, terrorism, civil society, economic reform, ethnic and identity politics, and international influences. Central Asia is a region that is poorly understood and beset by some unfortunate stereotypes. This course is intended to set straight these myths by digging deep beneath the surface of Central Asian politics. It analyzes Central Asia in comparative perspective in order to determine what, if anything, about Central Asia is unique and which characteristics it shares with other regions of the world. To that end, readings include theoretical social science literature addressing developments outside the region, especially in the postcommunist world.

Assignments

- Response papers (different for grads and undergrads—see below) analyzing and critiquing reading
- Policy memo analyzing a current topic and making recommendations to an influential decision maker (5-7 pp)
- Final or research paper

Grading

Grades will be determined by the following formula:

- Response papers—25%
- Class participation—15%
- Policy memo—30%
- Final exam (or research paper)—30%

Important Dates

The response papers are due on the day that we discuss those readings.
The policy memo is due on March 7, with an abstract on January 29.
Oral presentation of findings on March 12.
The optional research is due on the same day as the final: March 20.

Participation

Since this is a seminar, participation is a large part of the grade. Most of every class will be taken up by discussion. Students should complete the reading by the dates indicated below. Instructor reserves the right to administer unannounced quizzes if it appears students are not doing the reading.

Response Papers – for undergraduates

Starting in Week 2, every student will write 8 1-page response papers (anticipate having to do one for each class session with a handful of reprieves for busy days). *Students will submit it in hard copy at the end of class.* No late response papers will be accepted and you have to come to class to turn one in. Each paper should do 3 things:

1) Select one **major** reading of the day (i.e. a book chapter or scholarly article, not a newspaper article). In one sentence, state, in your own words, what you see as the main idea (thesis) of that reading. Then **briefly** interpret or define that argument/concept/idea and explain why it is important for understanding something about Central Asian politics.

2) Identify two key quotes from any/all of the readings that you find provocative, interesting, novel, or ridiculous, and note why you perceive it as such.

3) Devise two questions on the reading assigned for that day. The questions may be items that were not addressed but, you think, should have been. They may be framed as a challenge to a claim by an author that is not backed by the evidence, or that contradicts things other authors have argued. Or it might involve an implication of an argument, for example, whether the claim would stand up if taken to its logical conclusion. Or it might be an educated speculation about how the readings can be applied for policy purposes. Or something else entirely, as long as it comes out of the reading.

Be sure to indicate what text you are referring to, and page number if applicable, for each quote or reference. Full citations are not necessary; short-hand is OK.

The paper should not exceed 1 double-spaced 12-point font page. Indicate at the top which of your papers it is, i.e. “response paper #5”. Cleverer titles are optional. Variety is good. Don’t just specialize in one article.

Response papers – for graduate students

Starting in Week 2, graduate students will write *brief* (3 to 4-page; double-spaced, 12-point font) papers on the assigned reading for *four* sessions of your choosing. The papers are designed to help you engage scholarly arguments. They should *not* summarize the reading(s).

Instead, they should link the reading with broader themes addressed in the class. What is the broader significance of the readings? How do they advance our knowledge or frame an issue in a new way?

Each paper should evaluate the main argument(s) in the texts. Is the argument convincing and/or plausible? What evidence does the author bring to support it? What are the author’s assumptions or possible biases? If a claim seems problematic or unsubstantiated, how could it be corrected or further investigated? What additional evidence would strengthen the argument?

Papers should also compare and contrast the arguments in the readings. If there are readings assigned on that day by more than one author, compare them with each other. If only one author is assigned, compare the arguments to readings from previous weeks. Are the authors’ arguments complementary or contradictory? Why do they make different claims? Is it because they make assumptions that lead to different conclusions? Is it because they get their evidence from different sources or gather it in different ways? Is it because they were written at different times and had different amounts of knowledge upon which to build?

Related, how does the reading build on the reading from past weeks? What is important to know in order to situate this week’s readings? How are the elements connected? Or alternatively, how does this research contradict the earlier reading?

In writing this paper, you have to be selective. Choose only a few points on which to compare and evaluate the arguments. You do not need to answer all the questions posed here. Feel free to take risks. Don't spend time trying to divine the "right" answers, i.e., what the instructor wants to hear. Follow your ideas where they lead.

Policy memo

This 5-7 page paper should address a pressing issue on Central Asia and make concrete recommendations to a relevant decision maker, for example a political leader in the region, a philanthropist, or an international organization. Write as an expert on your chosen topic and as if your opinion will be taken seriously. The style will differ from the response paper.

It should first identify and give some background to the problem to be addressed. Why is it a problem? What historical or other details are necessary to consider in comprehending the problem and deciding how to address it? Whom does the problem affect? Why would it be good to solve? Who would benefit? How has it been addressed in the past? Why have those efforts been insufficient?

Second, it should propose a solution to the problem. What concrete steps should the policy maker take? Why would this work better than what has been tried before? Why is it better than other policies that one could conceivably propose? What kind of resources are necessary to carry it out? How costly (in terms of money, political capital, or time) will it be to mobilize these resources? What are some possible pitfalls or sources of resistance to this policy and how can they be overcome? How will we recognize if the policy is successful? By what metric?

Some points to keep in mind when writing your memo:

- Identify a specific problem and say why (and for whom) it's a problem.
- Note and briefly review strategies that have been tried before.
- Be realistic about what's possible and the resources available.
- Tailor the memo to the reader.
- Anticipate challenges to your strategy and sources of resistance and consider ways of dealing with them.
- Don't spend too much of your 5-7 pages giving background. Give only as much as is necessary.

Turn in a short summary of your proposed memo on 1/29.

Oral presentation

On March 12, students will make a 5-minute presentation of their research, using Power Point. It should summarize the problem and main findings/recommendations of the policy memo.

Final Exam

There will be a comprehensive final exam on March 20 at 4:30 consisting of two parts: i) short-answer identification of concepts, people, and events; and ii) essays from a list of study questions that will be handed out in advance

Optional Research Paper

Alternatively, students can choose to write a ~10-page research paper. Graduate students are especially encouraged to choose this option. Students should submit a one-paragraph abstract for approval by the instructor on 1/29.

Keeping up with Current Events

Students should try to keep up with current events in the region. The best websites are eurasianet.org, rferl.org (Radio Liberty), iwpr.net (Institute of War and Peace Reporting), ferghana.ru, and the blog registan.net.

Readings

Since this is a mixed graduate/undergraduate seminar, students will have a wide range of knowledge and experience with the subject matter discussed. There are no prerequisites for taking this class. Readings have been selected to cover both basic knowledge and advanced theoretical issues.

Most readings are on electronic reserve, while big files are on the website. The books are on sale in the book store, also on reserve in Odegaard library.

To access e-reserves, start at <https://www.lib.washington.edu/>. Then:

→Course Reserves

→Electronic Course Reserves for Seattle

→click [Electronic Reserves & Reserves Pages](#)

→Find the course either by department (International Studies-Area Studies) or Instructor (Radnitz)

Books

Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2007)

Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca, *Everyday Life in Central Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007)

Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010)

Week 1

Introduction 1/8

Studying Central Asia as a Region 1/10

Symposium on the Complexity of Central Eurasia:

John Schoeberlein, "Setting the Stakes of a New Society," 2002; Robert M. Cutler, "The Complexity of Central Asia"; Doulatbek Khidirbekughli, "Mysterious Eurasia: Thoughts in Response to Dr. Schoeberlein," Alexander Lehrman, "The Distinctive Factors of Central Eurasia: A Response to Professor Gleason"; Mehdi Parvizi Amineh, "Towards Rethinking Geopolitics"; Richard Pomfret, "The Specific and the General in Economic Policy Analysis and Advice," *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, 3(1), Winter 2004.

Steven Lee Myers, "Kazakhstan's Futuristic Capital, Complete With Pyramid," *New York Times*, October 13, 2006.

"Post-mortem: One-man Stan" *Atlantic*, March 2007

Ilan Greenberg, "Ancient Nomads Offer Insights to Modern Crises," *New York Times*, August 8, 2007.

Eric McGlinchey, "Central Asia Goes Wobbly," *Current History*, October 2012,

Week 2

Nation-formation 1/15

Francine Hirsch, "Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities," *Russian Review* 59(2), April 2000, 201-226.

Scott C. Levi. "Turk and Tajik in Central Asian History." In *Everyday Life in Central Asia*. edited by Sahadeo and Zanca (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 15-31.

Adrienne Edgar, "Everyday Life among the Turkmen Nomads," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 37-43.

Douglas Northrop, "Languages of Loyalty: Gender, Politics, and Party Supervision in Uzbekistan, 1927-41," *Russian Review* 59(2), Apr., 2000, 179-200.

The Creation of New Elites 1/17

Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Chapter 3, "Sources of Continuity: The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia," 51-74.

Gregory Gleason, "Fealty and Loyalty: Informal Authority Structures in Soviet Asia," *Soviet Studies* 43(4), 1991, 613-628.

Martha Brill Olcott, "The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-24," *Soviet Studies* 33(3), July, 1981, 352-369.

Week 3

The Emergence of New States 1/22

Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge, 2006), 122-68.

Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century* (Richmond, Great Britain: Curzon Press, 1997): Introduction (1-8), Chapter 8 (87-96), Chapter 10 (107-16).

Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia's Catapult to Independence," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1992, 108-130.

Threats to Stability 1/24

Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War and Peace Process." *Civil Wars* 4, no. 4 (2001): 49-72.

Zainiddin Karaev, "Water Diplomacy in Central Asia," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March, 2005), 63-69.

Nancy Lubin, Sam Nunn, Barnett R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley*, (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 1999), Chapter 4, "Social and Economic Tensions and Reforms," 59-72. Skim.

Monica Whitlock, "Kartoshka, Kartushka—War in Tajikistan," in *The Land Beyond the River* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 156-181.

Week 4

Democratization or Autocratization? 1/29 + summary due

Radnitz book, 58-76.

Richard Rose, "How Muslims View Democracy: Evidence from Central Asia," *Journal of Democracy* 13(4), October 2002, 102-111.

Turkmenbashi, *Ruhnama*, 9-32

Nationalism 1/31

Erica Marat, "Imagined Past, Uncertain Future: *The Creation of National Ideologies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.*" *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 12–24.

Laura Adams, "Invention, Institutionalization and Renewal in Uzbekistan's National Culture." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 355–373.

Madeleine Reeves, "Travels in the Margins of the State: Everyday Geography in the Ferghana Valley Borderlands," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 281-300.

Farangis Najibullah, "Central Asia: Name Debate Reflects Region's Mixed History," RFE/RL, 4-4-07.

Week 5

Subnational Identities and Networks 2/5

Kathleen Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Jan., 2003), pp. 171-190

Radnitz, Chapter 5 (103-30).

David Gullette, "Theories on Central Asian Factionalism: The Debate in Political Science and Its Wider Implications," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 3 (2007): 373–387.

2/7 instructor out of town

Week 6

Islam I: Cultural 2/12

Khalid, 19-24, 98-125, 135-39.

Sean R. Roberts, "Everyday Negotiations of Islam in Central Asia: Practicing Religion in the Uighur Neighborhood of *Zarya Vostoka* in Almaty, Kazakhstan," and

David W. Montgomery, “*Namaz, Wishing Trees, and Vodka: The Diversity of Everyday Religious Life in Central Asia,*” in Sahadeo and Zanca, 339-370.

Islam II: Political 2/14

Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 83-85.

Khalid, 140-67

Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad* (Yale University Press, 2002), 1-11, 137-155.

Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River* Chapter 12, “The Glinka Street Plot,” 242-264.

Week 7

Civil Society 2/19

Marc Morje Howard, “Postcommunist Civil Society in Comparative Perspective,” *Demokratizatsiya* 10(3), 2002, 285-305.

Olivier Roy, “The Predicament of ‘Civil Society’ in Central Asia and the ‘Greater Middle East’.” *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2005): 1001–1012.

Thomas Carothers, “The Backlash against Democracy Promotion,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2006.

Sarah Kendzior, “Stop Talking about Civil Society,” *Foreign Policy.com*, December 3, 2012.

State-building or State erosion? 2/21

“Central Asia: Decay and Decline,” International Crisis Group,” 2011, pp. 1-16.

Lawrence Markowitz, “The Sub-National Roots of Authoritarianism: Neopatrimonialism and Territorial Administration in Uzbekistan.” *Demokratizatsiya* 20, no. 4 (September, 2012): 387–408.

Daniel Kimmage, “Kazakhstan: A Shaken System,” RFE/RL, March 3, 2006.

Wikileaks Cable: “MAFIA BOSS FIXES GOU TENDERS AND JOBS,” 5-5-06
<http://cablesearch.org/cable/view.php?id=06TASHKENT902>

Wikileaks Cable: “BERDIMUHAMEDOV AND TURKMENISTAN'S RULING FAMILY,” 12-17-09,
<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09ASHGABAT1633>

Week 8

Political Economy 2/26

Richard Pomfret, *The Central Asian Economies Since Independence* (Princeton, 2006), Introduction, 1-22.

Pauline Jones Luong, "Political Obstacles to Economic Reform in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan: Strategies to Move Ahead," paper presented at the Lucerne Conference of the CIS-7 Initiative, January 20-22, 2003—read overview (4-9) and Uzbekistan case study.

Radnitz, 77-89.

"The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's Destructive Monoculture," ICG, February 28, 2005, 1-16.

Informal Networks and Economies 2/28

Dudwick Nora and Kathleen Kuehnast. "Better a Hundred Friends than a Hundred Rubles?" World Bank Working Paper #39. Washington, World Bank, 2004, 7-29.

Kelly McMann, "The Shrinking of the Welfare State: Central Asians' Assessments of Soviet and Post-Soviet governance," in Shahadeo & Zanca, 233-47.

Radnitz, Chapter 2 (39-52).

"Cash Flow From Tajik Migrants Stalls," NYTimes, 12-24-08

Week 9

Foreign Policy 3/5

Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), "The Devil's Tears: An Introduction," 1-10 and "The New Oil Dorado: Kazakhstan," 74-95.

Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2012), Intro (3-15) and Chapter 5 (74-96)

Wikileaks cable: WHETHER TO COOPERATE: MIXED SIGNALS FROM THE RUSSIANS IN DUSHANBE," 11-22-06,
<http://wikileaks.zakulisa.org/cable/2006/11/06DUSHANBE2113.html>

Development Aid and Democratic Dilemmas 3/7

Nick Megoran, "Preventing Conflict by Building Civil Society: Post-development Theory and a Central Asian-UK Policy Success Story," *Central Asian Survey* 24 (1), 83-96.

Richard A. Boucher, "U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities (Part II)," Statement to the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, April 26, 2006.

Wikileaks Cable: "AT TIMES ANGRY KARIMOV SAYS AFGHAN TRANSIT CAN CONTINUE, SEEKS 'COOPERATIVE APPROACH' WITH U.S. ON DEMOCRATIZATION," 3-18-09,
<http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/213849/09tashkent323.pdf>

Wikileaks Cable: CANDID DISCUSSION WITH PRINCE ANDREW ON THE KYRGYZ ECONOMY AND THE “GREAT GAME”, 10-29-08,
<http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/10/08BISHKEK1095.html>

Wikileaks Cable: “TURKMENISTAN CORRUPTION: WHAT HAPPENS IN ASHGABAT, STAYS IN ASHGABAT,” 12-14-07,
<http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2007/12/07ASHGABAT1348.html>

Week 10

Presentations 3/12

Revolution, Backlash, and Instability 3/14

Michael McFaul, “Transitions from Postcommunism,” *Journal of Democracy*, 16(3), July 2005, 5-19.

Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?” *Journal of Democracy* 17(2), April 2006, 132-46.

Eric McGlinchey, “Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan,” *Asia Policy*, Number 12, July 2011, pp. 79-98

Ilan Greenberg, “Rough Year Ahead for Central Asia,” *National Interest*, 12-28-12,
<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/rough-year-ahead-central-asia-7912>