

# Anth 235

## Central Asian Prehistory

Fall 2017



Photo credit: Cunliffe, 2015.

Meetings: Blodgett Hall 101, T-R 10:30-11:45 am

Professor: Zachary Cofran

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Office hours: T 4:45-6:00 pm, W 1:00-2:15 pm, or by appointment

Central Asia is a vast area at the crossroads of the East and West. Usually considered geographically to comprise the “-stans” of the Former Soviet Union, archaeology and ethnography reveal more porous boundaries with neighboring regions. Although human presence here is documented deep into antiquity, many mysteries about Central Asian prehistory remain: where did the “Andronovan” culture come from? What is the age and significance of expansive earthworks built in geometric patterns? What can the Scythians’ elaborate tattoos tell us about their culture? Starting with the earliest traces of human occupation in the region, possibly nearly 1,000,000 years ago, this course addresses these and many other questions about the early populations of Central Asia. The past of this large region can be understood by comparison with other cultures known ethnographically and archaeologically. Linking past and present, the course also examines the role of prehistory in shaping identity of modern Central Asian states.

### Course objectives

## Syllabus – Anth 235 – Spring 2017

- Learn how knowledge of the past is obtained and analyzed
- Appreciate how environment influences societies and cultures
- Basic GIS and mapping skills
- Develop knowledge of ancient cultures of Central Asia
- Explore how the prehistory is used in the present

### Readings

Weekly readings are posted to Moodle. All readings should be completed for the week in which they are posted/assigned, before coming to class.

### Grading

#### Participation = 20%

You will get the most out of the class if you actively participate, and there will be many instances when you will be expected to contribute to a class discussion and/or participate in small-group exercises. The assessment of Participation is as follows: missing four (4) or more class sessions = 0%; regularly present but inactive = 10%; regularly present and sporadically active = 15%; present and highly active = 20%.

#### Midterm & Final Exams = 2 x 20% = 40%

- Midterm: 05 October
- Final: Finals week

#### Geography quiz = 5%

- 19 September

#### Geoglyph GIS report = 15%

- Turgai introduced & assignment given 14 September
- Analysis & write up due 29 September

#### Site wiki = 20%

The term project is to contribute to a wiki or online database of Central Asian archaeological sites. A list of sites will be posted in the third week, and students will select one – first come, first serve. The wiki entry will entail a short “report” with bibliography and map image. Detailed instructions will be given in class.

Wiki peer-review in class Thursday 30 November

Wiki posted online by 07 December

Except for a few points on the exams, there will be no opportunities for extra credit.

### Attendance

If you miss class you cannot participate, which in turn can affect your grade. However, you are allowed up to three excused, penalty-free, no-questions-asked absences throughout the semester. The exception to this is that you must be in attendance for the exams and infographic presentations; failure to attend on these important dates will result in your failure of those assignments. Exceptions to this rule can only be made with appropriate documentation from Health Services or the Dean of Students.

### Assignment submission and late work policy

I expect you to submit your work in a timely manner, as directed on assignment prompts. Late work will be reduced by 10% for each day that it is late. The only time I

will accept late work without penalty is if it is accompanied by documentation from Health Services or the Dean of Students.

### **Disability accommodation**

Academic accommodations are available for students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO). Students in need of disability (ADA/504) accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, as indicated in your AEO accommodation letter.

### **Academic Integrity**

All work you submit must be your own. You may discuss assignments with colleagues, but you may not turn in the same work. When you use references, other people's ideas, and especially other people's direct words, you absolutely must cite them. For more information, see page 133 of the Vassar College Regulations (<http://bit.ly/2bMuogv>) and "Going to the Source" (<http://bit.ly/2bMuNQ8>). Plagiarism and other academic misconduct will result in a grade of 0 on the assignment and referral to the College's Academic Panel.

### **Technology**

Turn your phones off (or at least put on silent) when you come to class. I can and will confiscate phones if I find them distracting. Phones may only be used in class to access course materials (e.g., readings). You may take notes on a computer if you wish, however, if you become distracting to myself or other students I will confiscate the computer for the duration of class as well. I reserve the right to ban all technology from the classroom at any point in the semester.

## Schedule of topics, readings & assignments\*

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\* Schedule and content subject to change at professor's discretion.

### PART I: HARD ROCK

#### **Week 1 (29-31 August)** – Introduction to Central Asia

##### Readings

- Feder 2017. Chapter 2: Probing the Past. In *The Past in Perspective*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 22–63.
- Liesowska 2015. First glimpse inside the Siberian cave that holds the key to man's origins. *Siberian Times* 28 July (<http://bit.ly/2w9vQ4U>)
- Liesowska 2014. Iconic 2,500 year old Siberian princess 'died from breast cancer', reveals MRI scan. *Siberian Times* 14 October (<http://bit.ly/2w96cNr>)

#### **Week 2 (05-06 September)** – Geography & Geology

##### Readings

- Cunliffe 2015. Chapter 1: The Land and the People. In *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 1–22 (ending at “the Ocean”).
- Chlachula 2010. Pleistocene climate change, natural environments and Paleolithic occupation in East Kazakhstan. *Quaternary International* 220: 64–87.

#### **Week 3 (12-14 September)** – Earthworks and Geoglyphs

Thursday: [Meet in Library 160 for Google Earth workshop](#); [map assignment given](#)

##### Readings

- Salopek 2016. Giant ‘Arrows’ seen from space point to a vanished world. *National Geographic* 11 August. <http://bit.ly/2jv09u1>
- Matuzeviciute et al. 2016. OSL dates for the ancient geometric earthworks of Kazakhstan. *Archaeological Research in Asia* 7: 1–9.

#### **Week 4 (19-21 September)** – Paleolithic Culture

**Geography quiz 19 September**

##### Readings

- Dennell 2010. Chapter 2: The colonization of “Savannahstan”: Issues of timing(s) and patterns of dispersal across Asia in the Late Pliocene and Early Pleistocene. In Norton & Braun (eds) *Asian Paleoanthropology*. New York: Springer, pp. 7–30.
- Glantz, 2010. Chapter 8: The history of hominin occupation of Central Asia in review. In Norton & Braun (eds) *Asian Paleoanthropology*. New York: Springer, pp. 101–112.
- Turcotte nd. Mousterian stone tools (<http://bit.ly/2xnYv4M>)

#### **Week 5 (26-28 September)** – Paleolithic People

**Turgai map project due 29 September**

##### Readings

- Glantz 2009. Is Central Asia the eastern outpost of the Neandertal Range? A Reassessment of the Teshik-Tash child. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 138: 45–61.

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- Viola and Pääbo 2013. What's new in Central Asia? In *Basic Issues in Archaeology, Anthropology, and Ethnography of Eurasia*. Novosibirsk: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, pp. 555–565.
- *Homo neanderthalensis* (<http://s.si.edu/2xo2JJE>)

### **Week 6 (03-05 October) – Review & Exam**

Midterm Exam – in class Thursday 05 October

## October Break – no classes!

### **Week 7 (17-19 October) – End of the Stone Ages**

#### Readings

- Baumer 2012. Chapters 3-4. In *The History of Central Asia* Vol. I. New York: IB Tauris, pp. 39–56.
- Harris et al. 1993. Investigating early agriculture in Central Asia: New research at Jeitun, Turkmenistan. *Antiquity* 67: 324–338.

## PART II: HEAVY METAL

### **Week 8 (24-26 October) – Horses and Copper**

Wednesday 25 October– Amitav Ghosh, 5:30 pm

#### Readings

- Cunliffe 2015. Chapter 3: Horses and Copper. In *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 71–109.
- Olsen 2003. Chapter 7: The exploitation of horses at Botai, Kazakhstan. In *Prehistoric Steppe Adaptation and the Horse*, eds. Levine et al. McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research: Oxford, pp. 83–104.

### **Week 9 (31 October-02 November) – Sheep-goats and Bronze**

#### Readings

- Frachetti 2008. Chapter 2: An archaeology of Bronze Age Eurasia. In *Pastoralist Landscapes and Social Interaction in Bronze Age Eurasia*. University of California Press: Los Angeles, pp. 31–71.
- Honeychurch and Makarawicz 2016. The archaeology of pastoral nomadism. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 45: 341–359.

### **Week 10 (07-09 November) – Spidroin Road**

#### Readings

- Dupuy 2016. Bronze Age Central Asia. *Oxford Handbooks Online* (<http://bit.ly/2w9w9g1>)
- Askarov and Shirinov 1994. The “Palace,” Temple, and Necropolis of Jarkutan. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 8: 13–25.
- Christian 2000. Silk Roads or steppe roads? *Journal of History* 11: 1–26.

### **Week 11 (14-16 November) – Tarim Mummies**

Tuesday Film: *Mysterious Mummies of China*

#### Readings

- Mallory and Mair 2000. Chapter 10: Who were the mummies? In *The Tarim Mummies*. London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 298–318.



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- Mai et al. 2016. Characterization of cosmetic sticks at Xiaohe Cemetery in early Bronze Age Xinjiang, China. *Scientific Reports* 6: 18939.
- Yang et al. 2014. Proteomics evidence for kefir dairy in Early Bronze Age China. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 45: 178–186.

### **Week 12 (21 November) – Pazyryk (Scythian) Mummies**

No class Thursday (Thanksgiving)

#### Readings

- Lepetz 2013. Horse sacrifice in a Pazyryk culture kurgan: The princely tomb of Berel' (Kazakhstan). Selection criteria and slaughter procedures. *Anthropozoologica* 48: 309–321.
- Pearson 2009. The frozen tombs of Pazyryk: The body's skin as sacred boundary. In *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*. Gloucestershire: The History Press, pp. 61–67.
- Argent 2013. Inked: Human-horse apprenticeship, tattoos, and time in the Pazyryk World. *Society and Animals* 21: 178–193.

### **Week 13 (28-30 November) – History vs. Prehistory**

Thursday – Wiki peer review

#### Readings

- Godolphin 1942. Herodotus: On the Scythians. In *The Greek Historians* Random House: New York: 129–149.

### **Week 14 (05 December) – Perceptions, Pop culture vs. Prehistory**

Wiki posted by 07 December

#### Readings

- Shnirelman 1999. Passions about Arkaim: Russian nationalism, the Aryans, and the politics of archaeology. *Inner Asia* 1: 267–282.
- Anthony 2006. Chapter 2: Three deadly sins in steppe archaeology: Culture, migration and Aryans. In *Beyond the Steppe and the Sown*, eds. Peterson et al. Boston: Brill.

### **Finals week (11-15 December)**

Final exam date TBA