

Central Eurasian Studies

Ethnic History of Central Asia

Catalog number CEUS-U 496

[Ron Sela](#)

The course is a survey of ethnic history of Central Asia from the first centuries A.D. to the present time. Central Asia is defined as the western part of Inner Asia; it stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west to Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) in the east, and belongs culturally to the Islamic world.

Throughout its history Central Asia has been a crossroads of cultures and civilizations, and a connecting link between East Asia, South Asia, the Near East, and Eastern Europe. It was affected by numerous migrations and invasions of various nomadic peoples up to the 18th century. As a result of continuous movements of populations of different ethnic and racial origin, a very complicated ethnic map of modern Central Asia emerged. During the 20th century, the interethnic relations in the region were further affected by the imperial policies of the Soviet Union and China, and by the rise of nationalism in the Central Asian republics.

The course will discuss all these changes and will provide an historical background for the understanding of interethnic relations in contemporary Central Asia. We will address different theories of ethnicity, migrations of peoples and their consequences, the formations of ethnic groups, the impact of imperial powers upon the construction of ethnic identity, the relationship between ethnicity, nationalism and the modern state, ethnicity and language, and the emergence of ethno-genesis in the independent republics of the former Soviet Union and neighboring regions. Special attention will be given to the Soviet typology of ethnicity and ethno-genesis.

Assignments & Grading:

Undergraduates: a Mid-term exam (30%), a Final (30%), as well as a blank map quiz and several brief responses to the readings (40%).

Graduate students will take both exams (and the map quiz), and be responsible for one class presentation on the readings. They will also write a term paper, ideally (though not necessarily) of a historiographical nature.