



Arts of the Silk Roads

Yale College Summer Session 2018

History of Art

Session A: 5/29/18-6/28/18, TTh 1-4:15 pm

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Course Description

Globalization is not a modern phenomenon. The Eurasian continent has seen remarkable cross-cultural contact since ancient times. Vibrant trans-regional exchanges of artistic motifs and ideas along the “Silk Roads” allowed seemingly disparate and disconnected parts of the world to share a common vocabulary of arts.

These artistic motifs and ideas, however, did not travel by themselves. Rather, the human agents that facilitated the transfer of visual and material knowledge could choose – or at times, were forced to choose – what traveled and what remained locally specific. This course focuses on three major agents: the Buddhists, the Sogdians, and the Mongols. The artistic worlds of these three groups represent three different models of cross-cultural encounter along the Silk Roads. By examining and comparing these three models, students will gain familiarity with the multifaceted modes of globalization in the arts of Eastern Eurasia from the 3rd through the 14th centuries. Objects and sites under consideration come from Japan, Korea, Mongolia, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and India.

This course will also provide students with opportunities to develop skills in critical examination of visual and material evidence for historical research. Students will learn how to construct coherent arguments using formal analysis and will gain an understanding of how objects themselves were made. Hands-on activities, such as building miniature models of the nomadic tent, as well as extensive use of collections at the Yale University Art Gallery, will enhance the students’ understanding of the arts and history of the Silk Roads.

Textbooks

- 1) Denise Leidy, *The Art of Buddhism: an introduction to its History and Meaning* *The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to its Form and Meaning* (Boston: Shambhala, 2008).
- 2) Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History with Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). [**Note: this is the second edition (published in 2017) with the coverage of the Mongol period**]

All other readings will be available for download on the Canvas website.

Master Monument List

Students are responsible for 50 major monuments that we will discuss throughout the course, both in readings and in classroom discussion. Digital images accompanying the list will be available on the Canvas website.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Participation (20%): Attendance is mandatory. Students will come to class having completed the readings (~40-50 pages per session) and other short assignments. They are also expected to engage actively in discussions.

Map Quiz (5%): Short in-class map quiz on the major sites of the Silk Roads across Eurasia.

Two Writing Assignments (25%): Students will write two 750-word visual and material studies of an assigned object from the Yale University Art Gallery collection.

Midterm Quiz (20%): The quiz (60 minutes) will consist of 6 ID questions and one essay. The ID questions will come from the circulated list of master monuments (no. 1-20), which students will have read about and already discussed in class.

Final Exam (30%): The exam (120 minutes) will consist of 10 ID questions and two essays. The ID questions will come from the circulated list of master monuments (no. 31-50). The essay questions will ask students to synthesize the thematic issues discussed in class.

Total: 100%

Prerequisite

There is no prerequisite for taking this class. The course does not assume any knowledge of Asian history or prior experience with the history of art.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, copying the words or ideas of others without proper credit, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. For more information on plagiarism, visit:

<https://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/what-plagiarism>

Schedule

Each session (~3 hours) will be divided into three parts (1 hour each):

- 1) Discussion based on the readings assigned for the day
- 2) Lecture on a related topic
- 3) Activities that give students opportunity to critically engage with primary visual materials, whether in the Yale museums or through interactive presentations and discussions.

INTRODUCTION

Session 1 (5/29/18):

The Beginnings: What is the “Silk Road(s)”?

-Valerie Hansen, “Introduction,” in *The Silk Road*, 3-24.

Discussion questions: *How do we divide the world on a map? What are the different units of analysis that we can employ when we think about the world?*

Activity: Visit the Yale University Art Gallery (YUAG) Asian Art Permanent Display and practice speaking about objects

Assignment for next session: Study for short map quiz, covering major Silk Road sites and important geographical features that will be relevant for our course (see separate handout)

UNIT I: THE BUDDHISTS, ca. 300-1000

Session 2 (5/31/18):

Visualizing Buddha’s Bodies: From South to Central Asia (10-minute map quiz)

-Denise Leidy, “The Buddha Image: Second to Seventh Century,” and “Caves and Caravans: India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and China,” in *The Art of Buddhism*, 31-79.

Discussion questions: *What are the major iconographical features of a Buddhist sculpture? (i.e. when you look at a sculpture, how do you know if it is Buddhist?) How do the Buddhist sculpture's stylistic features change from India to Central Asia? How do they stay the same? Why might such stylistic features change/not change in different places and times?*

Activity: Introduction to the techniques of visual analysis (see separate handout), and visit the YUAG Asian Art Permanent Display to practice analyzing visual features of artworks

Assignment for next session: Write a 750-word visual analysis paper on the Gandharan Footprints of the Buddha at the YUAG.

Session 3 (6/5/18):

Buddha as a Global Icon: China, Korea, and Japan (first writing assignment due)

-Denise Leidy, "China: A New Dimension: Sixth to Ninth Century" and "Korea and Japan: Sixth to Ninth Century," in *The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to its Form and Meaning*, 81-125.

Discussion questions: *What are the main features of the "Tang international style" in Buddhist sculptures, and how are they different from the examples we have seen in the previous class? What might be the artistic, political, and religious motivation behind adopting an "international style? In comparing the Buddha sculptures from the beginning in India to 8th-9th century East Asia, what remained unchanging, and what became locally specific? Why?*

Activity: Introduction to the techniques of material cultural analysis (see separate handout), and visit the Yale University Art Gallery (YUAG) Asian Art Permanent Display to practice thinking about the material properties of objects.

Assignment for next session: Prepare a short oral presentation on 2 objects from Dunhuang Library Cave. Each presentation should use 5 power point slides. Students will be assigned specific objects from Michelle McCoy's catalogue entries in *Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on China's Silk Road* eds., Neville Agnew, Marcia Reed and Tevvy Ball (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Getty Museum, 2016), 188-271.

Session 4 (6/7/18):

Dunhuang Caves as Museum and Library

-Valerie Hansen, "The Time Capsule of Silk Road History: the Dunhuang Caves," in *The Silk Road*, 285-321.

-Look through images of Mogao Cave 428 (p. 88-95), Cave 220 (p. 116-123), Cave 158 (p. 170-175), and Cave 465 (p. 214- 215) in Fan Jinshi, *The Caves of Dunhuang* (Hong Kong: the London Editions, 2010).

Discussion questions: *Why is Dunhuang considered one of the most important sites for the Silk Road studies and art history? What is the relationship between the mural paintings and sculptures preserved in the Mogao/Yulin caves and the visual materials from the library cave? Based on your knowledge of Buddhist art history so far, how might a scholar be able to date a cave?*

Activity: Presentation on the Dunhuang object

Assignment for next session: **Study for the midterm quiz**

UNIT II: The SOGDIANS, ca. 500-800

Session 5 (6/12/18):

Sogdians at Home: Murals of Afrasiab and Panjikent (midterm quiz in the first hour)

-Valerie Hansen, “Homeland of the Sogdians, the Silk Road Traders: Samarkand and Sogdiana,” in *The Silk Road*, 193-224.

-Guitty Azarpay, “The Theme: Religious Imagery,” in *Sogdian Paintings: the Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1981), 126-143.

Discussion questions: *Who are the Sogdians? What is Zoroastrianism? What are the funerary practices of the Sogdians, and what are the common motifs on the ossuaries? How do the paintings from Panjikent compare to the Dunhuang murals?*

Assignment for next session: Complete the group project, “Mysteries of the Sogdian Funerary Couch” (see separate handout)

Session 6 (6/14/18):

Sogdians away from Home: Fashioning the Diasporic Identity in China

-Valerie Hansen, “The Cosmopolitan Terminus of the Silk Road: Historic Chang’an, Modern-day Xi’an,” in *The Silk Road*, 239-246, 269-272

-Judith Lerner, “Aspects of Assimilation: the Funerary Practices and Furnishings of Central Asians in China,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 168 (2005): 1-51.

Discussion questions: *What is striking about the Sogdian funerary art in China, when compared to their funerary practices in Sogdiana? How useful is the concept of “ethnicity” when we talk about the Sogdian funerary arts in China?*

Activity: Mysteries of the Sogdian Funerary Couch

Assignment for next session: Write a 750-word essay highlighting both visual and the material features of a Tang dynasty camel sculpture at the YUAG.

Session 7 (6/19/18):

Glass, Gold and Silk: Transfers of Technologies and Material Knowledge (second writing assignment due)

-Ryoichi Hayashi, “Shoso-in Motifs and Designs,” and “A Survey of Shoso-in Treasures,” in *The Silk Road and the Shoso-in*, trans. Robert Ricketts (New York: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1975), 104-134 and 154-165.

-Lee Insook, “Of Glass and Gold: Silla Tombs, the Silk Road, and the Steppes,” in *Silla: Korea’s Golden Kingdom*, eds., Soyoung Lee and Denise Leidy, (New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 114-131.

Discussion questions: *Which is more important as historical evidence: visual or material? How can visual and material evidence function as an index of cross-regional contacts?*

Activity: Storage visit to YUAG to see early silk textiles from Eastern Eurasia.

UNIT III: THE MONGOLS, ca. 1200-1400

Session 8 (6/21/18):

Nomadic Tents as Filters of Cultural Exchange

-Valerie Hansen, “A New Route through the Grasslands,” in *The Silk Road*, 391-417.

-Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: a Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-10, 99-106.

-James Watt and Anne Wardwell, “Luxury-Silk Weaving under the Mongols,” in *When Silk was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles* (New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 127-141.

Discussion questions: *What does Allsen mean when he describes the Mongol “filter”? How might the Mongol rulers be different from the Sogdians in terms of their ability to conduct cross-cultural exchanges?*

Activity: Building the Mini Nomadic Tent Yurt/Ger

Assignment for next session: Students will be divided into one of the following three groups: (1) Song/Ming Chinese scroll painting, 2) Liao Chinese tomb mural, and 3) Persian illustrated books. Each group will analyze the visual representations of nomadic tents in the assigned work of art and prepare a 15-minute presentation next class.

Session 9 (6/26/18):

The Mongol Cities: Urbanism in the World of Tents

-Zhixin Jason Sun, "Dadu: Great Capital of the Yuan Dynasty," in *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*, ed. by James Watt (New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 40-63.

-Nancy Steinhardt, "Imperial Architecture along the Mongolian Road to Dadu," *Ars Orientalis* 18 (1988): 59-93.

Activity #1: Group presentations on the depictions of nomadic tents in 3 different visual traditions

Activity #2: The Silk Roads Jeopardy Game to review for the final exam

Assignment for next session: final exam is next class!

CONCLUSION

Session 10 (6/28/18):

Conclusion: Multiple Modes of Globalization in Visual and Material Arts (Final exam during the first two hours of the class)

Activity: In the final hour, we will visit the YUAG Asian Gallery to do an activity, "which mode of cross-cultural contact is it?"