

Silk Road Cities: A Field Investigation of Routes of Trade and Cultural Connections from Ancient Times to the Present

Experiential Learning in China from Beijing to Xi'an, Dunhuang, Horgos, and Kashgar

Trade and cultural ties along the ancient Silk Road linked historic cities in China to great urban centers in Central Asia and Europe from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE). The Silk Road served as a link between China and the Roman Empire on which goods and people moved in both directions. Recent research by Roman historians has shown this connection was much more important to the Romans than had long been thought. China's "New Silk Road" initiative, launched in 2013, is reinforcing and amplifying the important role of cities in North Central and Western China that were hubs of Silk Road trade as new patterns of cross-border regional development are taking form. Using a historical approach through a contemporary cultural-geographic lens, the Center for Urban and Global Studies (CUGS) and Departments of History and Language and Culture Studies will launch a new traveling program to explore the legacy and

revival of several Silk Road cities in northern and northwestern China during the summer of 2018. **This program will mark the 10th anniversary of CUGS-organized summer field study in Asia that started in 2009.**

This summer program will start from China's capital, Beijing, where we will climb the Great Wall and tour the Forbidden City. This initial visit to Beijing, a historic city and the capital of several Chinese dynasties that has undergone rapid transformation, will orient students to taking a long historical perspective on understanding rapid urban change in China's Silk Road cities.

A city of immense historical significance located at the center of North China, Xi'an is generally regarded as the eastern starting point of the Silk Road. In Xi'an we will visit the grave of Qin Shi Huang (the emperor who united China around 221 BCE) outside of the city and see the terracotta army of warriors, horses, and chariots, which was excavated starting in 1974. During the Sui and Tang eras,

Xi'an was meeting place of cultures. It was a center of Buddhist thought and the location of several great monasteries that translated the Buddhist classical texts into Chinese. The Great Mosque, located in the Muslim quarter of the city, recalls the cosmopolitan society of earlier times and its continuing blend of cultural influences.

Dunhuang in Gansu province, farther west of Xi'an, was an oasis town of the Silk Road. It is famous for the "Grottos of the Thousand Buddhas", which are man-made chapels created by the 6th century to the end of the Qing Dynasty in the late 19th century. While in Dunhuang, we will visit the caves and see the huge sand dunes and the remnants of the Han dynasty Great Wall. A center of solar energy production and innovative efforts to increase water supply, Dunhuang also will give us an opportunity to think about challenges affiliated with desertification and the contemporary challenges of sustainable development in a desert setting.

From Dunhuang, we will fly to Yining, the most populous city in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture of Xinjiang, to begin our investigation into the city of Horgos bordering Kazakhstan. Horgos was the oldest land port on China's western frontier along the Silk Road and opened as a customs checkpoint in 1881. After a prolonged neglect by the central government, Horgos regained its historic importance in 2006 when China and Kazakhstan established the China-Kazakhstan International Border Cooperation Center, China's first border cooperation zone. We will visit this zone to study how the growing cross-border trade and transportation, together with ambitious municipal planning, is beginning to turn Horgos into one of the key hubs for China to revive the Silk Road by expanding long-distance trade with Central Asia and Europe.

The city of Kashgar, located in southern Xinjiang and China's westernmost city, will be the last and possibly the most interesting site of our investigation. A key stop on the Silk Road, Kashgar's history goes back around 2,000 years with an Old Town of over 800 years. Bordering present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, Kashgar once was a crossroad for the interaction among Chinese, Indian, Persian, and Roman civilizations and among Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. As the northern terminus or starting point of the \$50-billion-plus China-Pakistan Economic Corridor today, Kashgar is reemerging as the most important city for connecting China to all of its western neighbors and beyond. While there, we will work with the University of Kashgar on field visits to the city's preserved Old Town; lively bazaars; Id Kah Mosque, Xinjiang's largest and one of Central Asia's three most influential mosques; and diverse ethnic cultures dominated by the Uyghur nationality.

2018 Program Dates

March 30	Application deadline
June 9	Depart Hartford for Beijing
June 10	Arrive in Beijing
June 11–12	The Great Wall and Forbidden City
June 13	High-speed train from Beijing to Xi'an, Shaanxi Province
June 14–16	Xi'an
June 16	Overnight train from Xi'an to Dunhuang, Gansu Province
June 17–19	Dunhuang
June 20	Fly to Yining via Urumuqi, Xinjiang
June 20–23	Yining and Horgos
June 24	Fly to Kashgar
June 25–27	Kashgar
June 28	Fly from Kashgar to Beijing; program ends

Studying these dynamic cities sequentially and referentially offers a fascinating way to appreciate and understand historical legacies and new developments along the China segment of the Silk Road. Supported by a number of named scholarships (see cover page), the program will carry 1.5 course credits and combine diverse readings, extensive discussions, and intensive field visits with a number of Trinity professors and local experts throughout.

The program dates are June 9–28, 2018, and include one interdisciplinary course below:

**URST/HIST 313 (1.5 credits):
Silk Road Cities
(Michael Lestz, Gary Reger,
Yipeng Shen)**

The Silk Road stimulated and connected the growth of cities between China and Europe as trading posts and resting places. These mostly overland cities or towns created long-distance connections between national and local histories, cultures, religions, and ethnic groups across borders. While some of these past connections have been eroded by shifted political boundaries, a number of Chinese Silk Road cities have resurged in growth and influence due to the favorable policies under China's "One Belt One Road" initiative (see map). Adopting an interlinked historical and contemporary approach, this course will investigate the original status and subsequent change of these historic cities through classical and contemporary readings and local field studies of the built environment and other evidence. Through a cultural lens, the course will introduce film as a learning medium for enhancing the benefits from text reading, discourse analysis, and on-site visits. By integrating historical and cultural perspectives in multiple local settings, this course aims to provide students with a broad but grounded understanding of the diverse intersections between the past, present, and future of several distinctive Silk Road cities in China.



This map was drawn by Christina Boyles with assistance by Jane Switchenko.

Program faculty



Michael Lestz, associate professor of history at Trinity, directs the O'Neill Asia Cum Laude Endowment and the Charlotte Riggs Scholarship Fund. For the last decade, he has led courses and field investigations designed for Trinity students in China and elsewhere in Asia. In partnership with Professors Xiangming Chen and Joan Morrison, Lestz has played a critical role in designing interdisciplinary programs tied to Asian studies and the environment and was a co-author of Trinity's successful Luce Foundation proposal. Lestz's central research interests are Qing and 20th century China history. He is the translator and editor of Zhou Daguan's classic 13th century description of Cambodia, *A Record of the Customs of Cambodia*. In fall 2014, Lestz served as Trinity's first exchange professor at Fudan University in Shanghai.



Gary Reger is Hobart Professor of Classical Languages at Trinity. His research focuses include the economy of the Greek and Roman world and human interactions with desert environments across time and space; his publications include *Regionalism and Change in the Economy of Independent Delos* (1994) and "Romans in the Egyptian Desert: From Desert Space to Roman Place," in *Économie et inégalité: ressources, échanges et pouvoir dans l'Antiquité classique*, eds. Sitta von Reden and

Pascal Derron (Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 2017), 115-149. His teaching ranges from Greek and Roman history to the literature of the desert of the American West. He recently stepped down as chair of the Classics Department and is on research leave to write a book on the economy of the Greek and Roman world and to pursue his study of deserts.



Yipeng Shen, Trinity associate professor of language and culture studies and international studies, teaches Chinese and Japanese literature and films at Trinity. He received his Ph.D. in East Asian literature, film, and cultural studies from the University of Oregon. He recently published his book, *Public Discourses of Contemporary China: The Narration of the Nation in Popular Literatures, Film, and Television* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015). His current research focuses on globalized youth culture

in China, which covers a variety of topics such as eco-criticism and marital culture. He taught in the summer program at Fudan University in 2015 and again during spring 2017 as Trinity's first Thomas Visiting Professor.



Xiangming Chen has served as the dean and director of the Center for Urban and Global Studies and Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of Global Urban Studies and Sociology at Trinity since 2007. He conducts research on cities and regional development with a comparative focus on China and Asia. His books include *Shanghai Rising: Power and Local Transformations in a Global Megacity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009; Chinese edition, 2009), and *Global Cities, Local Streets:*

Everyday Diversity from New York to Shanghai (Routledge, 2015; Chinese edition, 2016; Korean edition, 2017). His more recent research and publication focuses on China's cross-border economic and infrastructure connections with neighboring Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia and their local and regional consequences.



Calendar for 2018

March 30 Application deadline
June 9-June 28 Program duration

For most questions, please contact:

Xiangming Chen
 Dean and Director, Center for Urban and Global Studies
 Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of Global Urban Studies and Sociology
 Trinity College 70 Vernon Street
 xiangming.chen@trincoll.edu
<http://cugs.trincoll.edu/project/china-summer-program/>

Michael Lestz
 Department of History
 Director of the O'Neill Asia Cum Laude Endowment
 Trinity College, Seabury Hall S-115
 michael.lestz@trincoll.edu
 860 297-2385

For questions related to application, please contact:

Jane Switchenko
 Student Program Coordinator
 Center for Urban and Global Studies
 Trinity College, 70 Vernon Street, Hartford, CT 06106
 jane.switchenko@trincoll.edu,
 860-297-2629

In-office days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

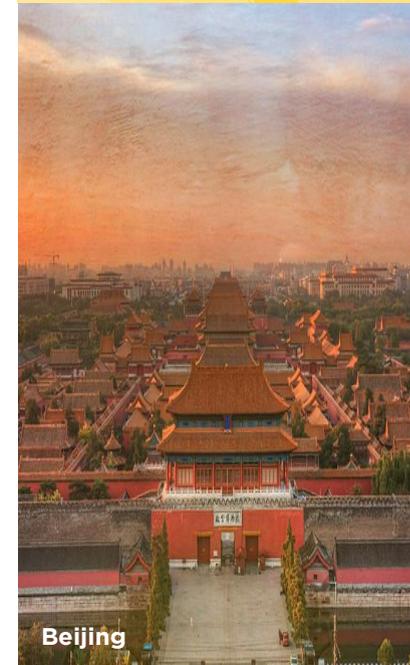
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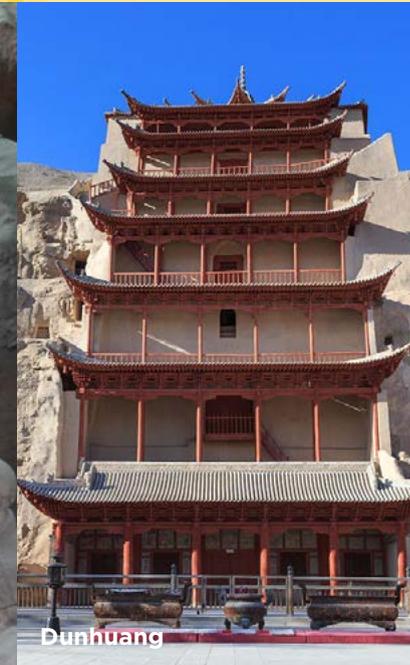
SILK ROAD CITIES: A FIELD INVESTIGATION OF ROUTES OF TRADE AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE PRESENT



Beijing



Xi'an



Dunhuang



Kashgar

SUMMER STUDY, June 9-28, 2018

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