

**ARCH 1490 *The Archaeology of Central Asia: Alexander in Afghanistan, and Buddhas in Bactria***  
Central Asia (from ca. 500 BC to AD 200) has tended to be treated as the ultimate frontier zone — on the fringes of the Mediterranean, the Near East, and India. Scholarly perspectives today are radically changing, with Central Asia emerging as a cultural and political entity in its own right. This course will explore the archaeology, art and history of what is today modern Afghanistan and the formerly Soviet Central Asian Republics, considering the region's development under the Persian empire, the rule of Alexander the Great, and finally of his Greek-named successor kings. MWF 1:00-1:50. Instructor: Rachel Mairs.

**Class 1: Introductory Session**  
**Wednesday 7 September 2011**

Historical periods:

- Central Asia in the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire.
- Conquest by Alexander the Great (320s BC).
- Greek kingdoms in Central Asia (- c. 145 BC) and India (- early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD).
- The Kushan Empire in Central Asia and India (c. 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD).

Some key themes:

- Cultural interaction and change; ways of exploring this in architecture and material culture.
- Using different forms of evidence (ancient historical writings, excavations, field survey, inscriptions, texts on parchment and papyrus) in combination.
- The historical and political context of archaeology in Central Asia: European colonialism, wars in Afghanistan, the fall of the Soviet Union.

Reading:

- Almost everything (or maybe even absolutely everything) will be online.
- For introductory essays on Persian (Achaemenid), Hellenistic and Kushan Central Asia, see the UNESCO *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol 2. On the course Wiki (or google it).
- A bibliography on the archaeology and epigraphy of Central Asia: Mairs (2011) *The Archaeology of the Hellenistic Far East: A Survey*. Also on the course Wiki (or, again, google-able).

Assessment:

- Map quizzes (learn to tell your Tajikistan from your Kyrgyzstan, and your Bactria from your Sogdiana!). 5%
- Two papers (4-5 pages) on a choice of set topics. (40% total) Due 21 Oct and 4 Nov (provisionally).
- A review/critique (3-4 pages) of the TV documentary 'The Forgotten Alexandria' (15%) Due 14 Nov.
- A longer essay (c. 10-12 pages) on a topic of your choice. You're encouraged to pick a subject which ties in with any other archaeology or history (or politics) classes you may have taken, and to come discuss with me. This will be due on December 7, and you will give a brief (5-10 min) presentation on it in the final class. (40%)

Questions?

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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2-3 (Rhode Island Hall 210)

