



Study abroad.

## SYLLABUS

### **SIENA ON THE SILK ROAD: EURASIAN EXCHANGE IN THE 12<sup>TH</sup> - 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

**Professor Roxann Prazniak**

**400 Level**

**Contact Hrs: 45**

**SIENA, ITALY**

#### Course Description:

Despite their questioned credibility, the impact of Marco Polo's stories regarding the wealth and curiosities of "the East" cannot be denied. Just down the road from Marco Polo's Venice, the Tuscan town of Siena was linked to the region's Silk Road traffic through commercial and artistic networks connecting Florence, Lucca, Pisa, and Genoa with Naples, Sicily and points east including Tabriz in Persia and Khanbulik in Yuan China. Spurred on by competitive urges and imaginative possibilities fed in part by visions of largely unknown Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asian lands, developments in northern Italian city-states of the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries were a rich interplay of Eurasian cultural and economic patterns. The life and legacy of Saint Francis of Assisi is our guide through the art and politics of this period. Evidence of Tuscan contact with Mongol Persia in the works of Ambrogio Lorenzetti at the Basilica of San Francesco in Siena and in Dante's Florence will form part of our sleuthing efforts in the cultural history of the Trecento.

This course is of interest to students with majors in history [both European and Asian], art history, and religion. It is also a background course for literature, science, and politics of the late medieval and early modern world. Generally meeting twice a week for discussion and brief background lectures, we will also meet regularly at different locations to continue our examination of readings in relationship to historic Siena.

#### Requirements/Grading

- Journal of reflections on readings and sites visited 30%
- Class participation 20%
- Midterm and final essays 50%

A course packet will provide reading materials. Reading selections will be limited to ten pages each. Advanced reading in full text of articles and volumes containing course selections.

#### Schedule:

Week #1

**Introduction: Geographies and Travelers Accounts**

Reading: Foltz, R., "The Silk Road and Its Travelers," *in Religions*

*Of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century* [1999]; selections from traveler's accounts

- Week #2      **Urban Development and Trade Networks: Siena, Lucca, Genoa**  
**Day Excursion:** Palazzo Pubblico. Siena  
[Discussion of Sieneze public and commercial life]
- Reading: R.S. Lopez, "China Silk in Europe in the Yuan Period" [*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol 72, no. 2 1952]
- Maria Luisa Meoni, "Utopia and Reality in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Good Government," 2003 [selection]
- Week #3      **The Franciscan Legacy and Its Challenges to Roman Christianity**  
Reading: "Canticle of the Sun" and the Neo-Manichaeian Revival, in Sorrell, R., *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature* [Oxford UP: 1988]
- Bernard Hamilton, "Wisdom from the East: the reception by the Cathars of Eastern dualist texts," in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530* [Cambridge UP: 1994]
- Week #4      **Day Excursion:** *Bardi Chapel, Florence*  
St. Francis Dossal, 1245  
Giotto, St. Francis Before the Sultan, 1315
- Reading: Cook, W., "Giotto and the Figure of St. Francis," in *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto*, Derbes and Sandona eds., [2004]
- Week #5      **Weekend Excursion:** *Assisi*  
*Basilica of San Francesco, Lower and Upper Churches, Assisi*  
[Journals due]
- Week #6      **Franciscan Missions to Cathay: Letters from Pope Nicholas IV, Yuan Emperor Shundi, Pope Benedict XII**
- Reading: Peter Armour, "The Twelve Ambassadors and Ugolino's Jubilee Inscription: Dante's Florence and the Tartars in 1300] on *Italian Studies*, No. 52, 1997  
[Midterm Essay Due]
- Week #7      **Day Excursion:** *Basilica of San Francesco, Siena*  
Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Martyrdom of the Franciscans, ca. 1336
- Reading: S. Maureen Burke, "The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenzetti," in *Zeitschrift fur Kunstgeschichte* 65, Band/2002
- Week #8      **Day Excursion:** Pinacoteca [National Art Gallery], Siena  
Reading: H. Tanaka, "Fourteenth Century Sieneze Painting and Mongolian and Chinese Influences," in *Art History* [Tohoku University, 1985]
- Rosamond E. Mack, "Oriental Script in Italian Paintings" in *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* [Berkeley UC Press: 2004]

- Week #9      **Bubonic Plague: Consequences for Eurasia/ Catherine of Siena**  
Reading: Iris Origo, “The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries” [*Speculum*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1955]
- Meiss, M., *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death: The Arts, Religion, and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century* [Princeton UP: 1951]
- Week #10     **Fall of the Mongol Empire/Rise of the Ottoman Empire: Consequences for Europe**
- Week #11     Final Exam and Journals Due