Course description
It is well known that the armies of Chingiz (Ghengis) Khan swept across Asia into Europe and the Middle East, creating havoc, destruction, and death. What is less commonly known is that the Mongols went on to create a vast Eurasian empire that facilitated cultural, technological, and ideological exchange among the civilizations they ruled over, especially between China and Iran. And while many have heard of the Ottomans, who built one of the longest-lasting empires in history (1300-1923), less is known of earlier Turkish-speaking nomadic peoples of Inner Asia, whose shorter-lived states and empires also mingled religions and cultures.
Some of the questions we will approach in this class are: Why could and did nomadic peoples of Inner Asia build empires? Even if short-lived, why was the memory of these empires so persistent and powerful? What transformations occurred when the sons and grandsons of nomadic conquerors found themselves ruling over settled territories with venerable cultures and structured economies, e.g. the Turks in the Islamic lands of the Middle East, the Mongols in China? And what compromises had to be made when a people of nomadic heritage, the Ottomans, established a conquest empire in a region with a long pedigree of “high civilization”?
Our main focus in this course will be on the Mongol and Ottoman empires, the one established in the early 13th century, the other just emerging at the end of that century, and the characteristics they shared and did not share. Among the topics we will touch on are religious identity and the management of religious diversity, the roles of women and men, oral and written legends and histories, and the reflections of outsiders on these empires.

(Some) thematic questions
1. How can we know about a people or civilization in the past when it left few or no written records?
2. How does culture actually get transmitted between peoples and regions? Who or what can be an agent of transmission?
3. How is it that a military-conquest state may practice a policy of religious and ethnic pluralism? Should we think of such policies as “tolerant”?
4. What role(s) did legends, myths of origin, and epic tales play among Mongols and Turks?
5. With regard to gender roles, it’s often said that nomadic women were “freer” than women in settled societies. Does this appear to be true? How can we in 2007 assess the social values and practices of the past?
6. The Mongols followed a pattern common to nomadic states (including most Turkish states) of dividing up the empire among the conqueror’s heirs—a practice that typically led to short political lifespans (100 years or so). The Ottomans followed an opposite path and their empire lasted 600 years. Were the Ottomans “more successful” than the Mongols?
7. Other important questions that the subject matter of this course provokes?
Requirements and grading
five short papers (1-1.5 pages) 30%
mid-term exam 25%
final exam 35%
attendance and participation in recitation 10%

Preceptors will determine your grades for the short papers and recitation participation. The mid-term and final examinations will be graded by the lecturer and the preceptors together.

Responsibilities
nb: It is your duty to be cognizant of the following rules.
• Attendance at lectures and recitation sections is mandatory; attendance will be taken routinely in sections and randomly in lectures. Absences and lack of punctuality to either lectures or sections will lower your grade.
• There are NO extensions for papers, and no make-up exams except in case of documented dire emergency.
• Plagiarism is an academic crime and will be severely penalized; if you are not sure what it is, ask.
• No food should be consumed at lectures or sections.
• Courtesy should be shown in oral participation: quieter people must not leave it to others to carry the discussion; frequent talkers must strive to be good listeners.

Required books (all are in the book store and on reserve in Bobst Library; if you order the books on-line, be sure you have them well in advance of the assignment date.)
  * Paul Kahn, Secret History of the Mongols
  * David Morgan, The Mongols
  * Carter Findley, The Turks in World History
  * Bernard Lewis, Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire
  * first reading assignment

Blackboard Apart from the four required texts above, all other readings will be posted on Blackboard; these readings are noted as BB in the assignments below, and can be located by clicking on the Course Documents tab in the Blackboard course site. In addition, other postings will appear on Blackboard, e.g. name and term identifications, maps and images, titles of pertinent videos; course information, e.g. the syllabus, is also posted there. Your preceptor may also make use of Blackboard to communicate with you.
Here’s how to access Blackboard if you are a first-time user:
  1- Log onto NYU Home with a valid NYU NetID and password.
  2- Click on the Academics tab and look under the “Classes” channel for the course name.
  3- Click on the course name to enter the Blackboard course site.

Office hours Office hours will be held weekly by your preceptor, who will inform you in your first recitation of the time and place. Prof. Peirce also holds weekly office hours for this class and will be lonely if no one comes.
schedule of lectures and readings

1/16  Introduction to the course

1/18  Nomads and nomadic states—an overview
Morgan, *The Mongols*, Ch. 2, Nomads of the Steppe: Asia before Chingiz Khan
Start  *Secret History of the Mongols*

1/23  Chingis Khan and his followers
Finish  *Secret History of the Mongols*

1/25  The Mongol conquests
Morgan,  Ch. 3, Chingiz Khan and the Founding of the Mongol Empire
BB:  Impressions of Chingiz Khan: Taoist master Ch’ang-Chu’n, Persian historian Juvaini

1/30  After Chingis Khan: conflict and division
Morgan,  Ch. 4, Nature and Institutions of the Mongol Empire
Morgan,  Ch. 5, pp. 112-117 only, Chingiz Khan’s successors

2/1   Mongol places and personalities
BB:  T. Allsen, “Spiritual geography and political legitimacy in the eastern steppe”
BB:  M. Rossabi,  “Khüblai Khan and the women in his family”

2/6   In the west: Islam and the question of Mongol religion
Morgan,  Ch. 6, Expansion to the west: the Mongols in Russia and Persia

2/8   In the west: material culture and artistic achievement
BB:  L. Komaroff et. al.,  *The Legacy of Chingiz Khan*

2/13  Video:  Storm from the east

2/15  In the east: Khubilai Khan and Mongol China
Morgan,  Ch. 5, The Mongols in China, 118-end
BB:  Rossabi,  “Khüblai Khan: the cultural patron”

2/20  The Pax Mongolica and cultural exchange
BB:  T. Allsen, “Ever closer encounters: The appropriation of culture and the apportionment of peoples in the Mongol empire”
BB:  T. Allsen, “Biography of a cultural broker, Bolad Ch’eng-Hsiang in China & Iran”

2/22  Guest lecture by Prof. Beatrice Manz
T.B.A.

2/27  Observing the Mongols: Travellers, their motives, their views
BB:  Travel memoirs of William of Rubric and Marco Polo

3/1   Mid-term examination

3/6   The Turks and their history—an overview
Findley,  *The Turks in History*,  Introduction & Ch. 1, Pre-Islamic Turks and their precursors
Moving westward: the Oghuz Turks and their conquests
Findley, Ch. 2, Islam & empire from the Seljuks through the Mongols, 57-75
(skim 75-93 on the Mongols)

Spring break!

Oghuz Khan and legends of the Oghuz

Who were the Ottomans?
Findley, Ch. 3, 107-113 (“...founding a town”)
Lewis, Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire, Ch. 2, The Conquerors,
through p. 25 (“...Mongol east”).
BB: Ashik Pasha-zade, Annals of the House of Osman

Early Ottoman society and religious identity
BB: Ibn Battuta, Travels in Asia Minor, 11-35 (in the pdf file, 413-459 in the text)

Mehmed the Conqueror and the conquest of Constantinople
Lewis, Ch. 1, The Conquest; Ch. 2, The Conquerors, 25-end
BB: Critoboulos, Mehmed the Conqueror

Who ran the Ottoman empire and how?
Lewis, Chapter, Ch. 3, Sovereigns and Rulers
BB: Konstantin Mihalovic, Memoirs of a Janissary

Inheriting the empire: was Turko-Mongol tradition abandoned?
BB: L. Peirce, Imperial Harem, Ch. 1, The House of Osman; Ch. 2, Wives & concubines

An imperial capital: the abode of sovereignty
Findley, Ch. 3, 113-118 (“...throughout the empire’s history”)
Lewis, Ch. 4, Palace and government

Video: Suleyman the Magnificent
BB: Hapsburg ambassador Busbecq, The Turkish Letters
Lewis, Ch. 6, Faith and Learning

Polyglottism and the question of tolerance
Lewis, Ch. 5, The City

After Suleyman: a different empire?
Findley, Ch. 3, 118-132; Ch. 4, Reform and Imperialism, 155-174
Lewis, Epilogue

Epilogue
Mongolians in the modern world
TBA

Turks in the modern world
Findley, Ch. 5, The Turks & modernity, Ch. 6, Conclusion: Turkic Caravan in Retrospect

Final examination: Thursday May 3, 10 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.