

OEL303 Moving Resources Across the Silk Road

Level: 3

Credit Units: 5 Credit Units

Language: ENGLISH

Presentation Pattern: EVERY JULY

Synopsis:

The objective of OEL303 is to provide students with the conceptual tools and learning experiences to develop a deeper understanding of the movement of resources across the Silk Road in the Gobi region. This is achieved through a combination of experiential learning, e-learning, classroom activities, and participation in an overseas trip to the Gobi desert, China.

In the recent times, the overland Silk Road has garnered much historical attention from researchers and its contemporary awakening through the ambitious initiative of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China has attracted voluminous economic analyses in the international media. Historically, it is often visualised as a region with prominent historical sites like the Dunhuang Grottoes in Gansu. The Gobi Challenge trek, pre-departure face-to-face seminar as well as fieldtrips to museums and religious sites analyses the formation of the world's earliest global trading system and traces the roots of globalisation. These provide the context for the discussion one of the most well-read Chinese classics, "Journey to the West". The hardships encountered, cultural metaphors found in the contents not only inspired the Gobi Challenge trek, but also serve as an example of how myths are used universally to structure, interpret, and share human collective experiences.

Just like other myths found in other cultures, the Journey to the West is a pedagogical tool that adorns experiences with anthropomorphic and quasi-religious qualities to help transmit culturally-unique lessons across space and time. Chief amongst Chinese myths is a salvational narrative that states that immortality can only be achieved through righteous hard work in overcoming challenges while taking unorthodox shortcuts would subject one to eternal damnation. This narrative is not only found in Journey to the West but also in other classical Chinese myths, underscoring how central it is to traditional Chinese worldviews.

This course seeks to showcase how the Chinese salvational narrative is used to make sense of the challenges faced in the movement of resources across the Gobi desert, through introducing students to traditional Chinese worldviews, historical analyses of the Silk Road, and contemporary discussions of the BRI. Through a direct encounter with the experiences of traversing the Silk Road, reflecting on the relation between the movement of resources and the salvational narrative, students would have the opportunity to deconstruct preconceived notions about the Silk Road, the BRI, and Chinese myths. This would not only help further their understanding of themselves as modern subjects of global trade, but also acquire a deeper understanding of how traditional Chinese worldviews continue to shape their contemporary practices.

Topics:

- Experiential learning
- Global trade: then and now
- History of the Silk Road
- Infrastructural development along the Silk Road and impacts
- Contemporary geopolitical and economic issues pertaining to the One Belt One Road (OBOR) development
- The lessons of Journey to the West
- The Chinese salvational narrative
- The traditional Chinese worldview

Learning Outcome:

- Develop understanding of the history of the Silk Road and the challenges/opportunities faced in reviving it in contemporary times.
- Examine the key players behind infrastructure development, connectivity and the economic development of China and Central Asia and analyse their initiatives politically and economically.
- Analyse the central messages contained in the Journey to the West
- Apply theories to make sense of the relationships between the movement of resources across the Silk Road and the Chinese salvational narrative
- Deconstruct how personal worldviews and presumptions about China shape observations of and responses to the functions of the Silk Road
- Appraise how Chinese worldviews shape the role that the Silk Road plays in the Belt and Road Initiative
- Construct new ways to address the relationships between the movement of resources across the Silk Road and the Chinese salvational narrative
- Illustrate how the Chinese salvational narrative is found in other Chinese practices and policies

Assessment Strategies:

Continuous Assessment Component	Weightage (%)
GROUP BASED ASSIGNMENT	30
GROUP BASED ASSIGNMENT	30
TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT	20
TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT	20
Sub-Total	100

Examinable Component	Weightage (%)
Sub-Total	

Weightage Total **100**