

Miami University
Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies

**Exploring the Silk Road:
The Power of Travel, Exploration, and Boundary Crossing as a Device for
Promoting and Creating Interdisciplinary, Interregional and International Studies**

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The Silk Road, the longest, oldest and most enduring of the Old World's great trading routes, linked ancient China with the Greek and Roman worlds of the Mediterranean and Buddhist India. The Road was not only a highway of commerce on which silk and porcelain were traded for turquoise and glass, but also a path of pilgrimage. Buddhists, Christians and Muslims trod the avenues across the highest mountains on earth and the deadliest deserts, seeking to spread their faiths throughout the world. Many scientific innovations, including gunpowder, the magnetic compass, the printing press, silk, mathematics, ceramic and lacquer crafts, were transferred gradually along the Silk Road, so that the West had no clear idea as to their origins. The Silk Road was also the path along which marauding armies invaded east, west, north and south. Empires were often bounded by the Silk Road and sought to expand beyond it. It is easy to see how the Silk Road can be studied both for its own sake and as an allegory for the power of pathways to expand the horizons of those within a culture, to transform that culture, and to make connections with other cultures.

We propose to hold a short-term seminar in the summer of 2006, six weeks in length, beginning in Western China and ending in Turkey, focusing on Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, for up to 15 faculty, to be drawn from the Departments of Anthropology; Architecture; Art History; Comparative Religion; Geography; Geology; German, Russian and East Asian Languages; History; Interdisciplinary Studies; International Studies; Music; Political Science; the Center for American and World Cultures; the East Asian studies program; the Middle East and Islamic studies program; and the Russian and Eurasian studies program. The trip will be preceded by a series of lectures and seminars to develop the curriculum for the seminar, and will be succeeded by a series of new courses taught by each faculty participant. Each faculty accepted into the program must agree to develop a new course, teach it at least three times, and apply for the course to be added as a permanent course offering. In this way, we believe the seminar will have a maximum impact on the transformation of the curriculum. In addition, the plan to take selected Miami students on the trip and to develop K-12 course materials from the trip, ensure it will have both immediate and long-term impact.