

HISTORY 650 (#22223113)

COLLOQUIUM IN MEDIEVAL HISTORY Silk Road Intersections: Jewish, Islamic, Christian

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Students will examine the historiographic issues of the East/West cultural, intellectual, economic, technological, and religious interactions between Jews, Muslims, and Christians. They will tackle issues having both an enormous geographic and conceptual range, “The East” and “The West,” and a great chronological span, from late Antiquity through the late Renaissance (ca.300–ca.1650). They will also examine scholarship that attempts to understand divisions and connections East and West, considering especially how Judaism, Islam, and Christianity were simultaneously conduits for and barriers to interchange. East/West intersections were extensive and diverse, ranging from the mundane to the ethereal, from the practical to the abstract: e.g., agricultural traditions and culinary arts; luxury goods and state-of-the art technology; medical and pharmaceutical knowledge and practices; engineering techniques and astronomical calculations; and translations of religious, philosophic, and scientific literature. Of

necessity, students will also confront historiographic issues arising from various periodization schemes: “Late Antiquity,” “Early Middle Ages,” “Central Middle Ages,” “Late Middle Ages,” “Renaissance,” “Reformation,” and “Early Modern.” To what extent do these labels and periodization schemes assist or mislead an investigation into a particular aspect of the East/West interactions? Through reading, group discussion, oral presentations, and analytic and synthetic writing, this colloquium will prepare students to teach and to plan research in the history of cultural, intellectual, economic, technological, and religious intersections between the East and West from late Antiquity through the late Renaissance. Related to their own research interests, students will investigate the historiography of some aspect of this cross-cultural interaction that transverses the usual period boundaries. They will write a substantial historiographic paper and present the results of their research to the class.