

**Course Code:** HUMA 6002U  
**Course Title:** Marco Polo and Eurasian Globalization  
**Course Offered in:** Spring 2025  
**Course Instructor:** Dr. Marco Caboara

**Course Description:**

Marco Polo’s travel to China 700 years ago led to the first reliable account of Central and East Asian economies and cultures to circulate in Europe. This course will focus on a complete reading Marco Polo’s short book in English translation accompanied by selected readings situating Marco Polo in his historical context, discussing his connections with the Silk Road and the first Eurasian Globalization as well as the debates surrounding the reliability of his account.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):**

	On successful completion of the proposed course, students will be able to:
1	read and understand ancient travel accounts along the Silk Road
2	critically analyze significant social and cultural phenomena related to early cultural exchange between Europe and China and regarding China’s relations with the world
3	think critically with regard to East-West interactions
4	evaluate past sources about West-Cultural exchange
5	effectively and appropriately communicate their understanding of Marco Polo’s works in written papers and oral reports
6	interpret events and developments in Europe and China's past interactions from both global and local perspectives

**Course Outline:**

<b>Week</b>	
1	Introduction: The World of Marco Polo The Travels, xi–xxxix and Prologue (1-15) Haw 2006 ch.3 “The Journey and the writing of the book”, 40-51

2	<p>Journey through the Middle East  The Travels Ch. 1 (pp. 16-45)  Jackson 1998, 82–101.  Bernardini, 2008, “Marco Polo” <a href="https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/polo-marco">https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/polo-marco</a></p>
3	<p>The Road to Cathay  The Travels ch.2 (46-86)  Rong Xinjiang 2015, 161-174.  Favereau 2022, ch 6 (206-246), “The Northern Road”</p>
4	<p>Khubilay Khan  The Travels ch. 3 (87-140)  Rossabi 2012, ch. 4 (60-84) “The Mongols and their world”  McCausland 2014, ch. 1 (23-50) “Dadu: Eurasia’s Metropolis</p>
5	<p>From Beijing to Bengal  The Travels ch. 4 (141-174)  Haw 2006, ch. 6-8 (82-123), “Marcos’ journey into China”  Wade 2009, 17–42.</p>
6	<p>From Beijing to Quanzhou  The Travels ch. 5 (175-224)  Caramello &amp; Schmitz 2022, 210-228.  Guy 2010, 158-77.</p>
7	<p>Debates about the book- did Marco Polo go to China?  Haw 2006, ch. 4 “No Great Wall?”, 52-67  Yang, 1998, 98-123  Psaki, 2011, 69-97.</p>
8	<p>From China to India  The Travels ch. 6 (225-245)  Gunn, 2021, ch.4 (Geographic Imaginaries from the Chinese Tradition)</p>

<b>9</b>	India The Travels ch. 7, 246-282 Gunn, 2021, ch.2 (An Indian Imaginary), 41-62 Ristuccia, 2013, 170–204.
<b>10</b>	The Arabian Sea The Travels ch. 8, 283-301 Gunn, 2021, ch.3 (Arab Geographic Imaginaries), 63-84 Davies, 2012, 215–34.
<b>11</b>	The Western Hordes The Travels, 309–41. Borbone, 2008, 221–42.
<b>12</b>	Who invented Spaghetti? Serventi & Sabban 2002, ch 1(1-40) and ch. 9 (271-303)
<b>13</b>	Scholars on the Silk Road (von Richthofen, Pelliot, Tucci) Waugh 2007: 1-10

**Planned Assessment Tasks:**

Presentations:	25%
Final written assignment (3500 words):	50%
Course participation/ reading comprehension:	25%

**Readings:**

1. Main reference text: Marco Polo, *The Travels*, trans. Nigel Cliff, Penguin, London 2015.

Other assigned readings

2. Bernardini, Michele, Marco Polo, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2008  
<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/polo-marco>

3. Borbone, Pier Giorgio, 'A 13th-Century Journey from China to Europe: The Story of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma,' *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 31 (2008): 221–42.

4. Caramello, E., & Schmitz-Esser, R. From Genoa to Yangzhou? Funerary Monuments for Europeans in Yuan China and their Paleographic Analysis. *medieval worlds*, 2022, 210-228.
5. Davies, S. 'The Wondrous East in the Renaissance Geographical Imagination: Marco Polo, Fra Mauro and Giovanni Battista Ramusio,' *History and Anthropology* 23.2 (2012): 215–34.
6. Favereau M. *The horde : how the mongols changed the world*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2022.
7. Gunn, Geoffrey C., *Imagined Geographies: The Maritime Silk Roads in World History, 100-1800*, ch.4 (Geographic Imaginaries from the Chinese Tradition), Hong Kong U Press, 2021, 85-112
8. Guy, John. 'Quanzhou, City of Faith. The International Port City of Yuan China', in J. Watt (ed.), *The World of Kubilai Khan. The Art of Mongol China*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010: 158-77.
9. Haw, S. G. *Marco Polo's China : a Venetian in the realm of Khubilai Khan*. Routledge, 2006.
10. Jackson, Peter, 'Marco Polo and his "Travels"', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61 (1998), pp. 82-101
11. McCausland, Shane. *The Mongol Century: Visual Cultures of Yuan China, 1271–1368* (London, 2014), ch. 1: 'Dadu: Eurasia's Metropolis.', 23-50.
12. Psaki, F.R. (2011). *The Book's Two Fathers: Marco Polo, Rustichello da Pisa, and Le Devisement du Monde*. *Mediaevalia* 32 (2011), 69-97
13. Nathan J. Ristuccia, 'Eastern Religions and the West: The Making of an Image', *History of Religions* 53.2 (2013): 170–204.
14. Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, *Reality or Tale? Marco Polo's Description of Khotan*. *Journal of Asian History*, 49(1-2), 2015, 161-174
15. Rossabi, Morris. (2012). *The Mongols : a very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
16. Serventi S. & Sabban F.. *Pasta : the story of a universal food*. Columbia University Press, 2002.
17. Wade, Geoff. 'An Annotated Translation of the Yuan Shi Account of Mian (Burma),' in *The Scholar's Mind: Essays in Honor of Frederick W. Mote* (Hong Kong, 2009), 17–42.
18. Waugh, D. C. (2007). *Richthofen's 'Silk Roads': Toward the archaeology of a concept*. *The Silk Road*, 5(1), 1-10.

19. Yang Zhijiu, "Marco Polo Did Come to China: A Reply to Did Marco Polo Go to China?" transl. by Hui Jianfeng and Pan Yufen, rev. by Sue Xuetao, *Social Sciences in China*, 19.3 (1998): 98–123. Originally published in *Lishi yanjiu (Historical Research)*, 3 (1997)

### **Supplementary readings**

#### **Other editions of Marco Polo's Travels**

Yule H. & Cordier H. (1993). *The travels of marco polo : the complete Yule-Cordier edition : including the unabridged third edition (1903) of Henry Yule's annotated translation as revised by Henri Cordier together with Cordier's later volume of notes and addenda (1920)*. Dover Publications.

Moule, A. C., and PELLIOT, P. *Marco Polo; the Description of the World* (London, Routledge, 1938).

#### **A fundamental tool**

Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo* (Paris, 1959-73, 3 vols)

#### **Fundamental collection of related travel accounts**

Sir Henry Yule, *Cathay and the way thither*, new edn. by Henri Cordier (Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, xxxin, xxxvii, xxxvii, XLI, London, 1913-16, 4 vols)

#### **Other references**

Leonardo Olschki, *Marco Polo's Asia*, (tr.) J. A. Scott, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960.

Vogel H. U. *Marco Polo was in China : new evidence from currencies salts and revenues*. Brill, 2013.

Frances Wood, *Did Marco Polo go to China?* London, 1995.