

# Central Asia from Within

REES 399      Special Studies in Central Asian Literature  
2:00-3:50 MTWRF      Aug. 19 to Sept. 8  
Amanda Bird

CRN 42400  
Room 106 FR

**This course will investigate the works of Central Asian biographers and memoirists from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.**

Since the 1990s, Central Asia has achieved increasing prominence as a player in global affairs and as a subject of academic study. Today's Central Asia is the heir of rich literary and artistic traditions descended from local cultural groups and influenced by imperial powers, including Greek, Persian, Chinese, Soghdian, Turkic, and of, Russian. Its literary and philosophical contributions to the world include the works of poets Omar Khayyam and Rumi and the philosopher-physician Avicenna (Ibn Sina).

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, fundamental social, economic, and political shifts were set in motion by external as well as internal forces. The Russians were making military incursions into the region, while Central Asian reformers were voicing discontent with the autocratic rule of local khans. This course will examine the juxtaposition of tradition and change as reflected in the memoirs of (among others):

- Sadriddin Aini (prominent Tajik literary figure)
- Chingiz Aitmatov (Kyrgyz novelist and essayist)
- Mukhamet Shayakmetov (Kazakh nomad, educator, and writer)
- Rajab Amonov (Tajik folklorist)—first time in English

In addition to the historical context of these works, participants in the course will consider the differing emphases, perspectives, interests, and literary styles of the individual biographers.



**Registan mosque in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

