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Intermediate Tibetan

TIBE 2003 - 2503 Online Course

(3 Credits)

Nepal: Intensive Tibetan Language

This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from term to term.

Course Description

Tibetan language is an important tool of communication to study and understand the Tibetan diaspora and Tibetans in Tibet, as well as Himalayans along the Tibetan borderlands. Our online Intermediate Tibetan language course is tailored to fulfil the need to acquire intermediate Tibetan language skills in a short span of time. This course exposes students to intermediate colloquial Tibetan vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures, with an emphasis on enabling students to develop literate as well as oral proficiency. The students learn modern standard Lhasa dialect, which is customarily used (at least as a lingua franca) by both Tibetans within Tibet and in exile, as well as by the many Himalayan peoples who have had a Tibetan-language education.

Having achieved intermediate level competence, this course will broaden colloquial language skills and the ability to understand the use of the language to express a range of ideas from religion to food to politics. Your obvious sincere efforts to learn Tibetan will be applauded by Tibetans who see this effort as a sign of profound respect and cultural sensitivity. You will approach a high level of colloquial proficiency and increasingly sophisticated skills in reading of literary and popular texts by the end of the three-week course.

Language classes will take place for three weeks online. All written materials are studied directly in Tibetan script and not in a phonetic transcription system. Vocabularies, grammar, sentence structures and tenses are effectively introduced in lessons thoughtfully planned around topics most relevant to daily lives. Besides Tibetan script, students are expected to use Wylie (most broadly accepted system of Tibetan transliteration into Roman script).

Courses are delivered via an e-learning environment and live video calls with instructors and conversation partners. Resources for this course include video and audio lectures, live classes via video calls, PDF handout material, invitations to participate in online discussion boards, and prompt feedback on quizzes and exams.

Through a combination of online formal class and oral training with Tibetan conversation partners, students can expect to achieve the necessary skills to carry on an intermediate level conversation in modern Tibetan. This course aims to prepare students to put their language skills to practical use during the January term (J-Term) course in Nepal, and/or in other situations in Tibetan speaking communities.

The course consists of three components: grammar study, conversational practice with language partners and interactive “language boost” sessions.

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- **Language Class** (two hours/five days a week)**:** Native Tibetan speaking instructors teach selected points of grammar as well as expressions useful in daily life. From the very first day onwards the students will be introduced to the fascinating world of Tibetan grammar and Tibetan grammatical categories which are quite special (even unique). For example, in the Tibetan language, letters have genders, and verbs are conjugated depending on the presence or absence of volition, and whether one has direct knowledge versus inferential evidence, etc. Students memorize vocabulary lists in addition to submitting written homework. Students are required to learn the grammatical structures in order to be able to take two quizzes a week in which the new vocabularies and the grammar are assessed.

- **Conversation Partner Class** (one hour/five days a week)**:** A precious 1:1 online learning session with trained native speaker. This class allows the students to practice the material introduced in class as well as talk about topics of their individual interest. The students use as little English as possible in these hours. This helps the students get a real, thorough practice. In the meantime, they digest grammar rules and vocabularies.

- **Language Boost** (once or twice a week in alternation with the previous two classes)**:** These sessions are especially designed to augment language partner and grammar study classes through a variety of web-based activities. Vocabulary reviews and sentence pattern drills revise previously introduced words and grammar structures through repeated application and usage. 'Mill and trade' and language games are designed for students to actively utilize their language learning through online interactions with other students and teachers.

Language Levels and Placement
Students are placed into appropriate language course levels based on a Tibetan proficiency exam at the beginning of the program.

Learning Outcomes
The *Intermediate Tibetan* language course encompasses 45 academic hours (3 credits). Upon its completion, students should be able to:
- Understand and use intermediate grammatical structures necessary for conversation;
- Discuss research, politics, weather on an intermediate level;
- Negotiate social/commercial transactions (doctor, shopping, ordering a meal);
- Read short stories and media articles with simple grammar;
- Become proficient with a Tibetan dictionary;
- Gain cultural insight based on language usage.

Course Requirements

Methodology
Each week entails: fifteen hours of teaching (grammar and vocabulary sessions, drills, and sessions with conversation partners). There will be a mid-term and final exam.

Useful Texts
- Oertle, Franziska. (2014) *Bod skad slob deb*. Unpublished.
- *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*. (1993) Beijing: Nationalities Publishing House.
- Goldstein, Melvyn. (2001) *The New Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan.* Berkeley: University of California Press. Available in Indian edition.
- Goldstein, Melvyn. (1984) *English-Tibetan Dictionary of Modern Tibetan.* Berkeley: University of California Press. Available in Indian edition.
- Tibetan & Himalayan Digital Library (THDL) Tibetan to English Translation Tool. http://www.thlib.org/reference/dictionaries/tibetan-dictionary/translate.php. For online usage, as well as instructions to download offline version.
- Tournadre, Nicholas & Sangda Dorje. (2003) *Manual of Standard Tibetan: Language*

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and Civilization. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

Daily Class Schedule

- We have two hours of online Tibetan language class interchanging with one hour of conversation partner class or drill every day from Monday through Friday. Schedules will be set up depending on the time zones of enrolled students, prioritizing morning classes.
- Each class begins with a review session. Students are drilled and each and every student is invited for active participation, which ensures each student's attention in the class.
- Quiz is conducted twice every week for constant assessment of the level in which each student is. The following classes are then planned and structured accordingly.
- Students are given daily assignments. They can request help from conversation partners and homestay families to complete the assignments. After assignments are submitted, students get them back the next day with feedback and corrections. As the pace of language class is pretty fast, prompt feedback ensures much needed prompt removal of any doubts or confusions to be able to move forward to new chapters.
- Teaching assistant is available online from Monday through Friday should the students have any question regarding Tibetan language.
- Students take a mid-term exam after a week and a half and a final exam at the end of the course.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Instructors evaluate each student's performance based on following criteria. Final grades are assigned by the Academic Director in consultation with the language instructors on the basis of each instructor's evaluation, each student's own self-evaluation and the Academic Director's observation of each student.

Methods of Evaluation

Grammar (10%)
Grammar is an integral part of any language. It governs the composition of word order, conjugation, tenses etc. Grammar is evaluated by going through students' homework, test papers and speech.

Vocabulary (10%)
New vocabularies are introduced with the introduction of every new lesson. Some vocabularies are given more importance than others based on how often the vocabularies are used in daily lives and in the class. Students are also expected to acquire more vocabularies from conversation partners, homestay families and books and practice them.

Comprehension (10%)
Students are graded based on their ability to comprehend statements or questions and to answer or carry on the conversation accordingly.

Pronunciation and Fluency (10%)
Native pronunciation is not expected. However, students' pronunciation should be clear and comprehensible to classmates and others. Fluency is also taken into consideration.

Motivation and Attitude (10%)
Students are expected to be positive and enthusiastic towards the host culture and language class, and to be positive, encouraging and helpful to their classmates as well.

Attendance (10%)
Students are expected to attend all classes. If students get sick, have an important appointment, or have network issues they need to inform the teacher or re-schedule the class.

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Language Use during Conversation Partner & Drill Class (10%)
Students need to use Tibetan as much as possible during one-on-one sessions with conversation partners and interactive online drill activities.

Tibetan script (10%)
Reading and Writing/Typing.

Progress (20%)
Students' progress is evaluated based on homework, quizzes and exams.

Oral proficiency interviews are conducted at the end of the semester to provide a measurement of students' overall linguistic progress.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
Below 64	F

Expectations and Policies
Class attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will reduce the language grade (see attendance policies in the front matter of the syllabus). For online classes, this means being digitally present on the class platform promptly and for the entire duration of the class.

Show up prepared. Be online on time, have your assignments completed and points in mind for clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.

Have assignments completed on schedule and done according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.

Ask questions in class. Teachers are highly respected in Nepal and among Tibetan and Himalayan peoples. Your polite and engaged behavior is expected.

Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

Respect differences of opinion (classmates', teachers'). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the program handbook given to you at Orientation.

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