

Beginning Tibetan

TIBE 1003 - 1503 Online Course

3 credits

Nepal: 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 Tibetan diaspora. The primary objective of the online Introductory Tibetan language course is for students to develop oral skills that will allow them to communicate with members of different Tibetan communities. The students learn modern standard Lhasa dialect, which is customarily used (at least as a lingua franca) both by Tibetans within Tibet and in exile. Reading and writing skills are also introduced, since students are required to include names and terms written in Tibetan script and/or scholarly transliteration (i.e. the Wylie system) in their papers and research projects.

By the end of this course, students should be able to converse in beginning Tibetan in the context of interacting online with teachers and language partners, and understand grammatical basics of the language and the ways it diverges from their native language. Students should gain the ability to employ Tibetan in appropriate cultural contexts (for example, using the honorific forms when speaking with elders).

Language classes will take place for 6 weeks online. All written materials are studied directly in Tibetan script and not in a phonetic 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 Wylie (universally accepted system of Tibetan transliteration).

Resources for this course include video and audio lectures, live classes via video calls, one-on-one virtual language partner sessions, PDF handout material and prompt feedback on homework, quizzes and exams.

This course exposes students to basic colloquial Tibetan vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures, with an emphasis on enabling students to gain oral proficiency. This course aims to prepare students to put their language skills to practical use during the J-term course in Nepal or other situations in Tibetan speaking communities. Through a combination of online formal classes with head instructors and oral training with Tibetan conversation partners, students can expect to achieve the necessary skills to carry on a simple conversation in modern Tibetan. The Tibetan script is introduced in the first 3 days of class and therefore all written materials will be studied directly in Tibetan and not in a phonetic system. All quizzes, assignments and examples given online will be written in this particular Tibetan script.

The course is composed of 3 components: asynchronous ("recorded") class, synchronous ("live") class and conversational practice with language partners.

- **Asynchronous class** (1 hour/3 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 versus inferential evidence, etc. Students memorize vocabulary lists in addition to submitting digital homework. Students are required to learn the grammatical structures in order to be able to take bi-weekly quizzes in which the new vocabulary and the grammar will be assessed.

- **Synchronous Class** (1 hour/3 days a week): Instructors review the grammar and vocabulary presented in the asynchronous class with students during a virtual class 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.
- **Conversation Partner Class** (1 hour/3 days a week): A precious 1:1 online learning situation with trained native-speaker conversation partners allows the students to practice the material introduced in class as well as talk about topics of their individual interest. These classes, in which as little English as possible is used, will help the student to thoroughly train and digest the grammar as well as manifold vocabulary.

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 *Beginning 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: 6–8 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. (2021). *The heart of tibetan language text book volume 1: A synthesis of indigenous grammar and contemporary learning methodology* (2nd ed.). Dharma Publishing.
- Esukhia. *Sngon 'gro: bod kyi phal skad slob deb* (Introduction: colloquial Tibetan textbook). Unpublished textbook. <https://www.esukhia.online/PDF/A0-IntroWeek.pdf>
- *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 and Civilization*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

Daily Class Schedule

- The class consists of 15 asynchronous classes, 15 synchronous classes and 15 language partner sessions over the course of 6 weeks. 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 bi-weekly for constant assessment of the level in which each student is. The following classes are then planned and structured accordingly.
- Students are given assignments after every class. They can request help from conversation partners to complete the assignments. After assignments are submitted, they 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 3 weeks and a final exam at the end of the course.

Class འཛིན་ཁྱ	Grammar & Vocabulary བད་སྟོན་ & ཚིག་གསར་	Quiz/Exam ཡིག་ཚད།
དང་པོ། Class 1	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ (recorded class): orientation, གསལ་བྱེད་སྟལ་ཅུ། (thirty consonants), དབྱངས་བཞི། (four vowels), འཚམས་འདྲི་དང་དོ་སྟོན། (greetings & introductions) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ (live class): བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review)	
གཉིས་པ། Class 2	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: རྗེས་འཇུག་བསྟུ། (the ten suffixes), ཡང་འཇུག་གཉིས། (the two post suffixes), རྩོན་འཇུག་ལྔ། (the five prefixes), མགོ་ཅན། (the superscript letters), འདོགས་ཅན། (the subscribed letters); བོད་སྐད་རྒྱག་རིགས་གནང་། (please speak in Tibetan) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review)	ཡིག་ཚད་ཁུང་ཁུང་། quiz
གསུམ་པ། Class 3	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: orientation review, ཚེས་བཤུ་འདྲས་ཟེ་ལབ་དགོས་རེད། (how to express feelings), རྒྱུན་སྟོན་སྐད་ཆ། (common talk) & Wylie transcription གང་ཟག་གི་མིང་ཚབ། (personal pronouns) + འབྲེལ་སྒྲ། (connective particle) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review)	
བཞི་པ། Class 4	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བདག་གཞན། ཡིན་མིན། རེད་མ་རེད། (“self & other”; essential mode of the verb “to be”) + གྲི་ཚིག་ བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (question words) འདི་ དེ་ ས་གི་ + མང་ཚིག་ ཚོ། (demonstrative pronouns, plural marker) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review)	
ལྔ་པ། Class 5	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: ཡོད་མེད་ ཡོད་རེད་/ཡོད་མ་རེད་ འདུག་/མི་འདུག་ (existential mode of the verb “to be”) + ལ་དོན། (“la” particle) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review)	ཡིག་ཚད་ཁུང་ཁུང་། quiz
དྲུག་པ། Class 6	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: གྲི་ཚིག་ (question words), རྒྱུན་ཚིག་དོ་སྟོན། (adjective introduction) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review)	
བདུན་པ། Class 7	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: སྟོན་སྐྱོད་གི་རྒྱུ་འཇུག་ (student presentation)	ཡིག་ཚད། mid-term exam
བརྒྱུད་པ། Class 8	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བོད་སྐད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། (history of Tibetan language) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: གྲུ་ཡངས་བཟོ་སྒྲུང་། (open discussion) & གཞས་ (song)—ན་བཟའ་དམར་པོ། (“red robe”)	
དགུ་པ། Class 9	བསྐྱུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་ཁྱ: གཟའ་འཁོར་ / བདུན་པ་གྲག་དང་ མང་གུངས་ (days of the week & numbers) དུས་ཚད་ཤོད་པ། (telling time) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་ཁྱ: བསྐྱུར་ཞིབ། (review)	

བརྩ་བ། Class 10	བསྟུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་པ།: ཇ་འབྲུང་གར་འགོ་དུས། (going for a cup of tea) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་པ།: བསྟུར་ཞིབ། (review)	ཡིག་ཚད་ཚུང་ཚུང་། quiz
བརྩ་གཅིག་བ། Class 11	བསྟུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་པ།: དུས་གསུམ་གྱི་དོ་སྟོང་། (introduction to the three tenses), བྱིད་སྒྲ། (the agentive particle) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་པ།: བསྟུར་ཞིབ། (review)	
བརྩ་གཉིས་བ། Class 12	བསྟུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་པ།: དུས་འདས་བ། & དུས་ད་ལྟ་བ། (present & past tense) ནམ་དུས། (seasons) གནམ་གཤིས། (weather) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་པ།: གཞུས་ནམ་དུས་བཞི།	ཡིག་ཚད་ཚུང་ཚུང་། quiz
བརྩ་གསུམ་བ། Class 13	བསྟུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་པ།: དུས་མ་འོངས་བ། & སྟུལ་ཚིག་ (future tense & imperatives); ཁ་ལག་ཟོ་ཡག་དང་ཟ་ཡག་ (cooking & eating) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་པ།: བསྟུར་ཞིབ། (review)	
བརྩ་བཞི་བ། Class 14	བསྟུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་པ།: ཡིག་ཚད་གྱི་བསྟུར་སྟོང་། (review for final exam) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་པ།: སྟོབ་སྟུག་གི་ནམ་བཞག་ (student presentation)	
བརྩ་ལྔ་བ། Class 15	བསྟུ་འཇུག་འཛིན་པ།: ཡིག་ཚད་གྱི་བསྟུར་སྟོང་། (review for final exam) ཐད་གཏོང་འཛིན་པ།: སྟོབ་སྟུག་གི་ནམ་བཞག་ (student presentation)	ཡིག་ཚད་ final exam

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.

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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