Course Description
This course traces Tibetan and Himalayan history from current political dynamics back to ancient times. It will challenge the prevalent analysis of Tibetan[-oid/-ish] politics synchronically and in emic terms, disconnected from change, larger dynamics and regional events. Students examine local political systems such as the Tibetan Government in Exile and the birth throes of the Nepalese constitution. Students also investigate the politics inherent in everyday life in an exile community, such as around our Boudha program site, themes like individual articulations of identity, as well as the politics of language and of religious practice.

Students will review regional politics, both current and as they have evolved over time. Students will examine politics on the geo-political scale, including the significance of various regions in the Himalayas as well as the maneuvering between Asia’s giants, India and China, whose adjacency renders Nepal “a yam between two boulders”. Through examination of current conditions in Tibet, students will be asked to reflect on and re-conceptualize ideas of power, autonomy, authority and vulnerability on individual, group and state levels. Economic forces to be considered include migratory strategies (Nepalis to the Gulf; Tibetans from TAR & PRC into exile; Tibetans from Nepal to India or beyond) and environmental changes, valuable non-renewable resources and national endeavors in mining, dam-construction, sustainable farming practices and tourism. Students will be asked to question what limits are entailed in each context. Who imposes these limits, how are they created and in what framework do they exist?

The course consists of a series of lectures and seminars, a series of one-day field trips in the Kathmandu Valley, and two extended field trips in Nepal and/or India and/or Bhutan (a minor one week excursion and a major three week excursion).

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will be able to:

* Identify the major regional political issues at global, national and local scales;

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.
- Describe the last 100 years of Chinese administrative intervention in Tibetan regions: prior to 1959, the Cultural Revolution, subsequent reforms, and post-2008;
- Compare and contrast the process of constitution formation in Nepal and Bhutan;
- Illustrate social and environmental changes across the Central Himalayas;
- Analyze challenges in identity formation, representation and the bottom line in the context of exile;
- Apply transdisciplinarity to the politics of Tibetan and Himalayan borders in a formal research paper.

**Language of Instruction**

This course is taught in English, including readings in English, but students will be exposed to Tibetan (and Bhutanese, Nepali and Sanskrit) vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of political change and borders through on-site expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales. Students will be simultaneously learning Tibetan (and optionally also Nepali) and expected to engage community members in this language (to the best of their abilities) when the opportunity arises.

**Course Requirements**

**Course Schedule**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>module</th>
<th>contact hours</th>
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<td>The politics of borders in the Nepal Himalayas</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Seminar Critical concepts in context</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Group discussion Synthesis and debrief</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Minor excursion The politics of borders in Tatopani</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Major excursion The politics of borders in Spiti and Dharamsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Final session Concluding synthesis and analysis of course themes</td>
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*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers’ availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

**Module 1: The politics of borders in the Nepal Himalayas (8.5 contact hours)**

**Session 1 Lecture:** Understanding the Himalaya & placing its issues in the global context—Anil Chitrakar
2-hour lecture with discussion

**Required Reading:**

**Session 2 Lecture:** The People’s War and Media in Nepal—Kunda Dixit
2-hour lecture with discussion

**Required Reading:**

**Session 3 Visit:** A walk through time: understanding the historical town of Patan—Anil Chitrakar

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2-hour tour on foot with discussion

**Required Reading:**

**Session 4 Lecture:** The Sherpas of Everest and beyond—Frances Klatzel  
2-hour lecture with discussion

**Required Reading:**

**Session 5 Film & discussion with filmmaker:** “We Corner People” (Hami Kunako Manche)—Kesang Tseten  
1 hour screening followed by 30 minutes discussion

**Required Reading:**

**Module 2: The politics of borders in Tibet (8 contact hours)**

**Session 1 Group discussion and presentations:** “Prisoners of Shangri-La” (Donald Lopez)  
2-hour seminar

**Required Readings:**
1-13.


Lopez, Donald Jr. 7 Things You Didn’t Know About Tibet. University of Chicago Press.  

**Session 2 Lecture:** Modern Tibet (i/iii)—Matthew Akester  
2-hour lecture with discussion

**Required Readings:**
“CCP central committee to the people of Kham, Tsang and Xifan”—Draft Programme of Tibetan National Revolutionary Struggle Movement (June 1935) Eat the Buddha! Part IV—Documents issued by the central CCP leadership  


**Session 3 Lecture:** Modern Tibet (ii/iii)—Matthew Akester  
2-hour lecture with discussion

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Required Readings:

Li, Jianglin and Akester, Matthew. *When did the destruction of Tibet’s monasteries actually begin? Documents on ‘reforming the religious system’ in eastern Tibet 1958* (2013).  
http://historicaldocs.blogspot.in/2013/05/when-did-destruction-of-tibets.html.

Session 4 Lecture: Modern Tibet (iii/iii)—Matthew Akester  
2-hour lecture with discussion

Required Reading:

Module 3 Seminar: Critical concepts in context (11 contact hours)  
(30 minutes × 22, see assignment below)

**Group 1: The politics of borders in the Nepal Himalayas**
Newar & Tamang  
Caste in Nepal (Muluki Ain)  
Sherpa & Thangmi  
Federalism in Nepal  
Human trafficking  
Nepalese Maoism  
Nepal elections  
Nepal’s remittance economy

Suggested Readings:

**Group 2: The politics of borders in Tibet**
Nepal/Tibet border  
13th Dalai Lama  
The Cultural Revolution  
2008 Tibetan uprising

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Self-immolation

Suggested Readings:

Group 3: The politics of borders in Tibetan exile

Dharamsala
Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)
The 17th Karmapa
Lobsang Sangay – Tibetan PM
The 15th Dalai Lama?
Dorje Shugden

Suggested Readings:
    (revised version of an essay published earlier in the Journal of the International Association of Buddhist

Group 4: The politics of borders in the Indian Himalayas

Spiti/ Ladakh

Suggested Readings:

Group 5: The politics of borders in Bhutan

Gross National Happiness

Suggested Readings:
Karma Ura & Karma Galay, ed. Gross National Happiness and Development. Thimphu: Center for Bhutan
    Studies, 2009.

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**Group 6: The politics of borders beyond Tibet and the Himalayas**

Zomia

*Suggested Readings:*

**Module 4 Group discussion: Synthesis and debrief (4.5 contact hours)**

(45 minutes x 6, see assignment below)

Group 1: The politics of borders in the Nepal Himalayas
Group 2: The politics of borders in Tibet
Group 3: The politics of borders in Tibetan exile
Group 4: Minor Excursion: The politics of borders in Tatopani
Group 5: Major Excursion: The politics of borders in Spiti
Group 6: Major Excursion: The politics of borders in Dharamsala

**Module 5 Minor excursion: The politics of borders in Tatopani (3 contact hours)**

Session 1: The politics of water between PRC, Tibet, Nepal, India and adventure tourism—Megh Ale
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

*Required Reading:*

Session 2: Eco-tourism in Tibet and at the Last Resort, Nepal—Sam Voolstra
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

*Required Reading:*

**Module 6 Major excursion: The politics of borders in Spiti and Dharamsala (10 contact hours)**

Session 1: Social Entrepreneurship over Development—Sunil Chauhan and Ishita Khanna
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

*Required Reading:*

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Session 2: The Government of India and Social Development in Spiti—His Royal Highness the King of Spiti, Nono Sonam Angdui
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

Required Reading:
“Tribal Areas” Tribal Development Department, Shimla, H.P. http://himachal.nic.in/tribal/tribalarea.htm.

Session 3: Structure of Tibetan Government in Exile—Penpa Tsering, House speaker
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

Required Reading:

Session 4: Why Tibet matters now?—Dorjee Tseten (SFT)
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

Required Reading:

Session 5: Activism and the Power of the Pen—Tenzin Tsundue
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

Required Reading:

Session 6: Tibetan geography, ecology, and the environment—Tenzin Norbu
1.5 hour lecture and discussion

Required Reading:

Session 7 Visit: Tsuglagkhang and Tibetan Museum
2-hour tour with discussion

Required Reading:

Module 7 Final session: Concluding synthesis and analysis of course themes (1 contact hour)

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
Assessment and timing of assignments
Module 2 “Prisoners of Shangri-la” position presentation & paper 10% 2nd week

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Assignments

**Module 2: Prisoners of Shangri-la (position presentation & paper)**

**Objectives**
To deconstruct myths about Tibet, both popular and personal.

**How it works**
You will be assigned one position to present in class, from the set of 4/5 Lopez pieces. You will read the whole series and then analyze your position in relation to the others.

Furthermore, the same day, you will submit a written list of five “facts” or “beliefs” about Tibet/Tibetans, etc., facts or beliefs which you previously held and/or continue to hold and/or never held but believe others to have held. These five should include at least two which are not in Lopez’s list of “7 things…” . You will be able to name and assess your sources (textual, visual, oral etc.), including whether the source is unknown (folk wisdom, urban legend, etc.). Maximum 500 words.

**Grading**
Of the total 10% grade for the assignment, 5% will be for the presentation and group discussion and 5% for the written paper.

**Module 3: Critical concept in context (seminar paper & presentation)**

**Objectives**
The “critical concepts in context” are designed to demonstrate the wealth of primary resources at hand in experiential education and to deploy those resources in the analysis and synthesis of core thematic concepts.

**How it works**
You will choose (or be assigned) a keyword central to the “Politics/Borders” course. You will prepare an engaging ten-minute presentation of your keyword and its significance, especially within the thematic seminar. On the due date, before your presentation, you will submit a 1,000-word write-up of your “critical concept in context”. You will present material from three kinds of sources or evidence: visual, oral[/aural] and written: a textual source, a picture/image, and the fruits of an encounter, i.e. an interview, e.g. a discussion with your homestay family and/or other Tibetan (or Nepali) friends and acquaintances. You do not need to show your visual evidence when we present outside of the program centre, but you must submit it as part of your assignment, and describe the image wherever you make your presentation. You will be able to name and assess your sources. Where appropriate, you will spell your words in Tibetan (in Tibetan script and/or Wylie transliteration).

**Grading**
Of the total 15% grade for the “critical concept in context”, 7.5% will be for the written paper and 7.5% for the seminar presentation.

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Module 4: Facilitation: synthesis and debrief

Objectives
- To enable the group to reflect on what we have learnt from various parts of the course, to integrate knowledge gained from a variety of sources, including field trips, and to share insights;
- To provide a forum for discussion of course readings;
- To give you practice at facilitating discussions and making presentations.

How it works
At the end of orientation you will be assigned to one of six groups. Each group will be assigned one group discussion to facilitate during the semester. These discussions will be guided by faculty but run by students. The group discussions will last for 90 minutes and will foster debate or discussion about what we have learnt in “Politics/Borders” since the previous meeting and will integrate what we have learnt that week in workshops, lectures, field trips and readings with what we have previously covered in the semester.

When it is your turn to facilitate a discussion, you need as a group, to identify the most important topics (check the learning goals) that are suitable for class discussion (don’t pick so many topics that there isn’t adequate time to discuss them all). At the meeting, the facilitators should first identify the topics to be covered in the meeting. They should then encourage and direct group discussion of the topics. Facilitators should talk with the relevant faculty member prior to starting their preparation for their meeting in order to review the topics to be discussed, and then again, after you have met, to review the questions you will put to the group. We reserve the right to include critical questions or topics if they are absent from your list. It is important to allow sufficient time for discussion of the readings.

Grading
Synthesis and debrief discussions make up 15% of the course grade. The quality of your contribution to the discussions throughout the semester is worth 7.5% and your facilitation of your session is worth another 7.5%. As a participant, you should come to group discussions with notes from the readings including a sentence summarizing the author’s main message. You should contribute to the discussions but not dominate them, your contributions should be informed and you should respect other’s opinions but not be afraid to disagree.

The criteria for evaluating the facilitators are:
- Your introduction identifying the topics to be discussed (5%)
- Your identification and framing of the important issues to be discussed from lectures, workshops, fieldtrips, etc., and the quality of the questions and prompts you used to initiate and direct the discussion (40%)
- Your identification of the important issues contained in the readings and your facilitation of the discussion of those readings (35%)
- Your facilitation of the group discussion (did you get everyone involved in and enthused about the discussion? Did you use any innovative approaches? Were you able to control the discussion and get it back on track when it wandered off the topic? Did you manage the time well – so that all topics were covered?) (20%)

Modules 5 & 6: Excursion study projects (major & minor)

Objectives
The fieldwork papers are designed to help you to reflect upon, analyze and synthesize what you are learning from excursions, field trips, lectures, seminars, readings, formal and informal discussions and your own observations.

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How it works
After each of the semester excursions, the major and the minor excursion, you will be asked to reflect in an essay on aspects of the fieldwork you have just carried out and to relate this to what you have previously learnt and observed in both the “Religion/Change” and “Politics/Borders” courses. There will be two essays in total. They need to be succinct, well organized and to show that you are thinking about what you are experiencing and that you are synthesizing what you learn from disparate sources.

The first paper, resulting from the minor excursion will be a group study project. This will entail a 1,200 word minimum contribution to a paper prepared in collaboration with program peers.

The major excursion study project will be a 1,600 word minimum.

Grading
The essays will comprise 20% and 25% respectively of your Politics/Borders grade. Each essay will have a different objective and therefore detailed instructions and grading criteria will be given at the time they are assigned.

Students should note that topics for papers as well as their field study journal are open. Students should not feel they are limited only to topics concerning politics/borders but should feel free to use each paper to explore a variety of topics. To reinforce and emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of these Study Project assignments, the weight given in evaluating the papers will be split equally between the two core courses, Politics/Borders and Religion/Change.

Module 7: Final reflection paper
Objectives
1. Reflect on your understanding of the Politics of Borders in Tibet and the Himalayas and how your engagement may have changed as a result of your experiences in Nepal and India and/or Bhutan.
2. Reflect on what are the most important things you have learnt from the Politics/Borders course in general.

How it works
Before the end of the program write a 1,000 word (minimum) essay covering the following topics:
Your understanding of the Politics of Borders in Tibet and the Himalayas:
How have your experiences in Nepal and India and/or Bhutan affected your personal understanding of the politics of borders in Tibet and the Himalayas? If your understanding of the politics of borders has not changed, why do you think this is so?
Your general learning experience:
What are the most important things you have learnt from the Politics/Borders course in general. Have you gained insights into US culture as a result of your last four months in Nepal and India and/or Bhutan? If so, please discuss how these insights have shed light on particular aspects of US culture.

Grading
This reflection counts for 5% of your NPT grade and is due the final Friday of the semester. You will be graded on the quality of your answers to the above questions.

Passim: Contribution to group learning
In this seminar, great emphasis is placed on the students' active participation in their own education. This element is worth 10% of your Politics/Borders grade. Your grade is allocated on an assessment of your timely attendance and informed participation in all activities, including field trips; your adherence to
codes of conduct and conditions of participation; and your general contribution to the maintenance of a positive learning environment throughout the course.

Grading Scale
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
- **Show up prepared.** Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- **Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements.** This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- **Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer.** These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- **Comply with academic integrity policies** (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- **Respect differences of opinion** (classmates’, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). 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 Dossier given to you at Orientation.

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