

## Religious Change in Tibet and the Himalayas

ASIA 3010 (3 credits/45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:  
Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples

**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.

### Course Description

This course explores religious preferences among the diverse Himalayan populations. Tibetan Buddhism is examined in relation to broader Tibetan civilization, the Tibetan [-oid/-ish] cultural sphere, including but not limited to the realms of politics and ritual. The course goes beyond the typical exclusive focus on the Tibetan Buddhist characteristics of Himalayan cultures, and instead investigates a multitude of beliefs and practices, amongst different groups. E.g. other Buddhism [s] such as that of the Newars, the sole surviving continuous tradition of Indian Buddhism; Indian tantra; Hinduism in the Kathmandu Valley; Islam in Tibet and South Asia; and Bön and pre-Buddhist Himalayan traditions. Furthermore, the determining role across the region of emerging systems such as secularism and spiritual materialism, whether or not sprung from Communist ideologies, will be evaluated.

We will emphasize the involved—and often fluid—interactions and interchanges between tradition, ritual and religious doctrine. One way we will transcend the synchronicity cum timelessness often associated with religion is through the study of etymology and the change of meanings within religious terminology. This course will further lay stress on the melding and divergence of traditions given a multitude of political and other contingent circumstances as well as the manifestations of such developments in individuals' worldviews and daily activities.

Whereas religion is often understood, in American or European contexts and in academic departments, to be a phenomenon easily delineated and isolated, we will find that cleavages and overlaps exist between doctrinal belief and everyday practice. Furthermore, we will explore how, precisely because it informs worldview and perspective, religion affects a society on all levels, including but not limited to politically, economically, architecturally, spatially—and culturally.

### Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the major regional religious issues at global, national and local scales;
- Describe the basic myths, principles and practices of Buddhism, Hinduism and other religious traditions present in the Himalayan context;
- Compare and contrast the manifestation of religions in everyday life, urban and rural, in Kathmandu and beyond;
- Illustrate religious change across the Central Himalayas;
- Analyze challenges in religious identity formation, representation and the bottom line in the context of exile;
- Apply trans-disciplinarity to the religious change of Tibet and the Himalayas 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 Nepali and Sanskrit) vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of political change and

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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

\*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	religious change in the Nepal Himalayas
2	religious change in Tibet
3 seminar	critical concepts in context in conversation
4 group discussion	synthesis and debrief
5 first excursion	religious change in Mundgod
6 second excursion	religious change in Tsum
7 final session	concluding synthesis and analysis of course themes

### Module I: Religious change in the Nepal Himalayas

session 1 lecture: overview of Buddhist history & thought—*Michael*

*required readings:*

“Buddhist Holy Sites of Nepal: Pharping.” *Voices of the Rigpa Shedra*.

<http://shedratalk.blogspot.com/2011/03/buddhist-holy-sites-of-nepal-pharping.html>.

Dowman, Keith (transl). “Yanglesho,” “Pharping Bajra Jogini,” “Asura Cave” & “Daksin Kali” in *A Buddhist Guide to the Power Places of the Kathmandu Valley*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2007. 48–51, 51–52, 52–54 & 54–55.

Dowman, Keith. “Pharping Vajra Yogini” & “Shesh Narayana” in *Power Places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1995. 92–94 & 95–38.

session 2 lecture: Buddhism in context: Buddhism of the Newars—*Gregory Sharkey, SJ*

*readings:*

Locke, John. “The Vajrayana Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley” in *The Buddhist Heritage of Nepal*. 1986.

Sharkey, Gregory. “Scholar of the Newars: The Life and Work of John K. Locke.” *Studies in Nepalese History and Society* 14(c) (2009): 423-440.

session 3 visit: Patan Museum

*required reading:*

Hagmueller, Goetz. “Introduction” in *Patan Museum: The Transformation of a Royal Palace in Nepal*.

London: Serindia, 2001. <http://www.asianart.com/associations/patanmuseum/report/page1.html>.

session 5 lecture & visit: Buddhism in context: Swayambhu post-earthquake—*Anil Chitrakar*

*required readings:*

Dowman, Keith (transl). “Swayambhu Stupa,” “Shantipur” & “Manjusri/Saraswati Hill” in *A Buddhist Guide to the Power Places of the Kathmandu Valley*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2007. 17–21, 21–24 & 25.

Dowman, Keith. “Swayambhunath” in *Power Places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1995. 24–29.

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- Maitland, Padme Dorje. "A Structure for Veneration." In *Light of the Valley: Renewing the Sacred Art and Traditions of Svayambhu*. Edited by Tsering Palmo Gellek & Padme Dorje Maitland. Cazadero, CA: Dharma Publishing, 2011. 24–31.
- Parker, Anne Z. & Dominique Susani. "The Sacred Landscape and Geomancy of Svayambhu." *Ibid.* 286–287.
- Von Rospatt, Alexander. "The Mural Paintings of the *Swayambhupurana* at the Shrine of Kantipur and Their Origins with Pratapa Malla." In *Himalayan Passages: Tibetan and Newar Studies in honor of Hubert Decler*, edited by Benjamin Bogin and Andrew Quintman, 45–68. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2014.

## Module 2: Religious change in Tibet

### session 1 lecture & visit: Sowa Rigpa—Amchi Puspa

#### required reading:

- Craig, Sienna. "Portrait of a Himalayan Healer: Traditional Medicine in Mustang, Nepal." In *Healing Elements: Efficacy and Social Ecologies of Tibetan Medicine*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
- Norbu, Dawa. *An Introduction to Tibetan Medicine*. New Delhi: Tibetan Review, 1976.

### session 2 paper & group discussion: Boudha/Buddhism Observed

#### required readings:

- Dowman, Keith (**transl.**). "Intro," "Chapter 1," "Chapter 2," & "Chapter 5." in *History of Great Stupa Jarung Khashor*. Kathmandu: Samtenling Monastery, 2005. 83–94
- Dowman, Keith. "Boudhanath" in *Power Places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1995. 30–35.
- Moran, Peter. "Introduction" & "Chapter 3: Commodities, Identities and the aura of the Other" in *Buddhism Observed: Travelers, Exiles and Tibetan Dharma in Kathmandu*. New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004. 1–13 & 34–57.
- Lama, Mani. "Foreword," and "Histories & Mythology." In *Boudha: restoring the great stupa*. Kathmandu: Vajra Books, December 2019, 1–27.

### session 3 lecture: Tibetan music & song—Amalia Rubin

#### required readings:

- Morcom, Anna. "History, Traditions, Identities and Nationalism: Drawing and Redrawing the Musical Cultural Map of Tibet." In S. Arslan, & P. Schweiger (Eds.), *Tibetan studies: An anthology*. (PIAT2006: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the eleventh seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Koenigswinter).

#### required listening:

- 3 versions of the classic Tibetan folk song, Aku Pema:  
 live performance at a concert in 2005 in Amdo, starring Palgon and several other local singers  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mpxk6UNYCR0>  
 more techno version by TIPA graduate Passang Lhamo  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8CrOD0DSZ4>  
 live acoustic version by Swiss Tibetan performer Loten Namling  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rt8CN9vAdc&t=69s>

### session 4 workshop: calligraphy—Nyima Dorjee Bhotia

#### required readings:

- "Tibetan Script Styles—An intro to Tibetan Scripts." Formatted by Nyima D. Bhotia. from Inkessential. *Related Tibetan Scripts*, 18 Dec. 2010, [http://inkessential.blogspot.com/2010/12/tibetan-script-styles\\_18.html](http://inkessential.blogspot.com/2010/12/tibetan-script-styles_18.html).

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

Gyatso, Ribur Ngawang, Losang N. Tsonawa and Tsepak Rigzin. "A Short History of Tibetan Script." *The Tibet Journal* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1984), 28–30. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43300125>

### Module 3: Critical concepts in context

(30 minutes x 6, see assignment below)

#### group 1: Religious change in the Nepal Himalayas

Nepalese Hinduism

Guru Rinpoche / Padmasambhava

*suggested readings:*

Bhattachan, Krishna B. "Nepalese Buddhists' view of Hinduism." *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*, Edited by Ram Bahadur Chhetri, Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan & Binod Pokharel. Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal: Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology Tribhuvan University. [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/opsa/pdf/OPSA\\_09\\_03.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/opsa/pdf/OPSA_09_03.pdf)

Dalton, Jacob. "Padmasambhava." *The Treasury of Lives*. June 2014.

<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Padmasambhava/7442>

Doniger, Wendy. "The Hindus: an alternative history." Penguin, 2009.

Dorje, Gyurme, & Dudjom Rinpoche. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: its Fundamentals and History*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1991.

Gellner, David. *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism: Weberian Themes*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Gill, Peter. "Indian Hindu Nationalism's Nepali Cousin." *The Diplomat*. March 1, 2019.

<https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/indian-hindu-nationalisms-nepali-cousin/>

Hutt, Michael. *Nepal: A Guide to the Art & Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley*. New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2010.

Kapstein, Matthew. *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Shakya, Rashmila. *From Goddess to Mortal: The True-Life Story of a Former Royal Kumari*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2007.

Toffin, G. "The Politics of Hinduism and Secularism in Nepal". *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Dec 2006. pp. 219–240.

Tsoygal, Yeshe. *The Lotus-Born: The life Story of Padmasambhava*. Boston: Shambhala Dragon Editions, 1993.

Van Loon, Borin and Vinay Lal. "Hinduism: a graphic guide." Icon Books, 2010.

Whelpton, John. *A History of Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

#### group 2: Religious change in Tibetan exile

The 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama?

*suggested readings:*

Dzongzar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche. "Time for a Radical Change in How We Raise our Tulkus." *Tricycle* (22 August 2016). <http://tricycle.org/trikedaily/time-for-radical-change-in-how-we-raise-our-tulkus/>

Gyari, Lodi Gyaltsen. 2022. *The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy: Memoirs of a Lifetime in Pursuit of a Reunited Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=3125105&site=eds-live&scope=site>

Schwieger Peter. *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China: A Political History of the Tibetan Institution of Reincarnation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=982232&site=eds-live&scope=site>

Tenzin Gyatso. *Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.

Tenzin Gyatso. *His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama: Collected Statements, Interviews & Articles*. Dharamsala: The Information Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1986.

Tenzin Gyatso. "Reincarnation" *His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet*. 24 September 2011.

<http://www.dalailama.com/messages/statement-of-his-holiness-the-fourteenth-dalai-lama-tenzinyatso-on-the-issue-of-his-reincarnation>

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Tenzin Gyatso. *My Land and My People: The Original Autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet*. Warner Books ed, Warner Books, 1997.

Tenzin Gyatso. *Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama*. 1st ed, HarperCollins, 1990.

Tshering Chonzom. "The Dalai Lama's Reincarnation Debate: Unravelling Hype, Identifying Interests." *China Report* 51:3(2015), 258-269.

Tulku Thondup. *Incarnation: The History and Mysticism of the Tulku Tradition of Tibet*. Boston: Shambhala, 2011.

### group 3: Religious change in the Himalayas

Bön

Islam in Tibet

*suggested readings:*

BBC News. "The Tibetan muslims who have made Kashmir their home." 2 December 2017.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-42165908>.

Karmay, Samten. *Bon: The Magic Word: The Indigenous Religion of Tibet*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers. 2008.

Karmay, Samten. *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals, and Beliefs in Tibet*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 2009.

Kværne, Per. *The Bon Religion of Tibet: The Iconography of a Living Tradition*. London: Serindia Publications, 1995.

Nadwi, Dr. Abu Bakr Amir-uddin. *Tibet and Tibetan Muslims*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA), 2004.

Rai, Dinesh. "Tibetan Muslims." *ECS Nepal*. August 2010. <http://ecs.com.np/features/tibetan-muslims>

Sherpa, Duxangh. "There are Muslims in Tibet, too." *Nepali Times*. May 23, 2018.

<https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/there-are-muslims-in-tibet-too/>

Zargar, Safwat. "The Tibetan Muslims of Kashmir." *The Diplomat*. July 31, 2019.

<https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/the-tibetan-muslims-of-kashmir/>

### **Module 4 Group discussion: synthesis & debrief**

(20 minutes x 6, see assignment below)

group 1: religious change in Nepal: Tibetan & Himalayan peoples

group 2: religious change in Tibetan exile

group 3: first excursion: religious change in Mundgod (& Losar)

group 4: religious change in Nepal

group 5: second excursion: religious change in Tsum

group 6: religious change in the Himalayas

### **Module 5 First excursion: Religious change in Mundgod**

Session 1 visit: visit to Drepung Meditation and Science Center

*Selected readings:*

Cupo, Lani. *Heretical science: deconstructing the false dichotomy of Buddhism and science*. NPT ISP. Spring 2017.

Dunne, John. "Is Buddhism scientific or religious?" *Tricycle*. 07 January 2019.

<https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/buddhism-scientific-religious/>

Eisen, Arri, Joel Zivot, Robin Nusslock, Meena M. Balgopal, Gillian Hue, and Lobsang Tenzin Negi.

"Editorial: The Emory-Tibet Science Initiative, a Novel Journey in Cross-Cultural Science Education." *Frontiers in Communication* 7 (April 26, 2022): 899215.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.899215>.

Session 2 visit: visit to Jangchub Choeling & interaction with *Geshema* nuns

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*Selected readings:*

- Härkönen, Mitra. "Tibetan Nuns between oppression and opportunity: an intersectional study." PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2017.
- Legtsok, Tenzin. Interview with Geshema Ngawang Chokyi. *Mandala*. 2019. <https://fpmt.org/wp-content/uploads/mandala/archives/mandala-for-2019/july/Interview-with-Geshema-Ngawang-Chokyi-Mandala-July-Dec-2019.pdf>
- Tibetan Nuns Project Newsletter. 2024. <https://tnp.org/wp-content/uploads/Tibetan-Nuns-Project-2024-Newsletter-1.pdf>

Session 3 field work: field work in Mundgod & Goa

*selected readings:*

- Chawla, Swati. "From Illiteracy to PhD: How exiled Tibetan Buddhist Nuns are Ensuring Gender Parity." *The Wire*. 25 September 2018. <https://thewire.in/religion/from-illiteracy-to-phd-how-exiled-tibetan-buddhist-nuns-are-ensuring-gender-parity>
- Dalai Lama. "Keynote address." In *Cosmology & consciousness, mind & matter*. Dharamsala: Tibetan Library of Works & Archives, 2013. [http://sfm.scienceformonks.org/SciencePrograms/MonasticGraduates/Conference/CosmologyAndConsciousness/Resources/MindAndMatter\\_CosmologyConsciousness\\_2011\\_FULL\\_TEX T.pdf](http://sfm.scienceformonks.org/SciencePrograms/MonasticGraduates/Conference/CosmologyAndConsciousness/Resources/MindAndMatter_CosmologyConsciousness_2011_FULL_TEXT.pdf)
- Font, Bernat. "Why Buddhism Is NOT a Science of the Mind: A Review of Evan Thompson's 'Why I Am Not a Buddhist.'" *Secular Buddhist Network* (blog), June 10, 2020. <https://secularbuddhistnetwork.org/why-buddhism-is-not-a-science-of-the-mind-a-review-of-evan-thompsons-why-i-am-not-a-buddhist/>.
- Vickers, Steve. "In Old Goa, India, a saint's relics raise mysterious questions." *The Washington Post*. 14 August 2014. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/in-old-go-a-saints-relics-raise-mysterious-questions/2014/08/14/c3eaa30c-1e75-11e4-ab7b-696c295ddfd1\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.97c9a55738cb](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/in-old-go-a-saints-relics-raise-mysterious-questions/2014/08/14/c3eaa30c-1e75-11e4-ab7b-696c295ddfd1_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.97c9a55738cb)

*Additional readings will be provided in our "Ladakh Sampler" prior to departure.*

**Module 6 Second excursion: Religious change in Tsum**

session 1 film & discussion: *Beyul: The Sacred Hidden Valleys* (2008, 31 min)

*selected readings:*

- Stumpfl, Luke. "Lha, Lu, and Shipda: Religious Landscape in a Conservation Area" (Fall 2023). NPT ISP. 3739. [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection/3739](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/3739)
- Plachta, Nadine. "Buddhism in Tsum: global connections, contemporary transformations & Buddhist identity in a high mountain valley of Nepal." Dissertationsprojekt, Universität Bern. [https://www.relwi.unibe.ch/e40353/e227976/e344644/e344646/forschung\\_Plachta\\_ger.pdf](https://www.relwi.unibe.ch/e40353/e227976/e344644/e344646/forschung_Plachta_ger.pdf)

Session 2 visits: visit Pyirun Phu (Milarepa Cave) and Q&A with Khangsar Labrang head monk

*selected readings:*

- Quintman, Andrew. "Milarepa." *The Treasury of Lives*. April 2010. <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Milarepa/3178>

Session 3 field work: village homestays & fieldwork in Tsum

*selected readings:*

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- Barnett, Robbie. "Saving Tibet from 'Satan's Grip': present-day missionary activity in Tibet. *Lungta* 11. Dharamsala: Amye Manchen Institute, 1999, 36–41. [https://info-buddhism.com/PDF/Satans-Grip\\_Robbie-Barnett.pdf](https://info-buddhism.com/PDF/Satans-Grip_Robbie-Barnett.pdf)
- Donohue, Mark & Dubi Nanda Dhakal. *A Tsum Lexicon*. Languages of the World/Dictionaries, 61. München: LINCOM, 2016, i–xiv, 118–123.
- Kopan Monastery. "Tsum monastic communities: Mu Gumpa & Rachen Nunnery." <https://kopanmonastery.com/about-kopan/affiliated-communities/tsum-monastic-communities>
- Snellgrove, David. *Himalayan pilgrimage: a study of Tibetan religion by a traveler through western Nepal*. Boulder: Prajñā Press: 1981, 257–264.

Additional readings will be provided in our "Tsum Sampler" prior to departure.

## Module 7 Final Session: Concluding synthesis & analysis of course themes

### Evaluation and Grading Criteria

#### Assessment and timing of assignments

module			
	orientation assignment	2.5%	first Monday
2	"Buddhism Observed" position presentation & paper	10%	2 <sup>nd</sup> week
3	CCCC seminar paper & presentation	15%	one session per student
4	facilitation: synthesis and debrief	15%	one week per student
5	first excursion group study project	20%	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday after first excursion
6	second excursion study project	25%	1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday after second excursion
7	final reflection paper	2.5%	final Friday
<i>passim</i>	contribution to group learning	10%	<i>passim</i>
		(100%)	

#### Assignments

##### orientation assignment

Your text should include the following four components:

- I. Reminisce: recall a disparaging comment or an ironic question or an encouraging remark by an acquaintance, previous to your departure, about the possible use of this Study Abroad semester. Give your reply or your private thought at the time.
- II. Somehow connect this with a quotation or anecdote from Avedon's or Kapstein's books that set you thinking.
- III. Reminisce: the last time you traveled; and what's different now.
- IV. End with another quote, either from Avedon or Kapstein again or (preferably) from one of the other titles; one that can function as a closing remark, without any comment.

Compose this piece as a publishable article, with a proper title. It is up to you what kind of publication you have in mind as the venue for your work. But write as a professional. As a colleague puts it, "fake it till you make it." Your article should be serious with a light touch.

Include at least one illustration, whether a photograph of your own, a self-penned sketch, or image you've sourced by other means.

Sign your text with no reference other than a pen name, in order to sublimate the personal, to assist in the conceit that this is a publishable piece, and to exercise your imagination in selecting a pseudonym. But do please initial your piece so that we can in fact return it to the right author.

You will receive written and verbal feedback.

When you are writing, please double-check that you have followed these simple instructions.

##### Grading

The orientation assignment will make up 2.5% of your "Religion/Change" grade.

### Module 2: Boudha[/"Buddhism"/] observed (presentation & paper)

#### Objectives

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To deconstruct misconceptions about Tibetan Buddhism, both popular and personal.

### **How it works**

Having read the Peter Moran text (“Buddhism Observed: Travellers, Exiles and Tibetan Dharma in Kathmandu” (2004), Introduction and Chapter 3, *Commodities, Identities and the aura of the Other*) you will spend a minimum of one hour making observations at Boudha stupa. Your observations can focus on a particular interaction or on a group of people at the stupa. In tandem with describing your observations, please suggest interpretations for what you have observed. You will bring five such pairings (observation/“what?” plus interpretation/“so what?”) to present in class. You will also have one key insight from Moran’s text. You will submit in writing your five pairings and one key quote/insight.

### **Grading**

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

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

### **Objectives**

The “critical concepts in context in conversation” 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 “Religion/Change” course (and/or the “Politics/Borders,” and/or FME course). You will prepare an engaging five-minute presentation of your keyword and its significance, especially within the thematic seminar. On the due date, before your presentation, you will submit a 500-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. Additionally, you will ask an artificial intelligence technology or algorithm (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini) about your keyword and compare the result to information your other sources.

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. You will also attempt to spell your words in Tibetan or translate them into Tibetan idiom (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.

## **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.
- To engage critically with distinct threads from among the semester themes

### **How it works**

At the end of orientation, you will be assigned to one of five 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 60 minutes and will **foster debate or discussion** about what we have learnt in synthesis in each of three components, “Politics/Borders,” “Religion/Change” and FME, 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. Each group will

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moreover be assigned a distinct thread from one of the semester themes, to be addressed in the discussion **but not as the theme of the entire discussion.**

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, ensuring that every member of the group is **given space to speak**, and indeed the **everyone does make a contribution**, however small. Facilitators are scheduled to **meet with a relevant faculty member** for the 15 minutes just prior to their session in order to review the questions you will put to the group. Please feel free to approach any faculty member already prior to starting your preparation for your own meeting in order to review the topics to be discussed. 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 (first/second)**

#### **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.

#### **How it works**

After the semester excursions, the major and the minor, 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. Your essay 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 first 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 second excursion study project will be a 1,600-word **minimum**.

#### **Grading**

The excursion study projects will comprise **20% and 25% of your "Religion/Change" grade**, respectively.

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

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 Religious Change in Tibet & the Himalayas and how your engagement may have changed as a result of your experiences in Nepal and/or India.
2. Reflect on what are the most important things you have learnt from the Religion/Change 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 Religious Change in Tibet & the Himalayas:*

How have your experiences in Nepal and/or India affected your personal understanding of the politics of borders in Tibet & the Himalayas? If your understanding of religious change has not changed, why do you think this is so?

*Your general learning experience:*

What are the most important things you have learnt from *both* the Politics/borders *and* Religious change courses in general. Have you gained insights into US culture and/or your own cultural intersectionality as a result of your last four months in Nepal and India? If so, please discuss how these insights have shed light on particular aspects of US and/or your own culture(s).

#### **Grading**

This reflection counts for 2.5% of your “Religion/Change” 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 Religion/Change 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.

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- 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.

**Disability Services:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [disabilityservices@sit.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@sit.edu) for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at: <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>

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