

Beginning Tibetan

TIBE 1003-1503 (3 credits)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent term. Because seminars develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual seminar 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 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.

Although we expect dedicated students will be able to achieve intermediate communication skills, students wishing to interact substantively with Tibetan speakers during their independent study project (ISP) should nevertheless expect extensive collaboration with a translator.

By the end of this course, students should be able to converse in elementary Tibetan in the context of interacting with homestay families, community members and excursion participants, 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 commence right at the beginning at orientation and continue till ISP (Independent Study Project) time. 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 use Wylie (universally accepted system of Tibetan transliteration).

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 in Boudha and during the ISP research period. Through a combination of formal class and oral training with Tibetan conversation partners and review sessions, students can expect to achieve the necessary skills to carry on a simple conversation in modern Tibetan. Students are encouraged to practice their Tibetan outside their classes, in homestay, excursions and ISP as well. The Tibetan script is introduced in the first five 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 in class will be written in this particular Tibetan script.

The course is composed of four components: grammar study, conversational practice with language partners and interactive “review class” sessions.

*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.

Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning

NPT SP25: Introductory Tibetan I

- **Language Class:** A native Tibetan speaker teaches 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 written homework (one hour/five days a week). Students are required to learn the grammatical structures in order to be able to take weekly quizzes in which the new vocabulary and the grammar will be assessed.
- **Language Partners:** A precious 1:1 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.
- **Review Class:** These sessions are especially designed to augment language partner and grammar study classes through a variety of applied 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 interactions with other students and teachers.

Language Levels and Placement

Students are placed into appropriate language course levels based on oral proficiency interviews conducted during orientation in Nepal.

Learning Outcomes

The SIT 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: ten–twelve hours of teaching (grammar and vocabulary sessions, drills, and sessions with conversation partners). While on excursion, formal language classes will be intermittent, but students will nevertheless be expected to use their previously gained language skills in the field and will be evaluated on these efforts.

Useful Texts

- Esukhia. *Sngon ‘gro: bod kyi phal skad slob deb* (Introduction: colloquial Tibetan textbook). Open source textbook. <https://www.esukhia.online/PDF/A0-IntroWeek.pdf>
- Oertle, Franziska. *The heart of Tibetan language: a synthesis of indigenous grammar and contemporary learning methodology (Bod skad snying po)*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 2019.
- Oertle, Franziska, and Tarthang Tulku. *The Heart of Tibetan Language Text Book Volume 2: A Synthesis of Indigenous Grammar and Contemporary Learning Methodology*. Dharma Publishing, 2023.

*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. Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning

NPT SP25: Introductory Tibetan–2

- *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

- We have one hour of Tibetan language class complemented by one hour of conversation partner class and/or interactive review class nearly every morning from Monday through Friday.
- Quiz is conducted for regular assessment of the level at which each student is. The following classes are then planned and structured accordingly. There will be **four quizzes** throughout the semester.
- Students are given daily assignments. They get help from conversation partners and homestay families to complete the assignments. After assignments are submitted, they will receive oral or written feedback and corrections. Since 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 throughout the day from Monday through Friday should the students have any question regarding Tibetan language.
- Students can request extra one-on-one language partner sessions outside of scheduled class time during the six-week duration of the Tibetan class.
- At the end, before students set off for their ISP, they give their final written and oral exams.

Orientation class in Pharping (February 5–8) Wednesday 5

February

8.15–9.15am Alphabet class: གསལ་འབྲེལ་མཁུ་ (thirty consonants), དཔལ་བཞི། (four vowels), འཚམས་འཇུག་གི་དང་འཇུག་གི་འཇུག་ (greetings & introductions)

9.30–10.30 LP class: འཚམས་འཇུག་གི་དང་འཇུག་གི་འཇུག་ (greetings & introductions) བཤམ་ཞིབ། (review)

Thursday 6 February

8.15–9.15am Alphabet class: བཤམ་འཇུག་མཁུ། (the ten suffixes), ཡང་འཇུག་གཞིས། (the two post suffixes), གྲོན་འཇུག་ཀྱི། (the five prefixes)

9.30–10.30 LP class: འཚམས་འཇུག་གི་དང་འཇུག་གི་འཇུག་ (greetings & introductions) བཤམ་ཞིབ། (review)

Friday 7 February

8.15–9.15am Alphabet class: མགོ་ཅན། (the superscript letters), འདོགས་ཅན། (the subscribed letters)

9.30–10.30 LP class: འཚམས་འཇུག་གི་དང་འཇུག་གི་འཇུག་ (greetings & introductions) བཤམ་ཞིབ། (review)

Saturday 8 February

8.15–9.15am Review class: བོད་བའི་ནང་མི་མཉམ་འབྲེལ་ Living with a Tibetan family/ LP class: བཤམ་ཞིབ། (review) 9.30–10.30 survival Tibetan language crash course (alphabet review)—Amalia

Class at Yantra House (February 10–May 4)

Monday 10 February

*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. Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning

8.30–9.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་དང་བོ། (Lesson 1): བོད་ཡིག་ཡག་རྒྱུ་གཞན་དུ། (please speak in Tibetan)

Tuesday 11 February

9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་གཉིས་པ། (Lesson 2): གང་ཟག་གི་མིང་ཚབ། (personal pronouns) & འོ་ལ། (connective particle)
10.40–11.30 Review class: ཇི་མོ་ ཇི་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (review) 11.40–12.30pm
Review class: ཇི་མོ་ ཇི་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (review)
2.45–4.45 survival Tibetan language crash course (grammar & conversation)—Amalia

Wednesday 12 February

8.30–9.30 Lhakar: about Lhakar & eating tsampa
9.45–10.45 Master class: ཀླུ་ཁོ་ལོ་གཞན་ཚད་ ང་ ང། (alphabet quiz) / Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་གཞན་པ། (Lesson 3): ཡིན་མིན། རེད་ མ་རེད། (“self & other”; essential mode of the verb “to be”) + བྱི་ཚག་ བས། གས། (question particles)

Thursday 13 February

9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བཞི་པ། (Lesson 4): ཡོད་/མེད་ ཡོད་རེད་/ཡོད་མ་རེད་ འཇག་/མི་འཇག་ (existential mode of the verb “to be”) + ལ་དོན། (“la” particle)
10.40–11.30 Review class: ཇི་མོ་ ཇི་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (review)
11.40–12.30pm Review class: ཇི་མོ་ ཇི་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (review)

Friday 14 February

8.30–9.30am Wylie & typing in Tibetan
9.45–10.15 / LP class: བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (review) / Review class: རྩ་བཟའ་དམར་པོ་གཞན་གཏོང་ཡག། (sing the song “Red Robe”) 10.15–10.45

Monday 17 February

8.30–9.30 Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་ཉི་པ། (Lesson 5): ཚན་ཚག་འོ་དོ། (adjective introduction)
9.45–10.15 LP class: ཚན་མདོ་གི་ལྷོ་ལ་ཡད་ཆ་བཤད་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (talk about colors & review) / Review class: ཇི་མོ་ ཇི་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)
10.15–10.45

Tuesday 18 February

9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་ ག་པ། (Lesson 6): འདི་ དེ་ བ་གི་ & མང་ཚག་ ཚ། (demonstrative pronouns, plural marker) & མོ་བ་ཚན་བཅུ་པ། (Lesson 7): ཡང་ ངས་ (གཅིག་ནས་བཀ་) (numbers 1–10) & བྱི་ཚག་ (question words)
10.40–11.30 Review class: ཇི་མོ་ ཇི་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: མཚོད་ ཇི་ལ་འ མ་འ མ་ལ་འ འོ་ཡག། (to on a walk to the stupa) དང་ འདི་ག་རེ་རེད་ ཇི་ཇི་དེ་ འོ། (“What is this?” activity)
11.40–12.30pm Review class: ཇི་མོ་ ཇི་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: མཚོད་ ཇི་ལ་འ མ་འ མ་ལ་འ འོ་ཡག། (go on a walk to the stupa) དང་ འདི་ག་རེ་རེད་ ཇི་ཇི་དེ་ འོ། (“What is this?” activity)

Wednesday 19 February

8.30–9.30 Lhakar: about shrine rooms & ritual objects (& Losar preparations)
9.45–10.45 Master class: བ་ ཡོད་དང་ཚག་གསར་ ཇི་ལོ་ལོ་ཡིག་ཚད་ ང་ ང། (grammar & vocabulary quiz) & མོ་བ་ཚན་བཟད་པ། (Lesson 8): ལོ་ གས་ ཇི་ལོ་ བེད་ འོད་ཅན་ ཇི་ཡད་ཆ། (Tibetan zodiac signs & some useful phrases)

Thursday 20–Thursday 27 February མོན་གློད་འདོད་ ཇི་ངོ་ལོ་ཤེས་རིག་ ཇི་ལོ། (Mundgod excursion)

*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. Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning

Monday 3 March

- 8.30–9.30am Master class: བ ་Yོད་དང་ཚག་གསར་ ི་yོར་ཡིག་ཚད་ ང་ ང། (grammar & vocabulary quiz)
& xོ་མོ་ཚན་དུ་བ། (Lesson 9): གཟའ་འཁོར་ / བཟའ་ལྔ་ལྔ་ ཨང་ ངས་ (days of the week & numbers)
- 9.45–10.15 LP class: བ་འཕྲིན། (review) / Review class: ི་དམོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་འཕྲིན། (games & review)
- 10.15–10.45

Tuesday 4 March

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: xོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་བ། (Lesson 10): ར་འཕྲིང་གར་འ ོ་ལ། (going for a cup of tea)
- 10.40–11.30 Review class: ི་དམོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་འཕྲིན། (games & review)/ LP class: ར་འཕྲིང་གར་འ ོ་ལ། (go for a cup of tea)
- 11.40–12.30pm Review class: ི་དམོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་འཕྲིན། (games & review)/ LP class: ར་འཕྲིང་གར་འ ོ་ལ། (go for a cup of tea)

Wednesday 5 March

- 8.30–9.30am Lhakar: about Tibetan & Himalayan clothing
- 9.45–10.45 Master class: xོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་གཅིག་བ། (Lesson 11): འཕྲིན་ཤོད་བ། (telling time) & xོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་གཉིས་བ། (Lesson 12): ང་གི་yོར། (about the past tense auxiliary/ང་)

Friday 7 March

- 8.30–9.30am གཟའ་འཁོར་དང་ཨང་ ངས་དང་ཚག་གསར་ ི་yོར་ཡིག་ཚད་ ང་ ང། (quiz on days of the week, numbers & vocabulary)
Review class: ི་དམོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་འཕྲིན། (games & review)

Monday 10 March

- 8.30–9.30am Master class: xོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་གཉིས་བ། (Lesson 13): འཕྲིན་ཤོད་བ། (future tense) & འཕྲིན་ཤོད་བ་ཡག་དང་ཟ་ཡག་གི་yོར། (About eating & cooking)
- 9.45–10.15 LP class: བ་འཕྲིན། (review) / Review class: ི་དམོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་འཕྲིན། (games & review)
- 10.15–10.45

Tuesday 11 March

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: xོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་བཞི་བ། (Lesson 14): འཕྲིན་ ། (present tense)
- 10.40–11.30 Review class: རྣམ་འཕྲིན་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག། (sing the “Four seasons” song)/ LP class: བ་འཕྲིན། (review)
- 11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྣམ་འཕྲིན་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག། (sing the “Four seasons” song)/ LP class: བ་འཕྲིན། (review)

Wednesday 12 March

- 8.30–9.30am Lhakar: about Tibetan prayers, prayer flags and sang puja
- 9.45–10.45 Master class: xོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་བཞི་བ། (Lesson 14) cont.: འཕྲིན་ཤོད་བ། (past tense)

Thursday 13 March

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: xོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་ཉི་བ། (Lesson 15): རྒྱུ་ཚག་ (imperatives)
- 10.40–11.30 Review class: རྣམ་འཕྲིན་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག་དང་བ་འཕྲིན། (sing the song “let’s go together” & review)/ LP class: བ་འཕྲིན། (review)
- 11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྣམ་འཕྲིན་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག་དང་བ་འཕྲིན། (sing the song “let’s go together” & review)/ LP class: བ་འཕྲིན། (review)

*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. Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning

Friday 14 March

- 8.30–9.30am Master class: བཤམ་གྱི་ཧོ་ར་ཡིག་ཚད་ ང་ ང། (quiz on verbs) མོ་བ་ཚན་བཀྲ་གས། (Lesson 16): བོད་ཡིག་ཀྱི་ཚན་གྲངས་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (about Tibetan verbs & the action particle)
- 9.45–10.15 LP class: མཚན་ རྒྱུ་ལ་འཇུག་ མ་འཇུག་ རྒྱུ་ལ་འཇུག་ རྒྱུ་ལ་འཇུག་ (go on a walk to the stupa) ང་ ང་ བོད་ཡིག་གི་རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (Tibetan script activity) / Review class: རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (games & review)
- 10.15–10.45

Saturday 15–Saturday 29 March: ཤུམ་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ ཧོ་ར་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (Tsum excursion)

Monday 31 March

- 8.30–9.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བཀྲ་གས། (Lesson 17): བཤམ་གྱི་བཤམ་འཇུག་ (review of verbs)
- 9.45–10.15 LP class: བཤམ་འཇུག་ (review) / Review class: རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (games & review)
- 10.15–10.45

Tuesday 1 April

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་གྱི་གཞུང་བཤམ་འཇུག་ (student presentation)
- 10.40–11.30 Review class: རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (games & review)/ LP class: བཤམ་འཇུག་ (review)
- 11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (games & review)/ LP class: བཤམ་འཇུག་ (review)

Wednesday 2 April

- 8.30–9.30am Lhakar: Gorshay
- 9.45–10.45 Master class: མོ་བ་གྱི་གཞུང་བཤམ་འཇུག་ (student presentation)

Thursday 3 April

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་གྱི་གཞུང་བཤམ་འཇུག་ (student presentation)
- 10.40–11.30 Review class: རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (games & review)/ LP class: བཤམ་འཇུག་ (review)
- 11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྟེ་གཞི་ (games & review)/ LP class: བཤམ་འཇུག་ (review)

Friday 4 April

- 8.30–10.30am Tibetan written exam
- 11 Tibetan oral exams

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.

*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. Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning

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 or have an important appointment, they need to inform the teacher.

Language Use Outside Class (10%)

Language use is not limited to class. Students need to use Tibetan as much as possible with Tibetan people and among themselves.

Tibetan script (10%) Reading and Writing.

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).

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

*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. Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning

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.

Disability Services: For information about and support from Disability Services (DS) to facilitate an accessible educational experience, please contact SIT Disability services at disabilityservices@sit.edu or +1-802-258-3390. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services can be found on the DS website at <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.

*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. Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning