

Beginning Tibetan TIBE-1003-1503 (3 credits)

Nepal: Himalayan and Buddhist Peoples

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.

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 interpreter/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.

Instructional Methods

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

- **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

Each week entails: 10-12 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.
- *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.

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 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.

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

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

Program Expectations

- 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.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Accessibility Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

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*

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་མིང་། (thirty consonants), དཔལ་བཞི། (four vowels), འཚམས་འཇུག་དང་འཇུག་པོ། (greetings & introductions)
- 9.30–10.30 LP class: འཚམས་འཇུག་དང་འཇུག་པོ། (greetings & introductions) བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (review)

Thursday 6 February

- 8.15–9.15am Alphabet class: བཞེས་འཇུག་པོ། (the ten suffixes), ཡང་འཇུག་གཞི། (the two post suffixes), རྒྱུ་འཇུག་པོ། (the five prefixes)
- 9.30–10.30 LP class: འཚམས་འཇུག་དང་འཇུག་པོ། (greetings & introductions) བཅོམ་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་དང་འཇུག་པོ། (greetings & introductions) བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (review)

Saturday 8 February

- 8.15–9.15am Review class: བོད་བའི་ནང་མི་མཉམ་འཇུག་ལྟེན་ལྟེན། Living with a Tibetan family/ LP class: བཅོམ་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

- 8.30–9.30am Master class: མོ་བཅོམ་ཚན་དང་པོ། (Lesson 1): བོད་ཡུལ་ཡག་ལོགས་གནང། (please speak in Tibetan)

Tuesday 11 February

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བཅོམ་ཚན་གཞི། (Lesson 2): གང་ཟག་གི་མིང་ཚབ། (personal pronouns) & འཇུག་པོ། (connective particle)
- 10.40–11.30 Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་པོ་དང་བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (review) 11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་པོ་དང་བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བཅོམ་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: གཤམ་ལྷོ་ཚུང་ ང་ ང། (alphabet quiz) / Master class: མོ་བཅོམ་ཚན་གཞི། (Lesson 3): ཡིན་མིན། རེད་ མ་རེད། (“self & other”; essential mode of the verb “to be”) + འཇུག་པོ་ བསྐྱེད། (question particles)

Thursday 13 February

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བཅོམ་ཚན་གཞི། (Lesson 4): ཡོད་/མེད་ ཡོད་རེད་/མེད་མ་རེད་ འགྲུབ་/མི་འགྲུབ། (existential mode of the verb “to be”) + ལ་དོན། (“la” particle)
- 10.40–11.30 Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་པོ་དང་བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (review)
- 11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་པོ་དང་བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: བཅོམ་ཞིབ། (review)

Friday 14 February

8.30–9.30am Wylie & typing in Tibetan

9.45–10.15 / LP class: བའ་ཞིབ། (review) / Review class: ན་བཟའ་དམར་སྟོང་གཞུང་ཡག (sing the song “Red Robe”) 10.15–10.45

Monday 17 February

8.30–9.30 Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་པེ། (Lesson 5): ཚན་ཚག་ངོ་ཡོད། (adjective introduction)

9.45–10.15 LP class: ཚན་མདོག་གི་ཡོར་ལ་ཡད་ཆ་བཤད་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (talk about colors & review) / Review class: ཇོ་མོ་ཇོ་

10.15–10.45 ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)

Tuesday 18 February

9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་ག་པ། (Lesson 6): འདི་དེ་པ་གི་ & མང་ཚག་ཚ། (demonstrative pronouns, plural marker) & མོ་བ་ཚན་བཟུང་པ། (Lesson 7): ཨང་ངས་ (གཅིག་ནས་བཀ) (numbers 1–10) & ཇོ་མོ་ཇོ་ (question words)

10.40–11.30 Review class: ཇོ་མོ་ཇོ་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: མཚོ་དེ་ན་ལ་འཇུག་མ་འཇུག་འོ་ཡག (to on a walk to the stupa) དང་འདི་ག་རེ་རེད་ཇི་ཇོ་ཇོ། (“What is this?” activity)

11.40–12.30pm Review class: ཇོ་མོ་ཇོ་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: མཚོ་དེ་ན་ལ་འཇུག་མ་འཇུག་འོ་ཡག (go on a walk to the stupa) དང་འདི་ག་རེ་རེད་ཇི་ཇོ་ཇོ། (“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་ཡོར་ཡིག་ཚད་ང་ང། (grammar & vocabulary quiz)

& མོ་བ་ཚན་བཟུང་པ། (Lesson 8): ལོ་གས་ཇི་ཡོར་བཤད་ཚན་ཇི་ཡད་ཆ། (Tibetan zodiac signs & some useful phrases)

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

Monday 3 March

8.30–9.30am Master class: བ་ཡོད་དང་ཚག་གསར་ཇི་ཡོར་ཡིག་ཚད་ང་ང། (grammar & vocabulary quiz)

& མོ་བ་ཚན་ད་པ། (Lesson 9): གཟའ་འཁོར་/བཟུང་པ་དང་ཨང་ངས་ (days of the week & numbers)

9.45–10.15 LP class: བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (review) / Review class: ཇོ་མོ་ཇོ་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)

10.15–10.45

Tuesday 4 March

9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་པ། (Lesson 10): ཇེ་འཕྲིང་གར་འོ་ལ། (going for a cup of tea)

10.40–11.30 Review class: ཇོ་མོ་ཇོ་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: ཇེ་འཕྲིང་གར་འོ་ལ། (go for a cup of tea)

11.40–12.30pm Review class: ཇོ་མོ་ཇོ་ཡག་དང་བའ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)/ LP class: ཇེ་འཕྲིང་གར་འོ་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: མོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་གཅིག་པ། (Lesson 11): ལས་ཚད་ཤོད་པ། (telling time) & མོ་བ་ཚན་བཀ་གཉིས་པ། (Lesson

12): ང་གི་ཡོར། (about the past tense auxiliary/ང་)

Friday 7 March

8.30–9.30am གཟའ་འཁོར་དང་མང་ ངས་དང་ཚག་གསར་ ི་ཡོར་ཡིག་ཚད་ ང་ ང། (quiz on days of the week, numbers & vocabulary)
Review class: ི་ད་མོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)

Monday 10 March

8.30–9.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བK་གཏམ་པ། (Lesson 13): འཕེལ་འདོད་པ། (future tense) & ལ་ལག་བཟོ་ཡག་དང་ཟ་ཡག་གི་ཡོར། (About eating & cooking)

9.45–10.15 LP class: བ་ར་ཞིབ། (review) / Review class: ི་ད་མོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)
10.15–10.45

Tuesday 11 March

9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བK་བཞི་པ། (Lesson 14): འཕེལ་ བ། (present tense)
10.40–11.30 Review class: རྣམ་འཕེལ་བཞི་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག། (sing the “Four seasons” song)/ LP class: བ་ར་ཞིབ། (review)
11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྣམ་འཕེལ་བཞི་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག། (sing the “Four seasons” song)/ LP class: བ་ར་ཞིབ། (review)

Wednesday 12 March

8.30–9.30am Lhakar: about Tibetan prayers, prayer flags and sang puja
9.45–10.45 Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བK་བཞི་པ། (Lesson 14) cont.: འཕེལ་འདོད་པ། (past tense)

Thursday 13 March

9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བK་ཉི་པ། (Lesson 15): རྟོག་ཚག་ (imperatives)
10.40–11.30 Review class: མཉམ་འཕེལ་ ི་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག་དང་བ་ར་ཞིབ། (sing the song “let’s go together” & review)/ LP class: བ་ར་ཞིབ། (review)
11.40–12.30pm Review class: མཉམ་འཕེལ་ ི་གཞུང་གཏོང་ཡག་དང་བ་ར་ཞིབ། (sing the song “let’s go together” & review)/ LP class: བ་ར་ཞིབ། (review)

Friday 14 March

8.30–9.30am Master class: F་ཚག་གི་ཡོར་ཡིག་ཚད་ ང་ ང། (quiz on verbs) མོ་བ་ཚན་བK་གཏམ་པ། (Lesson 16): བོད་ཡིག་དང་F་ཚག་དང་ Fེད་ ི་ཡོར། (about Tibetan verbs & the action particle)
9.45–10.15 LP class: མཚན་ ི་ན་ལ་འ མ་འ མ་ལ་འ ི་ཡག། (go on a walk to the stupa) དང་ བོད་ཡིག་གི་Fེད་ ི། (Tibetan script activity) / Review class: ི་ད་མོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)
10.15–10.45

Saturday 15–Saturday 29 March: ཤྭ་ ི་ཤེས་རིག་ ི་ཡོར། (Tsum excursion)

Monday 31 March

8.30–9.30am Master class: མོ་བ་ཚན་བK་བའོ་པ། (Lesson 17): F་ཚག་གི་བ་ར་འོ་པ། (review of verbs)
9.45–10.15 LP class: བ་ར་ཞིབ། (review) / Review class: ི་ད་མོ་ ི་ཡག་དང་བ་ར་ཞིབ། (games & review)
10.15–10.45

Tuesday 1 April

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་གཞི་གཏམ་བཤེན། (student presentation)
10.40–11.30 Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་འདུག་བཤེན། (games & review)/ LP class: བཤེན། (review)
11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་འདུག་བཤེན། (games & review)/ LP class: བཤེན། (review)

Wednesday 2 April

- 8.30–9.30am Lhakar: Gorshay
9.45–10.45 Master class: མོ་བ་གཞི་གཏམ་བཤེན། (student presentation)

Thursday 3 April

- 9.40–10.30am Master class: མོ་བ་གཞི་གཏམ་བཤེན། (student presentation)
10.40–11.30 Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་འདུག་བཤེན། (games & review)/ LP class: བཤེན། (review)
11.40–12.30pm Review class: རྟོག་མོ་ རྟོག་འདུག་བཤེན། (games & review)/ LP class: བཤེན། (review)

Friday 4 April

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