

The Politics of Himalayan Borders

ASIA 3020 (3 credits/45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Nepal: Himalayan and Buddhist 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 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 Nepal following the Federalism and the 2015 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 the Himalaya, 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 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 India (a first 12-day excursion and a second 10-day 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;
- 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 democratic governance in Nepal;
- 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 trans-disciplinarity to the politics of 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 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.

*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 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	the politics of borders in the Nepal Himalayas
2	the politics of borders in Tibet
3 seminar	critical concepts in context in conversation
4 group discussion	synthesis and debrief
5 first excursion	the politics of borders in Sikkim-Kalimpong
6 second excursion	the politics of borders in Mustang
7 final session	concluding synthesis and analysis of course themes

Module 1: The politics of borders in the Nepal Himalayas

Session 1 lecture: Understanding the Himalaya & placing its issues in the global context—*Anil Chitrakar*

required reading:

Chitrakar, Anil. "Karma and Fatalism" in *Take the Lead: Nepal's Future Has Begun*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Kathalaya Publications, 2013. 43–54.

Session 2 lecture: Conflict, calamity, climate, and China—*Kunda Dixit*

required readings:

Dixit, Kunda. "A New Himalayan Game." *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 34:1 Winter 2010.

Dixit, Kunda. *People After War: Nepalis Live with Legacy of Conflict*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Publication Nepa-Laya, 2009.

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

required reading:

"Introduction—Patan," *Nepal Government Department of Archaeology*.

<http://www.doa.gov.np/content.php?id=265>.

Session 4 lecture: Nang che, "architecture within architecture:" earthquake resilient features of Himalayan houses—*Sonam Lama*

required readings:

Herrle, Peter & Anna Wozniak. *Tibetan Houses: Vernacular Architecture of the Himalayas and Environs*. Basel, Switzerland: Birkhauser, 2017.

Lama, Sonam. "Thanks to Open Land." In "Former Student Sonam Lama's Account of the earthquake and rebuilding efforts in Nepal." *Master of International Cooperation Sustainable Emergency Architecture—UIC Barcelona*. May 28, 2015.

<http://masteremergencyarchitecture.com/2015/05/28/former-student-sonam-lamas-account-of-the-earthquake-and-rebuilding-efforts-in-nepal/>

Lama, Sonam. "Rebuilding Tsum Nubri." Video. December 7, 2015.

5min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq_PtoZIIJo&feature=youtu.be

Lama, Sonam. "Journey to Home during Earthquake." Video. June 7, 2015. 10

min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1uUr1cJ4cg&feature=youtu.be>

*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.

Module 2: The politics of borders in Tibet

Session 1 lecture: aspects of the Tibet issue (iii/iii): “All Roads Lead North”—*Amish Mulmi*

required readings:

Mulmi, Amish. "Chapter 1: Traders on the Silk Road, Chapter 3: A fence in the Himalaya & Chapter 10: All Roads Lead North " In *All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China*. Context, 2021.
Mulmi, Amish. “Ways of Seeing, or Not Seeing, the Himalaya and Its People,” *Himal Southasian*. March 1, 2023. <https://www.himalmag.com/himalaya-keay-fatland-douglas-western-narratives-indigenous-histories/>.

Session 2 lecture: aspects of the Tibet issue (ii/iii): Snow Lion Foundation, Nepal—*Tashi Tseten*

required readings:

“Snow Lion Foundation Schools (Nepal).” *Shes rig las khungs* (Department of Education). <https://sherig.org/en/schools/snowlion-foundation/#>
Mulmi, Amish. “Chapter 6: Ghosts: Tibetan exiles in Nepal.” In *All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China*. Context, 2021. (attached)

Session 3 group discussion and presentations: “Prisoners of Shangri-La” (Donald Lopez)

required readings:

Lopez, Donald. Jr. “Introduction” in *Prisoners of Shangri-la*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 1–13.
Shakya, Tsering. “Who Are the Prisoners?” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 69 (2001): 183–190.
Thurman, R.A.F. “Critical Reflections on Donald S. Lopez Jr.'s Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West.” *ibid*: 191–202.
Norbu, Jamyang. “Behind the Lost Horizon: Demystifying Tibet.” *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections and Fantasies*. Edited by Thierry Dodin & Heinz Räther. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001.
Lopez, Donald Jr. “Jailbreak: Author's Response.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 69 (2001): 203–213.
Lopez, Donald Jr. *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism and the West, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, with a new preface*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018, ix-xix.
Lopez, Donald Jr. *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism and the West, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, with a new preface*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018, ix-xix.
Lopez, Donald Jr. *7 Things You Didn't Know About Tibet*. University of Chicago Press. <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/493105.html>

Module 3: Critical concepts in context in conversation

(20 minutes x 8 see assignment below)

group 1: The politics of borders in the Nepal Himalayas

Maoism in Nepal

Newar/Tamang in the Kathmandu valley

suggested readings:

Bhattacharai, Kamal Dev. “Are the Maoists Rising Again in Nepal?” *The Diplomat*. March 13, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/are-the-maoists-rising-again-in-nepal/>
Bista, Dor Bahadur. *People of Nepal*. Nepal: Ratna Pustak bhandar, 2015.
Campbell, Ben. *Living between Juniper and Palm: Nature, Culture, and Power in the Himalayas*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013.
Constitution of Nepal [Nepal], 2015 (2072.6.3), 20 September 2015, available at: <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/np/np029en.pdf>
Dixit, Kunda. *A People War: Images of the Nepal Conflict 1996-2006*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Publication Nepa-Laya, 2006.

*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.

- Dixit, Kunda. *People After War: Nepalis Live with Legacy of Conflict*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Publication Nepa-Laya, 2009.
- Dixit, Kunda. *Never Again: Testimonies from the Nepal Conflict 1996-2006*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Publication Nepa-Laya, 2009.
- Gellner, David N., Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, and John Whelpton. *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. Amsterdam: Harwood, 1997.
- Gellner, David. "Caste, Ethnicity and Inequality in Nepal." *Economic and Political Weekly*. May 19, 2007. https://www.academia.edu/925707/Caste_Ethnicity_and_Inequality_in_Nepal
- Holmberg, David H. *Order in Paradox: Myth, Ritual, and Exchange among Nepal's Tamang*. 1. paperback ed. Cornell Paperbacks. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Joshi, Madhav and T. David Mason. "Peasants, Patrons, and Parties: The Tension Between Clientelism and Democracy in Nepal." *International Studies Quarterly* 55, 1 (2011): 151–175.
- Pradhan, R. "Ethnicity, Caste and a Pluralist Society." Dixit, K.M. and Ramchandaran, S. (2002). In *State of Nepal*, pp.1–21. Kathmandu: Himal Books.
- Sharkey, Gregory, "Buddhist Daily Ritual: The Nitya Puja in Kathmandu Valley Shrines" ", Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2001.
- Sharkey, Gregory. "Scholar of the Newars: The Life and Work of John K. Locke." *Studies in Nepalese History and Society* 2009 14(c): 423-440.
- Thapa, Deepak. *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari, 2003.
- Whelpton, John. *A History of Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Zharkevich, Ina. *Maoist People's War and the Revolution of Everyday Life in Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

group 2: The politics of borders in Tibetan exile

Xizang

suggested readings:

- Boulnois, Lucette. "Chinese maps and prints on the Tibet–Gorkha war of 1788–92." *Kailash* 15, no. 1/2 (1989). http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/kailash/pdf/kailash_15_0102_03.pdf
- Cowan, Sam. "The curious case of the Mustang incident." *The Record Nepal*, January 17, 2016. <http://recordnepal.com/wire/curious-case-mustang-incident>
- Cowan, Sam. "All change at Rasuwa Garhi." *Himalaya* 33, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 97–102. <https://digitalcommons.maclester.edu/himalaya/vol33/iss1/14/>
- Mulmi, Amish. "On KIMFF and Tibet Becoming Xizang in Nepal." *LinkedIn*, May 29, 2025. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/kimff-tibet-becoming-xizang-nepal-amish-mulmi-jhknf/>
- Shakya, Tsering. "Tibet Must Stand!" *SOAS China Institute Blog*, December 11, 2024. <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/china-institute/2024/12/11/tibet-must-stand/>.
- Shakya, Tsering. *Dragon in the Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*. New York: Random House, 2012.
- Smith, Warren W. *Tibet's Last Stand? The Tibetan Uprising of 2008 and China's Response*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc: 2010.
- Uprety, Prem Raman. *Nepal-Tibet relations, 1850-1930 : years of hopes, challenges, and frustration*. Kathmandu: Puga Nara, 1980.
- Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing. *Highlights of Tibetan History*. Beijing: New World Press, 1984.

group 3: The politics of borders in the Himalayas

Zomia

suggested readings:

- Hammond, Ruth. "The Battle over Zomia." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. September 4, 2011. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Battle-Over-Zomia/128845>
- Magnusson, Jan. "Jellyfishing in the Postcolonial Nation State: Baltistan through the Zomia Lens." *Asian Ethnology* 80, no. 1 (January 2021): 57–91. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=151654023&site=eds-live&scope=site>.
- Michaud, Jean. "What's (Written) History for?: On James C. Scott's Zomia, Especially Chapter 6½." *Anthropology Today* 33, no. 1 (February 2017): 6–10. doi:10.1111/1467-8322.12322.

*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.

- Magnusson, Jan. "Jellyfishing in the Postcolonial Nation State: Baltistan through the Zomia Lens." *Asian Ethnology* 80, no. 1 (January 2021): 57–91.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=151654023&site=eds-live&scope=site>.
- Shneiderman, Sara. "Are the Central Himalayas in Zomia? Some Scholarly and Political Considerations Across Time and Space." *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010): 289–312.
<https://shneiderman-commons.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2015/02/AretheCentralHimalayasinZomia.pdf>
- Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Varagur, Krithika. "Communal Tensions Rattle an Indian Himalayan Region." *Voice of America News*.
<https://www.voanews.com/a/inter-faith-marriages-create-tensions-in-india/4329930.html>

Module 4 Group discussion: Synthesis and debrief

(20 minutes x 8, see assignment below)

- group 1: the politics of borders of Nepal: Himalayan & Buddhist Peoples
- group 2: the politics of borders of Losar
- group 3: the politics of borders in Nepal
- group 4: the politics of borders in Sikkim-Kalimpong (first excursion)
- group 5: the politics of borders of the Himalayas
- group 6: the politics of borders of Trans-Himalayan Trade
- group 7: the politics of borders in Mustang (second excursion)
- group 8: the politics of borders of Co-Researching, across cultures and languages

Module 5 first excursion: The politics of borders of Sikkim-Kalimpong

Session 1: visit to Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

selected readings:

- Datta-Ray, Sunanda K. *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim*. New Delhi: Westland Publications Limited, 2025. 488 pp. ISBN 9789360455583.
- Duff, Andrew. *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2015.

Session 2 field work: field work in Sikkim-Kalimpong

selected readings:

- Dukpa, Rinchu Doma, Deepa Joshi, and Rutgerd Boelens. "Hydropower Development and the Meaning of Place: Multi-Ethnic Hydropower Struggles in Sikkim, India." *Geoforum* 89 (February 2018): 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.01.006>
- Gupta, Ranjan. "Sikkim: The Merger with India." *Asian Survey* 15, no. 9 (September 1975): 786–798.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2643174>
- Harris, Tina. "Silk Roads and Wool Routes: Contemporary Geographies of Trade Between Lhasa and Kalimpong." *India Review* 7, no. 3 (2008): 200–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480802261541>.
- Mandal, Prodip, Akash Chowdhury, and Mayank Joshi. 2025. "Disastrous Landslide Events in the Sikkim Himalaya Triggered by Extreme Early-Monsoonal Rainfall During May–June, 2025." *Natural Hazards Research* (In press). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nhres.2025.08.007>.
- McGranahan, Carole & Elliot Sperling. "Introduction: Tibet, India & China." *India Review* 7: No 3 (2008).
- Subba, Tanka B. "Social Adaptation of the Tibetan Refugees in the Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas." *The Tibet Journal* 13, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 49–57. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43301058>.
- Vandenhelsken, Michel. 2003. "Secularism and the Buddhist Monastery of Pemayangtse in Sikkim." *Bulletin of Tibetology* 39, no. 1.

Additional readings will be provided in our "Sikkim-Kalimpong Sampler" prior to departure.

Module 6 second excursion: The politics of borders in Mustang

Session I film & discussion: [Diversity Plaza](#) (dir. Kelsang Tseten 2023, 1 hour, 8 minutes)

*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.

selected readings:

Craig, Sienna R. 2020. *The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives Between Nepal and New York*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

<https://uwapress.uw.edu/book/9780295747699/the-ends-of-kinship/>

Sharma, Jeevan R. “*The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives Between Nepal and New York*, by Sienna R. Craig.” *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 58 (2022).

<https://doi.org/10.4000/ebhr.487>

Session 2 lecture: Interactive session with local elected representative

selected readings:

Stephenson, Wen. “In Nepal’s Mustang Region, Climate ‘Loss and Damage’ Puts the Survival of a Tibetan Community in Question.” *The Nation*, May 14, 2024.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/world/climate-change-mustang-valley-nepal/>.

Session 3 lecture: Interactive session with amchi in Mustang

selected readings:

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact. *Traditional Amchi Practices among Indigenous Knowledge: Nepal*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP). Accessed January 19, 2026.

https://aipnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Indigenous-Knowledge_Nepal.pdf.

Craig, Sienna R. *Horses Like Lightning: A Story of Passage Through the Himalayas*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008.

Session 4 field work: village homestays & field work in Mustang

selected readings:

Geoff Childs, “Review of *The Navel of the Demonsess: Tibetan Buddhism and Civil Religion in Highland Nepal*, by Charles Ramble,” *Himalaya* 28 (2008): 92–93.

Childs, Geoff, Sienna R. Craig, Cynthia M. Beall, and Budhathoki Basnyat. “Depopulating the Himalayan Highlands: Education and Outmigration from Ethnically Tibetan Communities of Nepal.” *Mountain Research and Development* 34, no. 2: 85–94. <https://doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-14-00021.1>.

Cowan, Sam. “*The curious case of the Mustang incident.*” *The Record*, January 17, 2016.

<http://recordnepal.com/wire/curious-casemustang-incident>

Mulmi, Amish. 2021. “Chapter 3: A Fence in the Himalaya.” In *All Roads Lead North: Nepal’s Turn to China*. Kathmandu: Context.

Murton, Galen. “Bordering Spaces, Practicing Borders: Fences, Roads and Reorientations across a Nepal–China Borderland.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, (2017) 1–17.

Additional readings will be provided in our “Mustang Sampler” prior to departure.

Module 7 Final session: Concluding synthesis and analysis of course themes

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assessment and timing of assignments

module			
	orientation assignment	2.5%	first Monday
2	“Prisoners of Shangri-la” position presentation & paper	10%	2 nd 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	25%	1 st Monday after first excursion
6	second excursion study project	20%	1 st Wednesday after second 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.

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 "Politics/Borders" grade.

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, 7% will be for the presentation and group discussion and 4% for the written paper.

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 "Politics/Borders" course (and/or the "Religion/Change," 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

*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.

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 in conversation”, 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 eight 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 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%)

*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.

- 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 two semester excursions 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 needs 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

These first and second excursion study projects will comprise **20% and 25% of your “Politics/Borders” grade**, respectively.

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 & 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 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 & 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 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 *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 “Politics/Borders” grade and is due the final Friday of the semester. You will be graded on the quality of your answers to the above questions.

*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.

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.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 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, is found on the Disability Services 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.