

Advanced Tibetan

TIBE-3003-3503 (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 communities of the trans-Himalayan region. Our *Advanced Tibetan* language course is tailored to fulfil the need to acquire advanced Tibetan language skills in a short span of time. This course exposes students to advanced literary as well as colloquial Tibetan vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures, with an emphasis on enabling students to develop literate as well as oral proficiency. The students learn modern standard Lhasa dialect, which is customarily used (at least as a lingua franca) throughout the Himalaya.

Having achieved advanced level competence, this course will broaden literary and colloquial language skills and the ability to understand the use of the language to express a range of ideas from religion to food to politics. Your advanced deployment of Tibetan will be applauded by Tibetan speakers who see this achievement as a sign of particularly profound respect and cultural sensitivity. You will attain a high level of colloquial proficiency and increasingly sophisticated skills in reading of literary and popular texts by the start of the Independent Study Project (ISP) or internship.

Language classes commence right at the beginning at orientation and continue till ISP (Independent Study Project) or internship 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).

Through a combination of formal class and oral training with Tibetan conversation partners, students can expect to achieve the necessary skills to carry on an advanced level conversation in modern Tibetan. Students are encouraged to practice their Tibetan outside their classes, in homestay, excursions and ISP/internship as well.

The course is composed of two components: language class and conversation partners' class, which is split between drills and conversation with the conversation partners.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand and use a broad Tibetan vocabulary to manage an academically developed range of formal and colloquial conversational topics;
- Write and read both Uchen (*dbu-can*) and Umé (*dbu-med*) scripts with some proficiency;
- Speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics;
- Develop advanced level vocabulary for reading and writing essays;
- Read with contemporary Tibetan literature, political, poetic and/or religious;
- Describe topics related to the program theme;
- Discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease;
- Support opinions and hypothesize on a broad range of concrete and abstract topics, including both popular and specialized.

Language Levels and Placement

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

Instructional Methods

Each week entails: ten 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.

- Language Class (one hour/five days a week): A native Tibetan speaker and a non-Tibetan instructor teach 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 knowledge versus inferential evidence, etc. Students memorize vocabulary lists in addition to submitting written homework. Students are required to learn the grammatical structures in order to be able to take two quizzes a week in which the new vocabularies and the grammar are assessed.
- Conversation Partners' Class (one hour/five days a week): A precious 1:1 learning session with trained native speaker. This class allows the students to practice the material introduced in class as well as talk about topics of their individual interest. The students use as little English as possible in these hours. This helps the students get a real, thorough practice. In the meantime, they digest grammar rules and vocabularies.

Although we expect dedicated students to achieve advanced communication skills, students wishing to interact substantively with Tibetan speakers during their ISP/internship should nevertheless be ready to request collaboration with a translator.

Useful Texts

Oertle, Franziska. (2014) *Bod skad slob deb*. Unpublished.

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.

Assessment

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*

- We have one hour's Tibetan language class followed by one hour's conversation partner class every morning from Monday through Friday.
- Each class begins with a review session. Students are drilled and each and every student is invited for active participation, which ensures each student's attention in the class.
- Quiz is conducted twice every week for constant assessment of the level in which each student is. The following classes are then planned and structured accordingly.
- Students are given daily assignments. They get help from conversation partners and homestay families to complete the assignments. After assignments are submitted, students get them back the next day with feedback and corrections. As 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.
- At the end, before students set off for their ISP/internship, they give their final written and oral exams