# RLG378H Fall 2015 Himalayan Buddhism

*This semester, immerse yourself in the study of Buddhism in the Himalayas through reading, research, discussion, creative writing and role-playing* 

### **Course Objectives**

You will be able to identify key terms, ideas and locations important to the study of Himalayan Buddhism You will improve your ability to read and critically discuss historical source materials and secondary scholarship

You will be able to see aspects of religious practice as described in the life-stories of historical persons You will be able to see and discuss links between religious ideas and practices and other dimensions of culture and social life You will practice working with a team to complete a project that integrates original research with classroom learning, embodied experience, and informed critical opinions

### **Course Overview**

This course will explore aspects of Buddhism in the Himalayan region through a study of religious biographies and a focus on travel and pilgrimage. Rather than seeing Buddhism as a monolithic tradition, an abstract philosophy, or a contemplative practice, we will look at the diverse forms of practice, thinking, and action that appear in the stories of Buddhist lives.

### **Critical Reading**

In addition to learning about forms of Buddhism in the Himalayas, throughout this semester we will be practicing methods of critical reading. As you do each week's reading, you will be required to fill out a reading response template that asks you to think carefully about what you are reading and respond to questions that will form the basis of our in-class discussions. Practicing this style of reading during this semester will help you greatly in other courses!

### **Research-based Creative Writing**

Your primary writing assignment in this course is a Travel Journal, to be written over the last six weeks of the course. You will be writing in the first person about a journey that you and your classmates will take as you walk



You and your classmates will walk across the Himalayan mountain range on a pilgrimage to Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.

from Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to a pilgrimage site near what is now called Sikkim, in India. You will be traveling in the year 1450, carrying a Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage guide to the mountain and hoping to cross the snowy Himalayas safely to reach your destination near the sacred mountain of Kanchenjunga. You will chart your route on maps and describe the progress you make each week, drawing on research you will do about Buddhist practices, Himalayan religious sites, and religious landscape features to create a realistic story about your character. This is a type of writing that you may not have done before in other University courses. You will be using imagination and creativity to bring to life facts and details about religious practice, travel, and social life in the fifteenth century. Don't worry - you can do it, and it will be fun!

### **Online Mapping**

As you travel across Tibet you will be charting your route on Google Maps and Google Earth. For this course you will need regular access to a decent computer, and a willingness to explore new technologies (if you have not previously used Google Maps or Google Earth). Your Travel Journal will consist of blog-like entries on your online map.

### Logistics

Instructor: Frances Garrett, Room 302, 170 St George Street, <u>frances.garrett@utoronto.ca</u>. Office hours by appointment.

Class meets each Wednesday from 11-1 in UC87.

Course details, readings, and announcements will be present on Blackboard. Student journals will be posted on each individual student's My Maps Google account and shared with the instructor and other students in the course.

## Kanchenjunga

"A veritable paradise on earth"

— Terton Dorje Lingpa (1346-1405)

### Assignments and Grading

### Participation (10%)

You must attend all class meetings; if you cannot attend please email the instructor to explain. You must come to class having completed the required readings and assignments, ready to engage in discussion. There will be occasional informal writing assignments in class, regular group discussions, and other required activities - if you do not come to class, you will not be able to succeed in this course. Your engagement during each class meeting is the basis for your ability to complete all other assignments in this course.

### **Character and Travel Presentations (10%)**

By Week 5, you will have created your character for the upcoming pilgrimage journey. You will write a paragraph introducing your character, present this person to the class, and hand this written introduction in at the end of class. By Week 6, you will have assembled your travel partners and planned your route; this will be presented in class and handed in. Your trip will begin in Week 7. In Week 12, you will tell the class what happened on your journey.

### 9 Weekly Reading Reports (40%)

Each week you must complete a Reading Report. You will use a template to respond to questions about the reading. You will bring these to class to refer to in our discussions and hand them in at the end of each class. Reading Reports are not required on the first or last day of class, and you may skip one other week during the semester, as suits your schedule. There are three possible grades for each Report: A (completed thoughtfully), C (incomplete or inattentively done), and F (not handed in at all). You may alternatively think of these three options as check plus, check, and fail.

### Mapped Travel Journal in Six Installments (40%)

Once your journey has begun, you will write a weekly report on your travels, associated with your online travel map. You will be using Google Maps to chart your route, and your journal entries will be logged by location. You will learn how to do this in class - it is very easy, technically, but you will need access to a computer with an internet connection. Each journal entry should be between 700-900 words long, which is less than 2 pages, singlespaced, in a word processing document. We will discuss in class how to tell the story of your character's journey, supported by research.

Your journals will be evaluated on the quality of your writing (i.e., clarity, grammar, and creativity), your role-playing (i.e., how well your journal sees the world through the eyes of a Buddhist), and your research (i.e., your writing should reflect things you've learned from class meetings, assigned readings, or additional research you might have done); writing will also be generally assessed following the Arts & Science policy at www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/general/gradingpolicy. Your journal will be graded as one piece at the end of the course, although you may certainly request feedback on your progress as you go along.

### Readings

You are required to purchase the following three books and map. Additional readings are posted on the class Blackboard site. You must bring your map and the week's readings to each class meeting.

A Step Away from Paradise: A Tibetan Lama's Extraordinary Journey to a Land of Immortality, by Thomas K. Shor. Penguin Books India, 2011. Available for purchase from Frances Garrett.

*The All-Pervading Melodious Drumbeat: The Life of Ra Lotsawa*, by Ra Yeshe Senge, translated by Bryan Cuevas. Penguin Classics, 2015. Available at the U of T Bookstore.

*Himalayan Hermitess: The Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Nun,* by Kurtis Schaeffer. Oxford University Press, 2004. Available at the U of T Bookstore.

Himalaya Nelles Map: Tibet Kashmir Nepal Sikim Bhutan. Folded Map, 2006. Available at the U of T Bookstore.

### FINE PRINT

If you require special accommodations or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, contact the instructor and also Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/.

Students may miss an assignment due to illness, domestic affliction, or in the case of part-time students, work commitments, without academic penalty providing the appropriate documentation is received and approved in a timely manner. In such cases students must notify the Instructor within 48 hours of the due date of the assignment.

Academic Integrity is a fundamental value essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarships at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectively, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the UofT degree that you earn will continue to be valued and respected as a true signifier of a student's individual work and academic achievement. http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/ behaveac.htm outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the process for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to: Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement; Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor; Making up sources or facts; Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated by the following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

### Weekly Schedule

### Class 1 - Sept 16

• Introduction and review of Buddhism.

### Class 2 - Sept 23

- Readings for today: "Representations of Buddhism in Undergraduate Teaching," by Todd Lewis; "Using Historical Fiction in the History Classroom," by Sarah K. Herz; "Buddhist Lives in the Himalayan Region," in *Buddhism: Understanding Buddhism through the Lives of Practitioners*.
- Weekly Reading Report

### Class 3 - Sept 30

- Readings for today: *A Step Away from Paradise*, pages 1-136. Watch PBS Documentary "Shangri-La: Lost Treasures of Tibet."
- Weekly Reading Report

### Class 4 - Oct 7

- Readings for today: *A Step Away from Paradise*, pages 137-end. Watch National Geographic Documentary "Cave People of the Himalaya."
- Weekly Reading Report

### Class 5 - Oct 14

- Readings for today: *The All-Pervading Melodious Drumbeat*, pages 1-76.
- Weekly Reading Report
- Hand in one-paragraph introduction of your character; present this to the class.

### Class 6 - Oct 21

- Readings for today: *The All-Pervading Melodious Drumbeat*, pages 77-236.
- Weekly Reading Report
- Travel group organized; hand in written route plan.

### Class 7 - Oct 28

- Readings for today: *The All-Pervading Melodious Drumbeat*, pages 237-end.
- Weekly Reading Report
- Travel Journal, part 1

### Class 8 - Nov 4

- Readings for today: *Himalayan Hermitess*, pages 3-12 and 131-184. Skim the rest of the book.
- Weekly Reading Report
- Travel Journal, part 2

### Class 9 - Nov 11

- Readings for today: "Growing through Travel," from *Tibetan Diary* and "Rethinking Tibetan Pilgrimage Practice," by Toni Huber.
- Skim or read some historical travel journals (links provided online).
- Weekly Reading Report
- Travel Journal, part 3

### **Class 10 - Nov 18**

- Readings for today: "The Guidebook: The Outer Passkey to the Hidden Lands"; 'The Tibetan Myth of the Hidden Valley in the Visionary Geography of Nepal," by Orofino; "Sbas Yul 'Bras Mo Ljongs: the Hidden Valley of Sikkim"; "Khembalung: the Hidden Valley."
- Weekly Reading Report
- Travel Journal, part 4

### **Class 11 - Nov 25**

- Readings for today: Do your own research readings.
- Weekly Reading Report
- Travel Journal, part 5

### Class 12 - Dec 2

- Readings for today: Do your own research readings.
- Travel Journal, part 6



"Within the fort of the snow mountain there are four treasures packed with tremendous wealth that will fulfill your wishes. There is a pond of nectar, and within that pond are eight nagas [serpent gods] protecting a treasure of unimaginable jewels. There is an unthinkable paradise of the owner of the hidden treasures, as well as a paradise of the protector in charge of the whole world. There are countless natural formations, great hidden treasures of dharma ad wealth and some small hidden treasures as well.

"At the foot of the snow mountain like a lion, which is full of rocks encircled by rainbows, there is a treasure of innumerable jewels. Within the rock mountain in C there is a treasure of wish-fulfilling gems. In the long cave called L there is another treasure of wish-fulfilling gems. In the east, below Kanchenjunga, are treasures of the three different salts. In the mountain called L there are treasures of life and religion. In the central mountain called T there is a great treasure of immortality. In the northwest, in a great cave at Y, there is a copper horse that will conquer all three worlds. And there is a dagger there that will conquer all illusions. In the hold place of the auspicious dakini there is a granary of corn."...

"In that place there are four main doors, four secret doors, the four cardinal directions and the four corners, which are all held tightly. The eastern great gate is blocked by three natural obstructions: narrow ways, mountain doors and curtains. The three conditions of the southern door are rocky hills, great rivers and innumerable ravines. The western and northern gates are entirely packed with natural barriers. Therefore this beyul is superior to other places."...

"When the world is devoid of happiness, the door of the ascetic valley will open. If one delays, troublesome things will occur and the great and small valleys will be shaken by a red wind of fire, and poisonous hailstorms will drop."

From A Step Away from Paradise

Advice from King Gesar on crossing the Himalayas:

"Try to kidnap some men from upper and lower Mon [to act as guides].

Pay attention in the mountains and spy in the villages. Spy on the layout of the mountains and valleys, and the course of the rivers and paths, and how wide or narrow are the footpaths.

For one who is heroic, it is not so difficult. The cowardly are made into meat for no reason. Those who travel to the other side of the mountain do so with three objectives:

On the day of climbing the three highest mountains It is necessary to move swiftly like a cooling wind. On the day of passing through a great plain, it is necessary to move swiftly like a hawk. When traveling through the right district of the great group, it is necessary to move like a hungry wolf.

If lightning and hail emerge, make the sound Ki! When clouds and mist emerge, make the sound Ha! When you reach water, make the sound Bso! Shoot your arrows upon the top of the white clouds! Use your knives on the top of the bumpy mountain! If someone happens to see you, make their vital channel quiver!

After we arrive at the centre of Mt Tsari, We will see what we need."

From the Medicinal Region of Tsari