

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

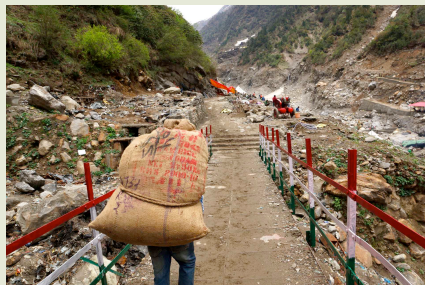
This course will explore aspects of Buddhism in the Himalayan region through a study of religious biographies and a focus on travel and pilgrimage. Rather than seeing Buddhism as a monolithic tradition, an abstract philosophy, or a contemplative practice, we will look at the diverse forms of practice, 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, frances.garrett@utoronto.ca. 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, single-spaced, 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/grading-policy. 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 Sikkim Bhutan. Folded Map, 2006. Available at the U of T Bookstore.

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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, respectfully, 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

