

RSOC 115:Tibetan Buddhism

Fall 2016 TR 10:20 AM-12:00 PM Kenna 214

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Office Hours: Mon. 11 AM-12 noon, and Wed. 1-2 PM, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will survey the development of Tibetan Buddhism, looking broadly at the development of its distinct traditions and the history of their interactions in the premodern and modern periods. From the basis of our overview of Tibetan religious history and the fundamental beliefs and practices of Tibetan religious traditions, we will then look closely at three central topics. These will include devotional traditions centering around saints, advanced systems of ritual, yoga and meditation, and the experience of women in Tibetan Buddhist traditions. We will also explore the difficulties faced by Tibetan Buddhist practitioners over the past sixty years, and will explore the state of Tibetan Buddhism in the contemporary world. We will achieve these goals through close readings of primary and secondary texts, as well as the exploration of visual media, particularly short and long documentary films on a variety of subjects.

COURSE GOALS

1. Gain an understanding of Tibetan Buddhist teachings, practices, and history.
2. Understand the challenges faced by contemporary Tibetans in Tibet and living in Diaspora.
3. Cultivate the ability to identify and critically evaluate arguments made in primary and secondary texts, develop one's own arguments, and cogently and convincingly expressing them orally and in writing.

CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The study of Religion, Theology and Culture forms an important component of a Santa Clara education. This course fulfills the requirement for the third course in Religion, Theology and Culture (RTC 3). Students must have taken both RTC 1 and RTC 2 courses, and have completed 88 units, to earn RTC 3 credit. As an RTC 3 course this class is part of the Explorations dimension of the Core Curriculum. Building upon the first two RTC courses, this class will enable students to:

1. Identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions
2. Evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society

In the context of RSOC 115, we will develop these skills by exploring the both the challenges faced by women in a contemporary Tibetan Buddhist community, as well as the those faced by Tibetan communities in the aftermath of the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet, which has divided the Tibetan community, causing many to flee into exile. We will explore the ethical dimensions of these issues, with particular focus on the resources provided by Tibetan Buddhist traditions to enable adherents to face these challenges.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING:

Critical Reflection Paper on Classical Topics (30%)

During the first half of the course students will read, and we will discuss in class, two primary texts, a Tibetan Buddhist scripture and a hagiography of a Tibetan saint. In the first paper, students will be asked to critically reflect on this material, and write a paper exploring a dimension of it. They may explore any topic that they choose; possible topics might include the how Tibetan beliefs in reincarnation have shaped the institutional structure of their traditions, or how hagiographies and ritual practices reinforce the status and prestige of Tibetan lamas. It will be evaluated on the basis of the clarity and cogency of their arguments, as well as their skill in drawing convincing conclusions. *This will assess course goals #1 and #3, and core learning objective #1.*

Short Reflection Papers (20%)

In addition to their group project, each student will also be expected to write two short reflection papers on the documentaries that we will watch in class. The second paper will address a film dealing with either the status of women in Tibetan Buddhism or the lives of Tibetans under Chinese occupation. This latter essay will require students to identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on a contemporary controversial issue.

This will assess course goals #1 and #2 and core learning objective #1.

Final Paper on Contemporary Issues (40%)

The course will conclude with a reading of an important anthropological work exploring how the institutional structure of Tibetan Buddhism serves to subordinate women *despite* the fact that theoretically men and women are equally capable of achieving awakening according to Mahāyāna Buddhist theory, along with an

autobiography of a Tibetan women who survived the Chinese invasion of Tibet and its terrible aftermath. In the final paper, students will be asked to address a major ethical issue, namely the status of women in Tibetan Buddhism and/or the treatment of Tibetans by the Chinese. Students will be required to identify diverse perspectives on these issues, such as the differences in attitudes between monks and nuns, or Tibetans and the Chinese. They will also be asked to look at resources found in Tibetan Buddhism and their applicability to the larger issue in comparative and global perspective. *This will assess course goals #2 and #3, and core learning objectives #1 and #2.*

Class Participation (10%)

Participation in class discussions and active engagement with the course readings are requirements of this class. This class will have structured discussions, in which students will be required to prepare in advance reflections on course readings, discuss them in small groups, and present the keys points of their discussions to the class. These discussions are intended the students' knowledge of the traditions studies, their ability to reflect upon them critically, and their ability to work and learn collaboratively. Participation will both be directly measured by the instructor, and indirectly measured by the students' progress in the other assignments. *This will indirectly support, but not directly assess, all of the course goals and core learning objectives.*

Students will be asked to assess the course via the narrative evaluations at the end of the quarter.

POLICIES

Attendance

Regular attendance is required. If you must miss a class, you should inform me in advance when possible, and you are responsible for making up missed work. While absences due to unavoidable problems (sickness, etc.) will definitely be excused, I will NOT excuse absences for activities associated with other classes. **Unexcused absences will significantly lower your final grade.**

Academic Integrity Pledge

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of -- and commitment to -- a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states: I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity

contained in the Student Conduct Code. Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class.

In order to maintain academic integrity, please make sure that you properly cite all sources that you utilize in your writing, including works that are directly quoted or paraphrased, as well as works used as a source of information. This includes both print and online sources. Your paper submissions must consist of your own writing, and any direct quotations or paraphrasing from other works must be properly cited.

Disability Resources

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, <http://www.scu.edu/disabilities> as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy may also be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

Accommodations for Pregnancy and Parenting

In alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and with the California Education Code, Section 66281.7, Santa Clara University provides reasonable accommodations to students who are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth, and/or have medically related needs. Pregnant and parenting students can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Alternatively, a pregnant or parenting student experiencing related medical conditions may request accommodations through Disability Resources.

Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, or stalking, I

encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please consult the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy at <http://bit.ly/2ce1hBb> or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at 408-554-3043, bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through <https://www.scu.edu/osl/report/> or anonymously through Ethicspoint <https://www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethicspoint/>

ASSIGNMENTS

Papers should be submitted as digital files (via Camino or email) by end of the day (i.e., 12 midnight) on the day that they are due **OR** submitted as a hard copy in class. In order to save paper, I prefer digital submissions, and do not require a hard copy. Please email me your papers as documents in the Pages (.pages) or Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) formats if possible, or as text files (.txt, or .rft). If you would like to submit papers in PDF format please do so via Camino. If you submit your paper via email, I will email you a confirmation when I have received it. If you do NOT receive a confirmation within 24 hours, please check with me to confirm that I have received it. If you email me a paper and I do not receive it, I WILL count it as late if you do not check in with me the next day. Late work will only be accepted with the permission of the instructor, and will be penalized at the rate of 5 points per day late (including weekends), unless the instructor has granted an extension in advance (i.e., at least 24 hours prior to the due date).

Grading Scale

94.0–100 A	87.0–89.9B+	77.0–79.9C+	67.0–69.9D+
90.0–93.9A-	83.0–86.9B	73.0–76.9C	63.0–66.9D
	80.0–82.9B-	70.0–72.9C-	60.0–62.9D-

CLASS TEXTS (REQUIRED)

The following readings will be available in the campus bookstore and on reserve in the library. Other readings will be available in digital format on Camino.

ITB John Powers, *A Concise Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion 2008)

TBD Gyurme Dorje, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Viking 2005)

Lobsang P. Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa: A New Translation from the Tibetan* (Penguin 1992)

Richard Kohn, *Lord of the Dance: The Mani Rimdu Festival in Tibet and Nepal* (SUNY 2001)

BBN Kim Gutschow, *Being a Buddhist Nun* (Harvard 2004)

Ani Pachen, *Sorrow Mountain* (Kodansha America, 2000)

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Tues. 9/20 **Class Introduction**

During the first class we will engage in the usual introductory rituals, and will then move on to broadly discuss the land and peoples of Tibet.

Thurs. 9/22 **Buddhism Basics**

We will cover the life of Shakyamuni Buddha and core teachings of Buddhism.

•ITB 17-29, 45-53

Tues. 9/27 **Mahāyāna Buddhism**

We will cover the basic teachings of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, the greater tradition which includes the Tibetan forms of Buddhism.

•ITB 31-43

Thurs. 9/29 **Tantra**

We will introduce the basic teachings and practices of the Tantric form of Buddhism. As the remainder of the course will focus on this form of Buddhism, this will be a survey of ideas that we will cover in more depth later.

•ITB 63-94

2. **Sanctity, Yoga, and Death**

Tues. 10/4 **The Four Orders of Tibetan Buddhism and their Founding Saints**

We will overview the history of the four main orders of Tibetan Buddhism, with a focus on the founding “saints” of these traditions.

•ITB 103-139

Thurs. 10/6 **Discussion: The Life of Milarepa**

We will read and discuss the famous biography of one of Tibet’s best known saints, the great yogī Milarepa.

•Lobsang P. Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa*, 9-197

Tues. 10/11 **The Yogis of Tibet**

We will view and discuss a documentary on contemporary Tibetan Buddhist yogis and yogic traditions.

•Film: “The Yogis of Tibet” (2002, 77 min.)

Thurs. 10/13 **Death, Enlightenment, and Buddhist Yoga**

We will explore Tibetan beliefs concerning death and rebirth, as well as religious practices designed to empower one to gain conscious control over the dying process, or even become enlightened while experiencing it. We will also watch a short documentary on Tibetan funerary practices.

- TBD xiii-xlix (introductory essays)
- Film: Ellen Bruno, "Sky Burial" (2005, 15 min.)

Tues. 10/18 **Discussion: The Tibetan Book of the Dead**

We will read and discuss this influential Tibetan Buddhist scripture.

- TBD 5-379

Recommended: Donald Lopez, "The Book" (on Camino)

Thurs. 10/20 **Contemporary Use of the Tibetan Book of the Dead**

We will conclude our study of this topic with a viewing and discussion of a documentary on the use of the Tibetan Book of the Dead in a contemporary Tibetan community.

- Film: Barrie McLean, "The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Way of Life" (2004, 90 min.)

3. Tibetan Buddhist Ritual

Tues. 10/25 We will next turn our attention to the topic of Tibetan Buddhist ritual. We will focus on the figure of the maṇḍala, which are Tibetan artistic representations of the cosmos. They are sites for initiation, and also objects of contemplation that can aid one on one's journey to awakening.

- TBD ch. 5 (61-91), Appendix 2 (387-402)
- Critical Reflection Paper on Classical Topics Due**

Thurs. 10/27 **The Kālacakra Rite of Initiation**

We will view a documentary on contemporary performances of the Kālacakra initiation ritual in India and Europe.

- Film: Werner Herzog, "Wheel of Time" (2003, 80 minutes)

Tues. 11/1 **Discussion: The Mani Rimdu Festival**

We will focus on the Mani Rimdu celebration, a multi-day ritual conducted regularly by Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Solu-Khumbu region of Nepal.

- Kohn, 3-264
- Film Review #1 Due**

Thurs. 11/3 **The Mani Rimdu Festival**

We will view a documentary on a contemporary performance of the Mani Rimdu festival.

•Film: Richard Kohn, "Destroyer of Illusion" (2006, 56 minutes)

3. **Women in Tibetan Buddhism**

Tues. 11/8 **Being a Buddhist Nun**

In order to explore the status of women in Tibetan Buddhism, and the roles available to them, we will read the Kim Gutschow's book *Being a Buddhist Nun*, a study of a community of Geluk Buddhist nuns in the region of Zangskar, an ethnic Buddhist community in the far north of India.

•BBN 1-76

Thurs. 11/10 **Discussion: *Being a Buddhist Nun***

•BBN 77-256

Tues. 11/15 **Discussion: The Tsoknyi Nangchen Nuns of Tibet**

•Film: Victoria Hitchcock, "Blessings: The Tsoknyi Nangchen Nuns of Tibet" (2010, 90 min.)

Thurs. 11/17 **Tibetan Buddhism and the Challenge of the 20th Century**

We will conclude the course with an exploration of Tibetan Buddhism in the contemporary world, beginning with the traumatic events of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, which forced many Tibetans into exile, and have forced the Tibetans who remained to endure a fiercely repressive occupation.

•Film: Ellen Bruno, "Satya: A Prayer for the Enemy" (1993, 28 min.)

11/22 & 24 **Thanksgiving break!**

Tues. 11/29 ***Sorrow Mountain***

We will read and discuss the autobiography of Ani Pachen, a Tibetan nun who resisted the Chinese invasion of Tibet.

•Ani Pachen, *Sorrow Mountain*, 3-278

•Alexandra Schultheis, "Subjectivity Politics in Sorrow Mountain: Transnational Feminism and Tibetan Autobiography" (on Camino)

Thurs. 12/1 **Tibetan Buddhism in Exile**

We will conclude the class with a viewing of the film "The Cup," a realistic portrayal of the lives of young Tibetan monks living in exile in India.

•Film: Khyentse Norbu, "The Cup" (2000, 93 min.)

Thurs. 12/8 **Final Paper & Film Review #2 Due**
Due by 4 PM via Camino, email OR hardcopy