

## SYLLABUS

### RELS O177-001 TIBETAN & INDIAN RELIGIONS

Taught in Loyola Himalaya Adventure, Summer Study in Dharamsala, India Program 2008 by Dr. Catherine Wessinger.

This course will be taught in the Loyola Himalaya Adventure, Summer Study in Dharamsala, India Program July 10-August 6, 2008. It will involve an immersion experience in Vajrayana Buddhism as expressed in the refugee Tibetan Buddhist culture based in Dharamsala, India, the site of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile, visits to other sites sacred to Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains, and to social service programs. In Dharamsala and other Tibetan Buddhist communities, there will be an opportunity to hear various teachers give "dharma talks" on Buddhist philosophy.

The onsite coordinator of the itinerary and accommodations will be Neil Guidry, director of the Louisiana Himalaya Association.

Prior to departure for India, each student will be paired with a Tibetan as a mutual learning partner. They will establish an email relationship prior to the student's arrival in India, and once in Dharamsala, they will spend significant face-to-face time together to facilitate the student's learning about Tibetan Buddhist religion and culture and the Tibetan improving his or her English reading and speaking.

There will be one mandatory preliminary meeting of the class toward the end of the Spring 2007 semester to provide Religious Studies categories for understanding the religious expressions that will be observed in India.

Students are strongly encouraged to do the assigned readings before embarking on the trip on July 10, 2008. We will discuss these readings in the classes in India in light of experiences in Dharamsala and on excursions outside Dharamsala.

**Course Objective:** The course will be an examination of Vajrayana Buddhism by immersion in Tibetan Buddhist culture in Dharamsala, India, as well as exposure to the other primary religions in India through study and observation. The course will examine the Indian influences on Vajrayana Buddhism, the uniquely Tibetan formulations of Vajrayana Buddhism, and the interactions of contemporary Tibetan Buddhists with other religions in Northern India.

#### **Assigned Readings:**

Ama Adhe, *The Voice That Remembers: The Heroic Story of a Woman's Fight to Free Tibet* (Wisdom Publications, 1997). ADHE.

Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, eds., *Religions of South Asia: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006). MITTAL/THURSBY

John Powers, *A Concise Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 2008).  
POWERS

Selected chapters from Judith Simmer-Brown, *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), saved on Blackboard. SIMMER-BROWN

Additional selected articles saved on Blackboard. All articles on Blackboard should be printed out and brought on the trip. BLACKBOARD.

\*Group meditation and some films are optional.

**Required preliminary class meeting:** Lecture and discussion of “basic religion,” and its relation to philosophical monism, and polytheistic, monotheistic, and non-theistic religious expressions. It will be demonstrated that the animistic worldview of basic religion and its associated characteristics of sacrifice, rites of passage, veneration of totems, observance of taboos, and practice of magic, divination, and shamanism are expressions that are fundamental to human religiosity. The Hindu tradition is a rich example of basic religion. It will be shown that various other types of religiosity develop out of basic religion: monotheism, philosophical monism, and non-theistic religious orientations. All of these trends will be explored in India in the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh traditions. It will also be asserted that most religious traditions do not move very far from the characteristics of basic religion, and if they do, the characteristics of basic religion often reappear.

BLACKBOARD: Lewis M. Hopfe, “Basic Religion,” *Religions of the World* 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 19-35.

MITTAL/THURSBY: “Introduction,” 1-11.

R July 10 Flight departs New Orleans.

F July 11 Arrive **Delhi** PM: Tara Hotel, phone 238 1077

Sa July 12 **Delhi**

7AM Tour of Sikh Gurudwara, Hindu & Tibetan temples, and surrounding neighborhoods.

11AM Introduction to Delhi street life. Lecture providing a general overview of the diverse populations living and working together in the surrounding neighborhood. A focus will be placed on the importance and evidence of religious ceremony and ritual as part of daily life, safety issues when engaging with the local population, and a brief introduction to cultural practices and taboos.

2PM Tour of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity home for the destitute.

**Class 1: Sikhism**

MITTAL/THURSBY: “Sikh Dharma,” 131-48.

7PM Break into small groups for a walking tour of surrounding neighborhoods and dinner.

- Su July 13     **Delhi**  
 9AM - noon Volunteer service at Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.  
 2PM Depart for Gandhi Museum and Memorial.  
 ASSIGNED READING ON GANDHI: MITTAL/THURSBY: "Bhagavad Gita," 47-48; "Karma Yoga," 63-64; "Gandhi and Independence," 78-79; *Time* article, "Mohandas Gandhi," 9-11.  
 6PM Group Meeting – First days in India plus preparation for tomorrow's journey.  
 7PM Guest Speaker.
- M July 14     **Delhi**  
 9AM – 11AM Volunteer service at Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.  
 11AM – 1PM Lunch, pack.  
**Class 2: Indian Christian Tradition**  
 MITTAL/THURSBY: "Indian Christian Tradition," 185-98; Wikipedia contributors, "Missionaries of Charity"; *L'Osservatore Romano* article, "Sr. Nirmala Joshi of the Missionaries of Charity."  
 6PM Depart for train station and night train to Pathancot.
- T July 15     **Dharamsala: Kelsang Hotel; phone 01892-221709**  
 7AM Jeeps from Pathancot to Dharamsala, group breakfast on the way.  
 Noon Break into small groups for village tour and lunch.  
Tibetan History and Culture  
**Class 3: *Time* article, "The Dalai Lama's Journey."**  
 6PM Dharamsala Orientation meeting  
 7PM group dinner
- W July 16     **Dharamsala**  
 9AM - noon Meet with Tibetan mutual learning partner and tour the main Temple of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.  
 ASSIGNMENT: The autobiography of Ama Adhe should have been read completely.  
Ama Adhe & the Recent History of Tibet  
 5PM Meet with Ama Adhe, survivor of 27 years in Chinese Communist work camps.  
 7PM Group Meditation Practice  
 8PM Film
- R July 17     **Dharamsala:**  
 9AM - noon Meet with Tibetan mutual learning partner.  
**Class 4: Life of the Buddha & Buddhist Doctrines**  
 POWERS: "The Indian Background," 17-29; "Some Important Buddhist Doctrines," 45-53.  
 7PM Group meditation practice  
 8PM Film

- F July 18      **Dharamsala**  
 9AM - noon Meet with mutual learning partner.  
**Class 5: Influence of Indian Mahayana Buddhism on Tibetan Buddhism**  
 POWERS: "Mahayana," 31-43.  
 7PM Group Meditation Practice  
 8PM Film
- Sa July 19      **Dharamsala**  
 9AM - noon With Tibetan mutual learning partner Partner tour Norbulingka Institute for preservation of Tibetan culture and the Tibetan Disabled Children's home.  
**Class 6: POSITION PAPER #1** written in class on a topic to be announced by the instructor.  
 7PM Dinner Party with mutual learning partners.
- Su July 20      **Dharamsala**  
 9AM - 2PM With mutual learning partner tour Tibetan Children's Village and have a private lunch in your Tibetan friend's home if possible.  
**Class 7: Religious Roles of Tibetan Women; The Enlightened Female; Nuns**  
 SIMMER-BROWN: "Gender in Traditional Tibet" and "Symbolism and Subjectivity: The Feminine Principle," 39-42; "The Dakini in Tibetan Buddhism," 43-80.  
 BLACKBOARD: Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Notes on Buddhist Women's Ordination (2 pages); Maren Aukerman, "Whose Nirvana? Tibetan Buddhist Nuns in North India" (3 pages)  
 7PM Preparation meeting for the jeep journey to Bir.
- M July 21      **Dharamsala**  
 9:30AM: Jeeps depart for **Bir** (about 3 hr. ride).  
 (Take small bag. Leave big bags.)  
 En route visit Jamyang Choling Institute of Buddhist Dialectics for women.  
 <<http://www.jamchoebuddhistdialectics.org/>>  
 1PM Break into small groups for lunch and village tour.  
 5PM Orientation then Tour of Nyingma monastery; Experience the daily life and routines of Tibetan Buddhist monks.
- T July 22      **Bir**: Choling Guest House, phone 9418913976  
 9AM One-hour hike through the surrounding small Indian farming villages to the area's Kagyu monastery. Then visit a home for the sick and needy.  
**Class 8: POWERS**: "Tantra," 63-94.
- W July 23      **Bir**  
 Free morning for personal reflection and exploration.  
 10AM Group meeting on preparation for trip, info about Mandi markets and Tso Pema

1PM Jeeps leave for **Tso Pema** [Lotus Lake, also called Rewalsar] (about 4-hour ride). En route stop at the market town of Mandi and visit local tailors to have clothes made (Indian or Western style); explain to tailors that clothes must be complete by Saturday.

Tso Pema is a lake sacred to Buddhists due to an origin myth about the Tantric practitioner Padmasambhava, who subsequently brought Vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet, and his Indian partner in Tantric practice, Mandarava. The lake is also sacred to Hindus and Sikhs.

7PM Break into small groups for village tour and dinner. Visit Shiva Temple, Guru Govind Singh's gurudwara, and Lomesh Rishi temple.

R July 24      **Tso Pema:** Hotel Lotus Lake, phone 01905-280 239  
9AM Hike up the mountain for a tour of the Nuns' monastery and caves of long-term retreatants. Meditation instruction and practice inside an ancient meditation cave.  
**Class 9:** Buddhist Meditation; Female Buddhas: Prajnaparamita, Tara, and Machik Lapdrön,  
BLACKBOARD: "Pilgrimage to Tso Pema" (2 pages).  
POWERS: "Meditation," 55-62.  
SIMMER-BROWN: "The Secret Dakini: The Great Mother," 81-115.

F July 25      **Tso Pema**  
7AM Walking meditation around the lake.  
9AM Hear dharma talk by a Tibetan Rinpoche or Elder Tibetan Nun.  
11AM Visit Tibetan pre-school and kindergarten supported by LHA.  
**Class 10:** Human Dakinis: Mandarava and Others  
SIMMER-BROWN: "The Outer-Outer Dakini," 182-233.  
8PM Film

Sa July 26      **Tso Pema**  
7AM Walking meditation around the lake.  
**Class 11:** POSITION PAPER #2 to be written in class on a topic to be announced by the instructor.  
1PM Jeeps to **Mandi** depart (1 hour ride).  
3PM Break into small groups for a tour of the town and check in with tailors to pick up clothes and/have alterations done, if needed, and clothes delivered to hotel.  
7:30PM Group dinner - casual dress.

Su July 27      **Mandi:** Raj Palace Hotel, phone 01905-222401  
7:30AM Meet in garden for walking tour of temples and rituals.  
Tour of Hindu temples, Mandarava's dungeon, Royal Garden where Padmasambhava taught. Padmasambhava was the Tantric Buddhist practitioner credited with bringing Vajrayana Buddhism from India to Tibet in the eighth century. Mandarava was the daughter of the king of Mandi who became Padmasambhava's consort and co-practitioner in Tantric yoga.

11AM Group meeting: The India Experience thus far.

**Class 12: Hinduism**

MITTAL/THURSBY: "Hindu Dharma," 15-84.

7:30PM Group Dinner – semi dress up. Wear the clothes you had made!

- M July 28      **Mandi**  
Free morning for reflection and relaxation  
1PM Jeeps leave for **Dharamsala** (about 6 hrs. ride). Stop at monastic university along the way.
- T July 29      **Dharamsala:** Kelsang Hotel, phone 01892-221709  
**Class 13:** POWERS: "The Four Orders," 103-39.  
11:30AM Group meeting: Preparation for Himalayan trek.  
1PM – until. Prepare for trek and/or shopping time with local vendors.
- W July30      **Dharamsala**  
7AM Depart for hike up **Triund** mountain, part of the Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas. This is a popular 9 kilometer (5.5 miles) hike from Dharamsala to a ridge at 2,827 meters (9,275 feet). Enjoy the marvelous view of the valley and higher mountains. Accommodation is in a very rustic mountain lodge, no electricity and no running water.  
5PM Sunset hike and search for Hobbits and other mystical creatures.  
7PM Group meal.  
**Optional for those not going on hike :**  
9AM – noon Meet with mutual learning partner.  
3PM Visit Kangra Art Museum.  
BLACKBOARD: "Kangra Art School Revived" (2 pages);
- R July31      **Triund**  
Day on Triund  
AM Rest or further hiking and exploration.  
3PM Group Discussion  
5PM Sunset Hike  
7PM Group Dinner  
**Optional for those not doing hike:**  
9AM - noon Meet with mutual learning partner.  
3PM - TBA
- F Aug 1      **Triund**  
11AM Depart for hike down from Triund and return to **Dharamsala**.  
**Optional for those not on hike:**  
9AM – noon Meet with mutual learning partner.  
3PM Tour Tibetan Government Center.
- Sa Aug. 2      **Dharamsala**  
9AM - Noon Final meeting with mutual learning partner.

**Class 14: Jainism**

MITTAL/THURSBY: "Jaina Dharma," 87-101.

**Islam**

MITTAL/THURSBY: "Indian Muslim Tradition," 201-45.

5:30 Group Meeting: Preparation for departure.

- Su Aug 3      **Dharamsala**  
Free morning: resting, shopping, goodbyes, etc.  
1PM Jeeps depart for Parthancot, group dinner en route; take night train to Delhi.  
READ: BLACKBOARD: Varupi Jain, "Unmapped, Yet Visited" on Pahar Ganj area in Delhi (4 pages).
- M Aug. 4      **Delhi:** Hotel Relax, phone 235 62811  
1 hour after hotel check in - Orientation then break into small groups for area exploration and eating.  
3PM Tour of Jain Temple and other points of interest.  
7PM Group meeting: Preparation for journey to Agra.  
8PM Group Dinner
- T Aug. 5      **Delhi**  
4AM Jeeps depart for Agra: **Taj Mahal** and other points of interest (the journey is about 4 hours each way); return early evening.
- W Aug 6      **Delhi**  
Free day to shop and/or do tours of personal interest.  
Consolidate bags into a couple of rooms before noon.  
Plane departs in the evening.  
Arrive back in New Orleans.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The course grade will be based on a scale of 200 pts.

Two position papers will be written in class in India relating the material in assigned readings to the experiences of places and people visited in India. A third position paper will be written after returning to the United States reflecting on Hinduism, Jainism or Islam in light of the assigned readings and observations in India. A fourth position paper will be written after return to the United States assessing what the student learned from the experiences of the trip and course. Each position paper will be worth a maximum of 25 pts. each, for a total of 100 pts.

The student will keep a journal throughout the trip recording reflections on the new experiences and the information learned **in light of the assigned readings**. This journal, worth a total of 50 pts., will be graded by the instructor after return to the U.S.

Participation in class discussion will be part of the final grade up to a maximum of 25 pts.

The instructor will keep a log of student participation in each class. Class attendance is part of the discussion grade. Absences from class are excused only in the event of illness.

After return to the U.S., the student will turn in a report on the experiences of learning and working with the mutual learning partner for a maximum of 25 pts. This final report will be graded in terms of the degree of thoughtfulness reflected in the report.

#### GRADING SCALE:

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| A | 90 – 100 percent |
| B | 80 – 89.5        |
| C | 70 – 79.5        |
| D | 60 – 69.5        |
| F | 59.5 or below    |

#### **Disability services and accommodations**

This trip involves a lot of walking and climbing up and down hills and steps. Students unable to perform these functions as well as carry their own travel backpacks should not go on this trip.

More time will be made available in India for students with learning and writing disabilities to write their position papers.

#### **Completion of assignments outside the course time**

Since this course will be taught in India, students are strongly encouraged to do the reading assignments before departing for India. They should bring all books and assigned papers with them to India. If they read the book by Ama Adhe before coming to India, they do not need to bring the book. They should make sure to read Ama Adhe's autobiography before leaving the United States, since we will meet with her shortly after arriving in Dharamsala.

#### **Attendance**

Attendance in every class is expected, except in the case of illness.

**Assignments due after return to United States**, including the student's India journal, must be turned in **by August 20**. If these are turned in late, the grade for the course will be diminished by one letter grade.