



THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Religion and Culture of Bhutan SFS 2010

Syllabus

Center for Himalayan Environment and Development Studies
The School for Field Studies (SFS)
UWICER and Bhutan Ecological Society
Himalayan Environment and Society in Transition
Paro, Bhutan

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

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COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that they may present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!

Course Overview

Religious and cultural principles and beliefs underlie much of the Bhutanese attitudes and practices in the environment. Students will learn to read the landscape for religious symbols and will tune their ears to pick up Buddhist principles in what they hear about environment. We will learn a little of the local languages, enough to engage in pleasantries on the street.

Learning Objectives

In this course students will develop a conceptual and practical understanding of religious and cultural principles that underlie Bhutanese attitudes and approaches to environment. Specific learning objectives are the following:

- 1) Understand basic principles of Buddhism as practiced in Bhutan
- 2) Learning about local Bhutanese cultural beliefs and practices
- 3) Learn to read the landscape for spiritual symbols
- 4) Be able to perform basic communication in dzongkha.

Assessment

Our goal is to conduct ongoing assessment of student learning throughout the course and provide timely and constructive feedback. Some assignments encourage students to work together, to share ideas and knowledge. This allows students to take advantage of the range of backgrounds within the group.

Assessment will be conducted on an individual basis, unless otherwise stated. The final course grade will be based on the following assessment items.

Assessment item	Value (%)
Participation observation exercise at Sangchoekhor	15
Reflective Essay	15
Mid Term Exam	25
Final Exam	35
Preparedness	10
Total	100

Reflective essays (15%): Every student will write one essay reflecting on a particular course reading, lecture or field experience. Students are encouraged to use this as an opportunity for personal reflection or to connect what they have learned in the class to a wider understanding of the environment in Bhutan

Participant Observation Exercise (15%): Each student will attend part of a local festival and be asked to write a descriptive passage about their experience. They are encouraged to attempt to tie their experience to what they learned in the course. Prior to the exercise students will have a lecture on the principles and practice of participant observation as a methodological tool.

Exam (midterm 25%, final 35%): Students will have a mid-term and final exam which will cover topics from language and culture classes, guest lectures and different field lectures.

Preparedness (10%): Students are expected to maintain 100% attendance and be actively involved in all indoor and outdoor classes. All students will start the semester with 100 marks and lose 3 marks each time they show up for class unprepared or unwilling to participate. Students are expected to attend all classes; exceptions will only be made through the SAM.

Grading Scheme

A	95.00 - 100.00%	B+	86.00 - 89.99%	C+	76.00 - 79.99%	D	60.00 - 69.99%
A-	90.00 - 94.99%	B	83.00 - 85.99%	C	73.00 - 75.99%	F	0.00 - 59.99%
		B-	80.00 - 82.99%	C-	70.00 - 72.99%		

General Reminders

Plagiarism: Using the ideas and material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. A grade of zero will be assigned if anyone is caught cheating or aiding another person to cheat actively or passively (e.g., allowing someone to look at your exam). All assignments unless specifically stated should be individual pieces of work.

Deadlines: Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated for several reasons: They are a part of working life to which students need to become accustomed and promote equity among students. Deadlines allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due. Late assignments will incur a 10% penalty for each day that they are late. No assignment will be accepted after three days. Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period.

Participation: Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the program is mandatory because your actions can significantly affect the experience you and your classmates have while at SFS. Therefore, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises, and simply get involved.

Course Content

Type- L: Lecture, **GL:** Guest Lecture, **FL:** Field Lecture, **FEX:** Field Exercise, **D:** Discussion
Readings in ***bold** (with asterisks) are required; others are optional supplementary reading.

No.	Title	Type	Time (hrs)
1	Lhabsang (Purification) In this class Students will be taught about the significance of Lhabsang and observe the activities during the process.	L and observation	2hrs
2	Basic Culture of Bhutan Students will be brief on Bhutanese culture and different Bhutanese etiquette	L	1hr:15 min
3	Briefing on the language and culture class We will go over the syllabus, introduce the assignments, explain grades and discuss reading materials and go over brief introduction on language and culture.	L & D	1hr:15 min
4	Language: (Introduction to language)	L	1hr:15 min

	In this class we will introduce the different Bhutanese languages and their history. We will also discuss how language and cultural identity are connected in Bhutan.		
5	Introduction to Buddhism We will teach how Buddhism came, its practices in Bhutan as well as talk about the everyday practices and beliefs of lay Buddhists.	L	1hr:15 min
6	Language: (Introduction to dzongkha alphabet and numbering and dzongkhag proverbs) The class will focus on introducing just the alphabet and numbering, and how letters are pronounced. Students will also be taught some simple proverbs in Dzongkha and finally students will learn how to write phonetically.	L	1hr:15 min
7	Language : Basic conversation I This class is mainly focus on teaching basic necessary conversation so that students can interact with local community and cooks.	L	1hr:15 min
8	Language: Basic conversation II The class will be the continuation of first basic conversation class.	L & D	1hr:15 min
9	Participation observation exercise at Sangchoekhor Students will visit Sangchoekhor monastery and observe the monastic activities. They will be made to write short notes on their exercise.	FEX I	3 hrs
10	Buddhist Iconography Iconography will enable students interpret what they are seeing on dzong and temple walls.	L	1hr:15 min
11	Rural Life In Bhutan The FEX is aimed to make student learn different livelihood and way of life in the rural part of Bhutan. They will also learn how open interview are carried out in the field.	Fex II	3 hrs
12	Women role in Bhutan This lecture will answer questions about the traditional and changing roles, perspectives and aspirations of women and men in Bhutan	GL: Ashi Kuenzang Choden	1hr:15 min
13	Mid Term Exam		1hr: 15 min
14	Bhutanese food and culture A lecture looking at the way in which Bhutanese food and food ways express Bhutanese culture, identity and how it is important in Buddhism.	L	1hr:15 min
15	Class on Buddhist way of meditation In this class, a Buddhist master will teach how to control our minds and learn ways for meditation	GL: Khenpo	1hr:15 min
15	Cooking Bhutanese foods The class aims students to learn cooking few pure Bhutanese food items.	Practical	2hrs
16	Cultural Dance The lecture will focus on teaching different types of Bhutanese dances and their significance. Then we will follow the lecture with dance lesson.	L & Practice	3hrs
17	Worshipping local deities and people belief We will take students to the one of the deity's site and give field lecture on its importance in Bhutanese culture and beliefs.	FL	1hr:15 min
18	Visit to Gangtey Goempa	FL	1hr:15 min

	Main objective of the FL is to make student learn more Buddhist iconography, important religious figures and observe Bhutanese architecture.		
19	Final Review We will do final review on all classes and have question and answer session.	L & D	1hr: 15 min
20	Final Exam		2 hrs
	Total		33 hours

Readings

Beer, Robert (2003) "Tibetan Buddhist symbols": Boston

Driem, George Van. Language policy in Bhutan

Choden, Kunzang. (2008). "To Za- Eat Food (Eat Rice)" *Chilli and Cheese: Food and Society in Bhutan* White Lotus, Bangkok

Gyatso, Kelsang. (2011). "Modern Buddhism": *The path of compassion and wisdom*. Tharpa pulication. USA

Pommaret, Francoise. (1999). Yul and Yul Lha: The territory and its deity in Bhutan. Paris

Chhoki, Sonam. (1994). "Religion in Bhutan: The Sacred and Obscene" *Bhutan: Aspects of Culture and Development*. (eds.) M. Aris and M. Hutt. Gartmore: Kiscadale Publications.

Dorji, K., Choden, K., & Roder, W. (2013). " Diversity in Food Ways of Bhutanese Communities Brought About by Ethnicity and Environment." *Journal of Bhutan Studies* Vol. 28

Hughes, Stuart. (2012). The Life Stories of Padmasambhava and their Significance for Tibetan Buddhists.

Mynak Tulku. (1997). "Religion and Ritual" *Bhutan Mountain Fortress of the God* (eds.) C. Shicklgruber and F. Pommaret Serindia Publication: London

Phuntsho, Karma. (2015). "The cultural construction of Bhutan; an unfinished story" *The Druk Journal* Vol 1, issues 1

Pommaret, F. (2003). "The Tradition of Betal and Areca in Bhutan" *Journal of Bhutan Studies* Vol 8

Harding, Sarah. (2003). *The life and revelations of Pema Lingpa*. Snow lion Publication