



THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Religion and Culture of Bhutan

SFS 2010

Syllabus

The School for Field Studies (SFS)
Centre for Himalayan Environment and Development Studies
In partnership with
Bhutan Ecological Society
&
Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation & Environmental Research

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.



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 may be present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!





Religious and cultural principles and beliefs underlie much of the Bhutanese attitudes and practices in the environment. Students will learn to read religious symbols and understand local culture and belief through homestays and participation in Bhutanese festivals. Students will also learn Dzongkhag, enough to engage in pleasantries on the street.

Learning Objectives

In this course students will develop a conceptual and practical understanding of cultural principles and some basic Bhutanese language. Specific learning objectives are the following:

- 1) Understand basic principles of Bhutanese culture, beliefs and practices
- 2) 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 Items	Value (100%)
Iconography observation exercise at Sangchoekhor	20
Reflective essay on rural life	20
Dzongkhag language aptitude test	30
Reflective essay on culture	20
Participation	10
Total	100

Iconography Observation Exercise: Each student will write a narrative on a Buddhist iconography of their choice which they will observe at Sangchoekhor monastery.

Reflective Essay on Rural Life: Drawing from their experience with homestays, each student will write a reflective essay on the cultural underpinnings of rural life in Bhutan and how the environment plays a role in Bhutan's rural livelihoods. Students are encouraged to use this as an opportunity for personal reflection to connect what they have learned in the class to a wider understanding of the culture and environment in Bhutan.

Dzongkhag Conversation & Language Aptitude Test: Students will take a 10 minute Dzongkhag conversation aptitude test with the instructor. Students will also undertake an exam on Dzongkhag language.

Reflective Essay on Culture: After partaking in a festival, students will be asked to write a descriptive essay about their experience. They are encouraged to attempt to tie their experience to what they learned throughout the semester.

Participation: 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, if a student is ill.



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, **O:** Observation, **P:** Practice/ Practical

No	Course/ Class	Type	Hours
1	Lhabsang (Purification) Through observation, students will learn about the Buddhist ritual of Lhabsang, or purification by water and smoke offering.	L&O	2
2	Cultural Orientation Students will be briefed on Bhutanese culture and etiquette.	L	1.15
3	Introductory Class: Language and Culture An overview course, schedule, assignments, grading systems and syllabus will be presented.	L&D	1.15
4	Introduction to Bhutanese Language Students will be introduced to different Bhutanese languages, their history, and how language and cultural are connected in Bhutan.	L	1.15
5	Introduction to Buddhism Students will be introduced to the basic ideas of Buddhism with particular reference to the Buddhism followed in Bhutan.	L	1.15
6	Introduction to Dzongkha: Alphabet and Numbering Student will learn Dzongkhag alphabets and numbers, their pronunciations and writing.	L&D	1.15
7	Language: Basic Conversation I	L&D	1.15



	Students will learn basic Dzongkhag words for communication.		
8	Language: Basic Conversation II Students will learn basic Dzongkhag words for communication. Students will also be introduced to Dzongkhag sayings and proverbs, as well taught common names for fruits, vegetables and common grocery.	L&D	1.15
9	Tantric Buddhist Iconography Students will be introduced to Tantric Buddhist iconography, their symbology, meaning and interpretation.	L	1.15
10	Iconography Observation Exercise at Sangchoekhor Following the class on <i>Tantric Buddhist Iconography</i> , Students will visit Sangchoekhor monastery and observe Buddhist iconography. Each student will write a narrative on a Buddhist iconography of their choice.	FEX	3
11	Rural Life Students will experience homestays in both Paro and Phobjikha. Students will be asked to reflect on their experience and glean on the relationship between rural life, culture and the environment. Based on this experience, each student will write a reflective essay on the cultural underpinnings of rural life in Bhutan and how the environment plays a role in Bhutan's rural livelihoods.	FEX	3
12	Language: Saturday Market Shopping Students will converse in Dzongkha with local vendors at the local market to buy vegetable and groceries. They will use what they have bought for the cooking class.	FEX	3
13	Bhutanese Cuisine Students will learn the basics of Bhutanese cuisine and cook some common Bhutanese dishes, such as Ema Datsi and momos.	P	1.15
14	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&P	3
15	Attend Thimphu Tsechu Students will attend Thimphu Tsechu, an annual festival held to commemorate the enlightened activities of the Buddhist master Guru Rinpoche. Students will observe how culture is interwoven within Buddhist religious festivities and the on-going impact it has on Bhutanese life.	O	3
16	Visit Punakha Dzong & Chimmi Lhakang Students will visit the Punakha Dzong and learn about Bhutanese architecture and the significance of dzongs, and how they shaped much of modern Bhutanese culture and etiquette. This will be followed by a visit to Chimmi Lhakang where students will learn about the great Drukpa Kuenley and his vision and expression of the Buddhist teachings.	FL	3
17	Visit Gangtey Goempa Students will be further exposed to Buddhist iconography and architecture in the Phobjikha region.	FL	3
	Total Hours		34