



**S F S** THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# Language, Religion, and Culture of Bhutan

## SFS 2010

**Syllabus**  
**2 credits**

The School for Field Studies (SFS)  
Center for Climate and Sustainable Futures (CCSF)  
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**

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***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, this is a field program, and the field can change.

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## Course Overview

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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 wherever possible. Students will also learn *Dzongkha*, the Bhutan's national language, enough to engage in pleasantries on the street.

## Learning Objectives

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In this course, students will develop a conceptual and practical understanding of cultural principles and some basic Bhutanese languages. 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

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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 (%)
<i>Dzongkha</i> Language Aptitude Test	20
Iconography Observation Exercise	30
Reflective Essay on Culture and Rural Livelihoods	30
Participation	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### ***Dzongkha* Language Aptitude Test (20%)**

Students will take a 45-minute *Dzongkha* language aptitude test with the instructor. The test includes *Dzongkha* alphabets and numbering.

### **Iconography Observation Exercise (30%)**

Each student will write a narrative on a Buddhist iconography of their choice based on class lectures, their observations in monasteries, dzongs, and other sacred places.

### **Reflective Essay on Culture and Rural Livelihoods (30%)**

Drawing from day-to-day experience from the center, with homestays, and after partaking in a festival or cultural events, 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.

### **Participation (20%)**

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 HWM, 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 they are late. No assignment will be accepted after three days. Assignments will be returned 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 course is mandatory, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and class activities, and simply get involved.

## Course Content

**Type- L:** Lecture, **FL:** Field Lecture, **FEX:** Field Exercise, **D:** Discussion, **O:** Observation, **P:** Practical

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)
LC 01	<b>Introductory Class: Language and Culture</b> An overview of course, schedule, assignments, grading systems and syllabus will be presented.	L; D	1:15
LC 02	<b>Introduction to basic Culture of Bhutan</b> Briefing on Bhutanese culture and etiquette.	L	1:15
LC 03	<b>Introduction to Buddhism I&amp;II</b> Introduction to the basic ideas of Buddhism with reference to the Buddhism followed in Bhutan.	L	2:30
LC 04	<b>Introduction to Bhutanese Language</b> Introduction to different Bhutanese languages, their history, and how language and cultural are connected in Bhutan.	L	1:15
LC 05	<b>Introduction to Dzongkha: Alphabet and Numbering</b> Learn <i>Dzongkha</i> alphabets and numbers, their pronunciations and writing.	L; D	1:15

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)
LC 06	<b>Language: Basic Conversation I</b> Learn basic <i>Dzongkha</i> words for communication.	L; D	1:15
LC 07	<b>Language: Basic Conversation II</b> Learn basic <i>Dzongkha</i> words for communication. Introduction to <i>Dzongkha</i> sayings and proverbs, common names for fruits, vegetables and grocery.	L; D	1:15
LC 08	<b>Tantric Buddhist Iconography</b> Introduction to Tantric Buddhist iconography, their symbology, meaning and interpretation.	L	1:15
LC 09	<b>Iconography Observation Exercise</b> Following the class on <i>Tantric Buddhist Iconography</i> , students will visit one of the monasteries and observe Buddhist iconography. Each student will write a narrative on a Buddhist iconography of their choice.	FEX	2:00
LC 10	<b>Rural Life</b> Students will experience homestays at 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	3:00
LC 11	<b>Language: Saturday Market Shopping</b> Converse in <i>Dzongkha</i> with local vendors at local market to buy vegetable and groceries. They will use what they have bought for the cooking class.	FEX	2:00
LC 12	<b>Bhutanese Cuisine</b> Learn the basics of Bhutanese cuisine and cook common Bhutanese dishes, such as <i>Ema Datsi</i> , <i>Momos</i> , and traditional snacks ( <i>Khabzey</i> ).	P	2:00
LC 13	<b>Cultural Dance</b> 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	2:00
LC 14	<b>Observe Tsechu</b> Students will try to attend one of the <i>Tsechus</i> , 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	3:00
LC 15	<b>Visit Dzongs &amp; Lhakhangs</b> Visit the <i>Dzongs</i> (Fortresses) 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 some <i>Lhakhangs</i> (Monasteries/temples) to learn about the great Buddhist icons in Bhutan and in general and their vision and expression of the Buddhist teachings.	FL	4:00
LC 16	<b>Visit Gangtey Monastery</b> Experience Buddhist iconography and architecture in the Phobjikha region.	FL	1:30
LC 17	<i>Dzongkha</i> Language Aptitude Test		0:45
	<b>Total contact hours</b>		<b>31.5</b>