Tibetan Religion and Culture
RELI 3692

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Class meeting: Tuesday and Thursday 11:00-12:15
Office hours: Tuesday 1:00-3:30 and Thursday 9:00-11:00 and 1:00-2:30

Course Description
This course will: (1) examine the emergence of Buddhism against the backdrop of the indigenous religion in Tibet, (2) study the historical development, philosophical principles, and manifestations of Buddhism in Tibet, (3) explore the social impact of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, Mongolia, and elsewhere in Asia, and (4) survey the influence of religion on Tibetan art, medicine, prophecy, and other social forms. The course can be used as a Foundations Curriculum (FC) humanities elective and to help satisfy requirements for a Religious Studies major. For more information about the major, please visit: www.ecu.edu/religionprogram.

Learning Objectives
Students will:
• Critically reflect on what it means and how it is possible to understand other peoples, including their religious traditions,
• Investigate the moral, ethical, and aesthetic expressions of religious life in Tibet,
• Examine the general outlines of Tibetan religious history and the distinctive combination of Buddhist philosophy, religious practices, and culture found in Tibet,
• Explore Tibetan art and architecture and how they reflect Buddhist principles and Tibetan legends, and
• Become familiar with various methods of analysis employed in the study of religion, including those used in anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology.

Required Readings
Additional readings are available on the course Blackboard website. http://ecu.blackboard.com/
Students are responsible for checking the email address linked to the Blackboard system so that they are assured of remaining up-to-date with reading assignments, exam dates, and other information relating to the course.

Grading
• 15 page paper with a preliminary proposal and at least one draft (25% - 125 points)
• Two 4 page papers (See “Short Writings” below) (30 points each), two brief critiques of peers’ paper proposals (12.5 points each), and two critiques of peers’ papers (20 points each) (Total 25% - 125 points)
• Mid-term exam with essays and short answers (20% - 100 points)
• Comprehensive final examination (20% - 100 points)
• Classroom participation (10% - 50 points)
A (100-93%) 500-465; A- (down to 90%) 464-450; B+ (down to 87%) 449-435; B (down to 83%) 434-415; B- (down to 80%) 414-400; C+ (down to 77%) 399-385; C (down to 73%) 384-365; C- (down to
Research Paper Standards
A research paper must clearly set forth a thesis, assemble evidence from authoritative sources, and argue for a conclusion. The paper, which will be 15 pages, should concern a theme covered in this course, but it must not merely repeat in-class content. A thesis and defense research paper is a particular form of writing that articulates and then argues for a thesis. A thesis is a clear and unambiguous statement that a research paper is meant to prove; a thesis has to be expressible in the form, “I will argue that X is true.” A proper thesis is a statement about which the author could be right or wrong. For example:

- Tibetan Buddhism takes on a distinctive form because of the contribution of the pre-existing Bön religion.
- Gelukpas endeavored to legitimize their tradition by constructing parallels between the biographies of their own founder, Tsongkhapa, and the universally revered Atiśa.

A thesis must be controversial enough to raise interesting questions, a test that is failed by the statement, “ECU students are human beings.” However, it does not need to be something utterly revolutionary. A thesis is a statement about which the author could be wrong. A matter of taste, such as the statement, “Jimi Hendrix is the greatest guitarist in history,” does not count as a thesis. Also off limits would be an argument in favor of some normative posture, such as, “People throughout the world should practice democracy.”

You must employ a standardized style for footnotes and bibliography, such as the MLA style, APA Style, or Chicago Style. A paradigm, along with other helpful information relevant to writing papers is available on-line at:
http://www.ecu.edu/cs-lib/reference/refdesk/Style.cfm

One of the most powerful resources available for the study of religion is the ATLA (American Theological Library Association) Religion Database. This valuable tool provides resources on many topics in religious studies from 1949 and includes: more than one million bibliographic records covering the research literature of religion in 35 languages, more than 350,000 article citations from 600 journals, more than 200,000 essay citations from 15,500 multi-author works, and over 360,000 book review citations. In order to foster research skills, each student is required to use two resources found through the ATLA system. Please mark those resources in your bibliography by placing the acronym “ATLA” beside those sources. Access it at:
http://media.lib.ecu.edu/erdbs/index.cfm?subjectid=6&subcat_id=54&on=cat&button.x=21&button.y=21

Students may employ web page resources, but they should be used sparingly. In no case should they constitute more than 25% of the sources employed. Web pages are to be distinguished from legitimate journals accessed through the web. The latter are reliable sources, whereas the former may or may not be. On-line resources, such as web pages, can be extremely unreliable when it comes to religion. If you have doubts as to the accuracy of your sources, please ask for my advice. If you use material from the web, the particular URL of a referenced idea or passage must be footnoted just like any other source. While you can use Wikipedia for background information, in no cases shall it be relied upon as a footnote source.

Both the ideas and the quoted words of others must be footnoted properly. Failure to do so could constitute plagiarism. While it is fine for you to share resources and references with your peers,
each person must do their own work. If you are uncertain as to whether you might be crossing the line between helpfulness and cheating, please consult with me.

The **steps to writing your research paper** are as follows:
- Students will write a 2-3 page proposal for their paper. The proposal will include a thesis, a general statement of how the argument will be structured, and 5-8 resources.
- Each student will read, carefully reflect upon, and critique the proposals of three of their peers. I will also write a critique of each proposal.
- Once a final revised proposal has been approved, students will write a draft of their paper.
- Each student will read, carefully reflect upon, and critique a draft of two of their peers (different people from the ones whose proposals they critiqued previously).
- Students will rewrite their papers in light of the comments from their peers. They will submit this final draft on time.

**Short Writings**
As noted above, each student will also write critiques of two paper proposals written by their peers and critiques of two first drafts written by other peers. In addition, each student will write two 4 page papers throughout the semester. Themes will be specified later.

**Portfolio**
Each student will submit a portfolio that includes the final draft of their paper, their proposal, the critiques of their proposal written by their peers, the critiques they wrote about their peers’ papers, and their two short writings that were graded by me.

**Art Review**
Each student will explore [www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org). Students must be able to identify various art forms and iconographic images to be specified. Exams will feature questions relating to art you have reviewed.

**Exams**
Exams will consist of essays and short questions. Generally, I will provide several essay questions from which the student may select two to answer. Short questions may be multiple choice, true and false, and simple identification.

**Classroom Participation and Attendance**
Students who attend all classes, read all assignments on time, and demonstrate their ability to be fully and actively involved in all class discussions will earn full marks for participation. Since this is a small upper level course, student engagement will be required.

An absence for a legitimate university-sanctioned reason will be excused. Students should consult the following site to become familiar with the relevant ECU policies. Quizzes, exams, and other assignments may be made-up only if the absence is officially excused by the University or is medically related. A note will be required.

Students who must be absent—excused or not—are responsible for obtaining notes from a peer. After they have done so, they may ask me for further clarification, but they should not ask me first. Unexcused absences will result in grade reduction. After the 3rd unexcused absence, 3% will be deducted from the final grade. Each additional absence will result in a deduction of a further 3%. Please plan on attending our class.
**Academic Integrity**
All students are expected to comply with the principles of Academic Integrity embodied in the ECU Honor Code. Since violations can result in expulsion from the University, suspension, or a grade of “F” for the course, students should become familiar with what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, falsification, and other violations. Note also that according to ECU policy mere attempts to plagiarize, cheat, or falsify qualify as violations. Consult the ECU Clue Book for details. [http://www.ecu.edu/studenthandbook/III.htm](http://www.ecu.edu/studenthandbook/III.htm)

**University Resources**
The Writing Center offers students in-person and on-line assistance in learning writing skills. Contact the Writing Center for hours and locations at Bate (GCB) 2026 (328-2820). [http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/writing/writingcenter/index.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/writing/writingcenter/index.cfm)

In addition to providing students with personal counseling, the Counseling and Student Development Center in Wright Building 316 (328-6661) offers various resources to assist students in their academic development. These include training in time management, test taking, overcoming test anxiety, and academic motivation. [http://www.ecu.edu/studentlife/counselingcenter/](http://www.ecu.edu/studentlife/counselingcenter/)

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (252) 737-1016 (Voice/TTY).

**Meeting with me**
I have scheduled 5 hours of office hours each week. If the times I have indicated are not practical for you, please see me before or after class. If you need to meet with me another time, please let me know, and I am sure I can accommodate your needs. I encourage all students to come and see me as you work to formulate your research paper. This will insure that your selected paper topic is appropriate and relevant. I will likely be able to direct you to resources that can help you in your quest.

**Library**
All students at ECU should become proficient in using library resources. The Joyner Library at ECU (accessible on-line at [http://www.lib.ecu.edu/](http://www.lib.ecu.edu/)) has many valuable resources on Tibet, Tibetan religions, and Tibetan culture. There are hundreds of books on religion in the stacks of Joyner Library. Books on Philosophy, Psychology, and Religion have call numbers beginning with the letter B. Books on Buddhism have call numbers beginning with BQ. Navigate your way around the library with the following source: [http://geography.miningco.com/library/congress/blb.htm](http://geography.miningco.com/library/congress/blb.htm)

Additionally, you can find information on religious traditions in books in other sections of the library, including anthropology, art, geography, history, literature, philosophy, and psychology. You may also explore the film and music resources the library collects. One of the best resources available is the library’s collection of journals. Not only does the library have numerous religion journals in paper and bound forms, but it is also possible to access a very large number of journals on-line. The library staff can be extremely helpful in learning to use all of these resources. Don’t be shy about asking for their help. ([https://jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/login?qurl=http%3a%2f%2fjw3mh2cm6n.search.serialssolutions.com](https://jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/login?qurl=http%3a%2f%2fjw3mh2cm6n.search.serialssolutions.com))

As a student of East Carolina, you also have free use of the Library system at University of North Carolina — Chapel Hill ([www.lib.unc.edu](http://www.lib.unc.edu)). Moreover, you can access just about any book, journal or other resource in the world through the Inter Library Loan. Many resources can be obtained within a matter of days. Often, journal articles can be delivered electronically within a day or two.
The Joyner Library has a special office for Inter Library Loan services, located to the left of the front desk. You can access these resources on-line at: http://jill.lib.ecu.edu/illiad/logon.html. For particular information on relevant resources collected by Joyner Library and for references to reliable on-line sources, see www.ecu.edu/religionprogram.

Other key sources are to be found at:
7. My class notes will be posted on blackboard throughout the semester.

Outline of Topics and Readings

**Week 1 – Introduction of Course, Syllabus Review**

**Week 2 – Reflections on Representations of Tibet**

**Orientation**
- Kapstein, Preface through p. 26
- Mapping exercise

**Week 3 – Early History**
- Kapstein, 27-83

**Week 4 – Bön**

**Week 5 – Decline and Renaissance**
- Kapstein, 84-126

**Week 6 – The Dalai Lamas**
- Kapstein, 127-174
- Tsepön Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons*, Chapters 7 and 8.

**Week 7 – Monasticism and Religious Life**
- Kapstein, 205-243

**Week 8 – Classic Religious Texts**
- Geshe Sonam Rinchen and Ruth Sonam, *Atisha’s Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1999), 149-159.

**Week 9 – Sacred Biography**

**Week 10 – Social Life**
- Kapstein, 175-204

**Pilgrimage**

**Week 11 – Divination**

**Death Practices**

**Week 12 – Tantra**
Week 13 – Women

Week 14 – Religious Conflicts in Tibet
- Stephen Batchelor, “Letting Daylight into Magic: The Life and Times of Dorje Shugden”
- “Various Materials Collected on the 11th Panchen Lama”

Week 15 – Art and Architecture
- Assignment on [www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org)

Week 16 – Tibet since 1950
- Kapstein, 269- 300
- Barry Sautman, “Tibet: Will the Myth Persist?” on Blackboard

PAPERS DUE
FINAL EXAM