

## COURSE SYLLABUS: HISTORY OF TIBET

This course surveys the history of Tibetan civilization from the iron age to the present. Following a spiral curriculum, we shall move through Tibetan history from its origins in Tibet's geopolitical dominance during the period of the Tibetan Empire (c.620–862) through to its so-called dark age, its Buddhist-inspired renaissance, the rise of the Dalai Lamas, the intervention of foreign powers, and the Tibetan diaspora after 1959. Circling back, these periods will be investigated in turn from the vantage points of political history, social and cultural history, and the history of art and ideas.

### Materials:

- Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*. (In UCSB bookshop)
- Powers, J. 2004. *History as Propaganda*. (In UCSB bookshop)
- Taylor and Yuthok, trans. 1996. *The Clear Mirror: A Traditional Account of Tibet's Golden Age*. (In UCSB bookshop)
- E-reserves page: <http://eres.library.ucsb.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=3575&page=docs>
- Course page on history dept. website:  
[http://www.history.ucsb.edu/courses/course.php?course\\_id=1377](http://www.history.ucsb.edu/courses/course.php?course_id=1377)

### *FIRST LOOP: PREHISTORY TO THE PRESENT – THE BASICS*

#### 1ST SESSION, 30 MARCH: INTRODUCING TIBET, INTRODUCING THE COURSE

Overview of the course. Political Tibet and cultural Tibet. The politics of terminology, competing historical narratives and partial representations. Geography, topography, prehistory, and archeology.

Assignment 1: study maps of Tibet, prepare for map quiz in 2nd session.

### Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 1-33.  
Maps on coursepage, maps in Kapstein.

#### 2ND SESSION, 1 APRIL: PEOPLE AND PLACE

Geopolitical context and the Silk Road. Sources for Tibetan history. Political structure of the Tibetan Empire and the outlines of imperial history.

Map quiz at start of class.

Essay: write a response (500 to 1,000 words) to the following prompts: What is at stake in the depictions of Tibet's history? What parties have vested interests? What are their goals? How should one go about reading and writing Tibetan history? Due at the beginning of the 3rd session.

### Readings:

Powers, J. 2004. *History as Propaganda: Tibetan Exiles Versus the People's Republic of China*, vii-xiii, 1-27.

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 51-83.

Petech, L. 2002. The silk road, Turfan and Tun-huang in the first millennium A.D. In Cadonna, A. (ed.), *Turfan and Tunhuang*, 1-13.

“Buddhism and Empire” I—IV at earlyTibet.com:

<http://earlytibet.com/2007/08/08/buddhism-and-empire-i/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2008/08/21/buddhism-and-empire-iii-the-dharma-king/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2009/07/01/buddhism-and-empire-iv-converting-tibet/>  
and

<http://earlytibet.com/2007/10/19/sky-dharma/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2007/10/30/dharma-from-the-sky-ii-indian-or-chinese-dharma/>

### 3RD SESSION, 6 APRIL: THE TIBETAN EMPIRE

Tibet's international relations, the introduction of Buddhism, global collapse ca.840.

#### Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 84-109.

“The Decline of Buddhism” I—V at earlyTibet.com:

<http://earlytibet.com/2008/02/28/lang-darma/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2008/03/13/did-lang-darma-persecute-buddhism/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2008/04/09/why-should-the-secret-mantra-be-secret/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2009/01/09/the-decline-of-buddhism-iv-keepers-of-the-flame/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2009/06/12/decline-of-buddhism-v/>

#### Optional Readings:

Davidson, R. 2005. *Tibetan Renaissance*, 61-84.

### 4TH SESSION, 8 APRIL: DARK AGE AND RENAISSANCE

Proliferation of Buddhist ideals, decentralized and antinomian models. Rise of the lama ideal. Princelings and principalities. Bon, Nyingma, and the new sects. Yearning for what has been lost, (a bit on the mythologization of the empire.)

#### Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 110-39.

Powers, J. 2004. *History as Propaganda: Tibetan Exiles Versus the People's Republic of China*, 47-71.

Seyfort Ruegg, D. 2004. Introductory Remarks on Spiritual and Temporal Orders. In Cüppers, C. (ed.), *The Relationship Between Religion and Politics (chos srid zung 'brel) in Traditional Tibet*, 9-13.

<http://earlytibet.com/2008/09/30/phagpas-arrow/>

### 5TH SESSION, 13 APRIL: FROM THE SAKYA TO 5TH DALAI LAMA (13TH –17TH CENTURIES)

Mongols, geopolitics, lamas and charisma. Reassertion of nationalism with Phagmodru. Disunity, civil war, foreign intervention under Rinpung and the Tsangpa; the 'patron-priest' relationship. (A little bit on refiguring the past under DL5, replicating Phagpa and Kubilai, Dromtonpa, Tibetan kings.)

Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 139-74.

6TH SESSION, 15 APRIL: TIBET BETWEEN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL POWERS

DL5 as kingmaker (cakravartin-maker), his role between mongols, manchus, and Chinese. The DLs from 6 onward, waxing of Qing power, ambans, Polane. Nepali incursions. Bogle, DL 13, collapse of Qing, Tibet's aspirations for nationhood. The great game, Younghusband.

Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 269-300.

Powers, J. 2004. *History as Propaganda: Tibetan Exiles Versus the People's Republic of China*, 101-150.

7TH SESSION, 20 APRIL: OCCUPATION, MODERNITY, AND DIASPORA

Chinese invasion, 1959 Uprising, flight of DL to India. UN route thwarted by Britain, India, militant route aided by US. Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, refiguring Tibet in exile, coalescence of identity. Cultural revolution (a different coalescence). Revival and reform in 1980s China. Tibet as a pawn between India and China.

Assignment: Map quiz redemption, 50-100 words (details on coursepage)

Take-home mid-term: choose an essay prompt from the list distributed in class, write 1,000 words. Due before the beginning of the 11th session. (details on coursepage)

8TH SESSION, 22 APRIL: CURRENT AFFAIRS

Once again on the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. The "Tibet Card" in international relations with China. The Panchen Lama controversy, the politics of the Free Tibet movement, the riots in 2008 and the Olympic torch rally, and the politics over disaster relief in Jyekundo/Yushu in 2010.

Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 33-50.

Sonam Gyaltzen (Taylor and Yuthok, trans.). 1996. *The Clear Mirror: a Traditional Account of Tibet's Golden Age*, 52-91.

## *SECOND LOOP: THEMES AND FIGURES*

### 9TH SESSION, 27 APRIL: MYTH AND NARRATIVE

Origin myths, civilizing myths, and kingship myths.

#### Readings:

Sonam Gyaltzen (Taylor and Yuthok, trans.). 1996. *The Clear Mirror: a Traditional Account of Tibet's Golden Age*, 95-217.

#### Optional Readings:

Macdonald, A.W. 1987. Religion in Tibet at the time of Srong btsan Sgam po: myth as history. In A.W. Macdonald (ed.), *Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South Asia*, vol. 2, 129-40.

Mills, M. 2007. Re-assessing the Supine Demons. *Journal of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* 3: 1-49. (available online)

### 10TH SESSION, 29 APRIL: AXIAL FIGURES 1 –SONGTSEN GAMPO

The development of the legend, and its uses.

#### Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 205-14, 237-43.

#### Optional Readings:

Stein, R.A. 1972. *Tibetan Civilization*, 191-229.

### 11TH SESSION, 4 MAY: TIBETAN LOCAL RELIGION

Divination, ritual, funerals, mountain cults, cosmology, gods, and demons.

#### Mid-term due at the start of class.

#### Readings:

Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 215-37.

Kvaerne, P. 1995. *The Bon Religion of Tibet*, 1-23.

Ramble, C. 1990. How Buddhist are Buddhist Communities. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 21.2: 185-97.

“Buddhism and Bon” I—IV at earlyTibet.com:

<http://earlytibet.com/2007/05/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2007/07/31/buddhism-and-bon-ii/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2008/04/30/buddhism-and-bon-iii-what-is-yungdrung/>

<http://earlytibet.com/2009/08/24/buddhism-and-bon-iv/>

### 12TH SESSION, 6 MAY: TIBETAN BUDDHISM AND THE BON RELIGION

Brief overview of the basics of Buddhism, and its Tibetan elaborations. Overview of the four sects, their key figures. Consideration will be given to the types of religious expression and religious communities that fall within Tibet's two main scriptural religions, Buddhism and Bon.

Readings:

- Dagyab Rinpoche. 2003. On the significance of Tibetan Buddhist art and iconography. In I. Kreide-Damani (ed.), *Dating Tibetan Art*, 5-14.
- Henss, M. 2005. From Tradition to "Truth": Images of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. *Orientalia* (December 2005): 61-68.
- Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 255-61.

13TH SESSION, 11 MAY: TIBETAN ART

From prehistoric rock art to modern art. Portraiture, statues, paintings, development of styles. Narrative paintings and religious paintings as pedagogical devices. Buddhism through art (wheel of life, Palden Lhamo, Buddhas of 3 times, 8 bodhisattvas, 16 arhats). Development of modern styles both in exile and in PRC.

Readings:

- Gyatso, J. 1997. From the Autobiography of a Visionary. In Lopez (ed.), *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, 369-75.
- Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 244-55.
- Sonam Gyaltzen (Taylor and Yuthok, trans.). 1996. *The Clear Mirror: a Traditional Account of Tibet's Golden Age*, 221-84.
- Yang Enhong. 2001. On the Study of the Narrative Structure of Tibetan Epic: a Record of King Gesar. *Oral Tradition* 16.2: 294-316.

Optional Readings:

- Cabezón and Jackson. 1996. Introduction. In Cabezón and Jackson (eds), *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, 11-37.
- van der Kuijp, L. 1996. Tibetan historiography. In Cabezón, J.I. and Jackson, R., eds, *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*. Ithaca: Snow Lion, 39-56.
- Schaeffer, K. 2009. *The Culture of the Book in Tibet*, 1-18.

14TH SESSION, 13 MAY: TIBETAN LITERATURE

Milarepa, life histories, religious histories, Gesar and the bardic tradition. Production of canons, circulation of books, literacy. Some background on the Tibetan language.

Readings:

- Nyang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer (Kunsang, trans.). 1993. *The Lotus Born: the Life Story of Padmasambhava*, 55-64.
- Diemberger, H. 2007. Padmasambhava's Unfinished Job. *Pramanakirtih*, 85-93.
- <http://earlytibet.com/2007/06/20/padmasambhava/>

15TH SESSION, 18 MAY: AXIAL FIGURES 2 - PADMASAMBHAVA

Development of the legend, similarity with story of Shenrab, Buddha, its uses.

Readings:

- Aziz, B. 1974. Some notions about descent and residence in Tibetan society. In C. v. Furer-Haimendorf (ed.), *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*, 32-39.
- Thargyal, R. 2007. *Nomads of Eastern Tibet*, 163-72.
- Kapstein, M. 2006. *The Tibetans*, 175-203.
- Samuel, G. 1993. *Civilized Shamans*, 39-63.

Optional Readings:

- Goldstein, M. 1971. Taxation and the Structure of a Tibetan Village. *Central Asiatic Journal* 15.1, 1-27.

*THIRD LOOP: SOCIETY AND POLITICS*

16TH SESSION, 20 MAY: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Descent and residence, house societies, clans, polyandry, livelihood, taxation.

Assignment 2: Before the next class, turn in a 50-100 word typed statement of your own opinion about the applicability of the term serf. What is at issue? What further questions should be asked about this topic?

Readings:

- Goldstein, M. 1986. Re-Examining choice, dependency and command in the Tibetan social system: "tax appendages" and other landless serfs. *Tibet Journal* 11, 79-112.
- Goldstein, M. 1987. On the Nature of the Tibetan Peasantry: a Rejoinder. *Tibet Journal* 12.3, 61-65.
- Goldstein, M. 1989. Freedom, Servitude, and the "Servant-Serf" Nyima: a re-rejoinder. *Tibet Journal* 14.2, 56-60.
- Miller, B. 1987. Response to Goldstein's "Re-Examining choice, dependency and command in the Tibetan social system." *Tibet Journal* 12.2, 65-67.
- Miller, B. 1987. Last Rejoinder to Goldstein's on Tibetan Social System. *Tibet Journal* 13.3, 64-67.

These are all available at the following website:  
<http://www.case.edu/affil/tibet/tibetanSociety/social.htm>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serfdom\\_in\\_Tibet\\_controversy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serfdom_in_Tibet_controversy)

17TH SESSION, 25 MAY: ENTERING THE DEBATE: SERFDOM

Kings, lords, subjects, class, clan, state. Tibetan economy, pastoralism, agriculturalism, trade. Clan to household. Serfdom and mobility. Centralization and regionalism, taxation, administration, gov of DLs, rank and law, 'serfdom'.

Assignment 3: Before the next class, turn in a 50-100 word typed statement of your own position about the sovereignty (or lack thereof) of Tibet.

Readings:

- Dotson, B. 2009. "The 'nephew-uncle' relationship in the international diplomacy of the Tibetan Empire (7<sup>th</sup>—9<sup>th</sup> centuries)." In Dotson, B., et al. (eds.), *Contemporary Visions in Tibetan Studies*. Chicago: Serindia Publications, 223–38.
- Powers, J. 2004. *History as Propaganda: Tibetan Exiles Versus the People's Republic of China*, 73-100, 151-162.
- Sperling, E. 2003 [1997]. Tibet's foreign relations during the epoch of the fifth Dalai Lama. In F. Pommaret (ed.), *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century*, 119-32.

18TH SESSION, 27 MAY: ENTERING THE DEBATE: SOVEREIGNTY AND SUZERAINTY

How did Tibet's own diplomatic assumptions differ from those of China? How were each affected by the geopolitical backdrop of British imperialism? Do de-facto eventualities trump de-jure arguments?

Readings:

- Oppitz, M. 2007. "Close-Up and Wide-Angle. On Comparative Ethnography in the Himalayas – and Beyond. The Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture, Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> 2006." *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 31: 155-71.
- Oppitz, M. 1974. Myths and Facts: Reconsidering Some Data Concerning the Clan History of the Sherpas. *Kailash* 2.1-2: 121-31.
- Macdonald, A. 1980. Creative dismemberment among the Tamangs and Sherpas of Nepal. Aris and Suu Kyi, *Tibetan Studies*, 199-208.
- Manzardo, A. 1982. Impression Management and Economic Growth: the Case of the Thakalis of Dhaulagiri Zone. *Kailash* 9.1-2: 45-60.
- Ramble, C. 1993. The Name Bhotey. *Himal* 6.5: 17.

Optional Readings:

- Oppitz, M. 1982. Death and Kin Amongst the Northern Magar. *Kailash* 9.4: 377-421.
- Macdonald, A. 1989. Note on the Language, Literature, and Cultural Identity of the Tamang. *Kailash* 15.3-4: 165-77.

\*The readings from *Kailash* and the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* may be freely downloaded from <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/>

19TH SESSION, 1 JUNE: ETHNOGRAPHIC TIBET

Survey of some of the prominent themes in the ethnography of the Tibetan cultural area, particularly northern Nepal. Clans, creative dismemberment, exchange, impression management, Sanskritization, Tibetanization, modernity, etc. among the Magars, Gurungs, Thakalis, Tamangs, and "Bhote."

Assignment 4: Before the next class, turn in a 50-100 word typed statement of your own position on the debate concerning Tibetan identity and the question of Tibetans being 'prisoners' of impression management both from within and from without.

Readings:

Dreyfus, G. 2005. Are We Prisoners of Shangri-La? *Journal of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* 1: 1-21. (available online)

Ramble, C. 1993. Whither the Tsampa-Eaters? *Himal* 6.5: 21-25. (available online)

Lopez, D. 1994. New Age Orientalism: the Case of Tibet. *The Tibet Review*, 16-20. (available online)

Shakya, T. 1993. Whither the Tsampa-Eaters? *Himal* 6.5: 8-11. (available online)

\*The readings from *Himal* may be freely downloaded from <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/>

The readings from the *Journal of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* may be freely downloaded from <http://www.thlib.org/collections/texts/jiats/>

20TH SESSION, 3 JUNE: THE IMAGE OF TIBET

Shangri La for Chinese, the same for Westerners. Prisoners of Shangri La? Representing Tibet. The uses of history. Diasporic, transnational identity.

NB: No late assignments will be accepted (unless a very good reason is given). No work may be resubmitted.

FINAL EXAM: 9 JUNE 12-3PM