

Undergraduate Courses offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2025-2026

ELECTIVE COURSE (OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

BSTC2027 Tibetan Buddhism

Offering Semester	2 nd Semester
Lecturer	Prof. Dr. Klaus-Dieter Mathes
Office	Room 4.04, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus
Tel	39102458
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Day of the week	TBC
Assessment	100% coursework
Class Venue	TBC

Course Description

Tibetan Buddhism is a form of Mahāyāna Buddhism that developed in Tibet, Mongolia, parts of Russia, and the Himalayas over the course of more than one thousand years. In this course we will examine the history, institutions, teachings, and ritual practices of Tibetan Buddhism. We will do so by following two parallel tracks, one historical and the other thematic, providing on the one hand a sense of the origins and development of Tibetan Buddhism, and on the other a general overview of some central topics such as Tibetan Buddhist art; meditation practices on the Buddhist path of liberation, pilgrimage, death and dying; and more. Although foundational knowledge of Buddhism will be provided in the opening weeks, some prior basic knowledge of Buddhism would be helpful for students wishing to take this course.

Reading Material *

Main Sourcebook

(JP1) Powers, John. 2008. *A Concise Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston and London: Snow Lion Publications.

Additional Sources

[GH] Mathes, Klaus-Dieter and Gabriele Coura (eds.): *Nonsectarianism (ris med) in 19th- and 20th-Century Eastern Tibet*. Brill's Tibetan Studies Library 49. Leiden: Brill.

[GS] Samuel, Geoffrey. 2012. *Introducing Tibetan Buddhism*. New York: Routledge.

[JP2] Powers, John. 2007. *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. New York and Colorado: Snow Lion Publications.

[MK] Kapstein, Matthew. 2014. *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

* Weekly readings from the Reference Sources and Optional Readings will be made available by the Instructor on moodle.

Course Expectations

Students enrolled in this course are expected to attend all lectures punctually, complete the weekly readings prior to each lecture, take two in-class tests, and complete a long essay on a topic provided by the professor or tutor on the subject of Tibetan Buddhism

Course Assessment

Assessment for this course will be carried according to the following three criteria:

1: Class Attendance and Participation - 20%

Students are expected to arrive punctually in class and participate in the group discussions at the end and during each lecture. To gain full marks, students should not have missed without valid excuse more than 2 lectures during the term.

* Please note that the use of mobile phones in class is not permitted.

2: In-class Tests - 40%

Two in-class tests will be held at the beginning of the fourth week on February xx (covering the material from the first three weeks) and the eighth week on March xx (covering the material from the fourth to seventh weeks). The purpose of these tests is to ensure that the students consolidate the core knowledge of each stage of the course, as later lectures will build upon what has been taught in earlier lectures. Both tests will last approximately twenty minutes. They will comprise several multiple-choice questions and one written answer.

Assignment 3: Long Essay (1300-1700 words) - 40%

Students will be expected to choose one essay question from approximately five to seven options, each of which will link to a topic/set of topics discussed in the lectures. In addition to the readings already assigned for the lectures, up to three extra compulsory readings will be provided with each question. The expectation is that students will base their essays on these readings. However, to achieve the very highest marks, students should also independently seek out further academic sources relating to their topic.

Bibliography

Your bibliography should include, as applicable, sources from the following:

1. The Textbook (JP) and the Reference Sources (GH) (GS) (GT) (MK) assigned for this course.
2. Other sources held at HKU Main Library including: academic books, encyclopedias, chapters in edited volumes and/or journal articles. For suggested bibliography see also References for Essays.

Evaluation Criteria

- a). Clear Structure and Organization. Your paper should have an introduction, a main body with headings, sections, and a conclusion/summary. The information should be organized in a logical and clear manner.
- b). Background Reading, Understanding of Sources and Arguments. It is expected that all

- essays show familiarity with the assigned readings. To achieve the highest grades familiarity will also be expected with further publications on your chosen topic.
- c). Style of Scholarly Writing. This means that one is careful with the choice of words and one does not reproduce colloquial or conversational modes of expression and jargon. The use of thesaurus is encouraged.
 - d). Proper use of citations and quotations. Recognize for the contribution of other writers is expected through accurate quotations (judiciously selected and sparingly used). Follow the conventions in the Essay Topics and Guidelines.
 - e). Carefully Edited. Accurate spelling and usage of English punctuation and grammar.

Bibliography

A minimum of 5 bibliographical sources cited in the essay (not just listed in the bibliography) ought to reflect some of the reading material assigned in this course and specialized readings on your topic. Non-academic sources, i.e., internet websites, lecture notes, magazines and partisan publications do not count towards the minimum sources.

Deadline

Students planning to receive full grade for this assignment ought to submit by the deadline: xxxx

An electronic copy of their paper uploaded through the Turnitin link available in moodle

* Late and incomplete submissions will be penalized by grade reduction.

WEEKLY LECTURES

Lecture 1. The Three Dharmacakras: Indo-Tibetan Perspectives of Buddhism

Lecture 2. The integration of Tantra in mainstream Mahāyāna

Lecture 3. The Transmission of Buddhism to Tibet

Lecture 4. Characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism: the Path of the Pandita

Lecture 5. Characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism: the Path of the Siddha

Lecture 6. The Samye Debate: Gradual versus Direct Path to Enlightenment

Lecture 7. Major Schools of Tibetan Buddhism: the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug

Lecture 8. Major Schools of Tibetan Buddhism: The Jonangpas and the *Gzhan stong* Controversy

Lecture 9. Death, Dying and Liberation

Lecture 10. Tibetan Buddhist Iconography, Art and Material Culture

Lecture 11. Tibetan Buddhist Practices

Lecture 12. A Virtual Pilgrimage through Tibet

Note:**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. The University upholds the principle that plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and any student found plagiarizing is liable to disciplinary action in addition to failing the assessment concerned. Please read the following webpage on "plagiarism" for details:

<http://arts.hku.hk/current-students/undergraduate/assessment/plagiarism>

Faculty Grade Expectations: http://arts.hku.hk/grade_expectations.pdf