

**SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF BUDDHIST STUDIES
(MBuddhStud)**

These Syllabuses apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Buddhist Studies curriculum in the academic year 2026-27 and thereafter.

1. PURPOSE

This curriculum offers quality teachings on the fundamental understanding and in-depth analysis of Buddhism from the textual, doctrinal and historical perspectives. It further aims to provide training in the practical usage of the Buddhist teachings in modern societies, and offers a critical review of Buddhism in Hong Kong, Chinese Mainland and the region. Topics include history and doctrines of the different Buddhist traditions, contemporary Buddhism, and Buddhism as applied in counselling, palliative care and psychotherapy, with particular reference to current scholarly research.

2. CURRICULUM DURATION

The curriculum shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study.

3. CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

All courses are offered on credit basis. Candidates have to complete a total of 60 credits for graduation.

Candidates choosing the “BSTC8999 Capstone Experience: Dissertation” must complete a total of eight courses, including two compulsory foundation courses, five elective courses, and BSTC8999.

Candidates choosing the “BSTC8997 Capstone Experience: Portfolio” must complete a total of nine courses, including two compulsory foundation courses, six elective courses, and BSTC8997.

Not all elective courses listed below will necessarily be offered each year.

1. Foundation Courses (9 credits each)

BSTC6079. Early Buddhism
BSTC6002. Mahayana Buddhism

2. Elective Courses (6 credits each)

2.1 Buddhist Languages

BSTC7006. Pāli I
BSTC7007. Pāli II

- BSTC3044. Pāli language III
 BSTC3045. Pāli language IV
 BSTC7008. Sanskrit I
 BSTC7009. Sanskrit II
 BSTC3040. Sanskrit language III
 BSTC3041. Sanskrit language IV
 BSTC7010. Classical Tibetan I
 BSTC7011. Classical Tibetan II
 BSTC3042. Tibetan language III
 BSTC3043. Tibetan language IV

2.2 Buddhist Texts, Thought, and Culture

- BSTC6032. History of Indian Buddhism: a general survey
 BSTC6044. History of Chinese Buddhism
 BSTC6013. Buddhism in Tibetan contexts: history and doctrines
 BSTC6039. Abhidharma doctrines and controversies
 BSTC6012. Japanese Buddhism: history and doctrines
 BSTC6052. Study of important Buddhist meditation texts
 BSTC6066. Doctrines of the early Indian Yogācāra
 BSTC6070. Research methodology in Buddhist Studies
 BSTC6075. The Pali commentarial literature
 BSTC6076. The Buddha-concept and Bodhisatta Ideal in Theravada Buddhism
 BSTC6080. Chinese Buddhist art along the Silk Road
 BSTC7002. Tantric meditation traditions in Tibet: a survey of Vajrayāna texts and practices
 BSTC7003. Dunhuang Buddhist art and culture
 BSTC7110. Reading early Buddhist discourses
 BSTC7111. Chan Buddhism: history, culture and thought
 BSTC7119. Reading Chinese Buddhist texts
 BSTC7607. Buddhist liturgy and rituals
 BSTC7121. Chinese Buddhist texts: a survey and sample readings
 BSTC7122. Yogācāra Models of Reality
 BSTC7123. The concept of emptiness in Buddhist literature
 BSTC7124. Anthropology of Buddhism
 BSTC7125. Buddhism in Central Asia

2.3 Applied Buddhism

- BSTC6058. Buddhism and contemporary society
 BSTC6006. Counselling and pastoral practice
 BSTC6011. Buddhist mediation
 BSTC6034. Mindfulness, stress reduction and well-being
 BSTC6055. Buddhist psychology I
 BSTC7004. Buddhist psychology II
 BSTC7112. Buddhist ethics
 BSTC7120. Buddhist psychology and mental cultivation

2.4 Other Courses

- BSTC6024. Special topics in Buddhist studies (1)

- BSTC6030. Special topics in Buddhist studies (2)
 BSTC6031. Special topics in Buddhist studies (3)
 BSTC6056. Special topics in Buddhist studies (4)
 BSTC6057. Special topics in Buddhist studies (5)

3. Capstone Experience (6 or 12 credits)

- BSTC8997. Capstone Experience: Portfolio (6 credits)
 BSTC8999. Capstone Experience: Dissertation (12 credits)
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4. SYLLABUSES

A. Foundation Courses

BSTC6079. Early Buddhism (9 credits)

This course offers a comprehensive exploration of Early Buddhism through the lens of Pali Suttas, providing students with insights into its foundational doctrines. We will begin by examining religious and philosophical context that shaped Buddhism, particularly the interplay between spiritualist and materialist ideologies. Key themes include the analysis of individual experience through the dynamics of khandha (aggregates), ayatana (faculties), and dhatu (elements), as well as the Three Marks of Existence: impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Additionally, the course will address the doctrines of selflessness, dependent origination, ignorance, subjective constructions, craving, Nibbana, and the Noble Eightfold Path. Further discussions will encompass the psychological, ethical, epistemological, and ontological dimensions of Early Buddhism. The course will conclude with a reflective inquiry into Buddhism's "middle position," highlighting its impact on both theory and practice within this unique religious tradition.

Assessment: 60% coursework and 40% examination

BSTC6002. Mahayana Buddhism (9 credits)

This course aims to provide comprehensive introduction to history, doctrines and philosophical schools of early Indian Mahayana Buddhism. After surveying the history of the development of Buddhism in early India after the death of the Buddha, it concentrates on the philosophical doctrines and practices of Indian Mahayana Buddhism. The topics to be discussed include the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattva ideal, Trikaya or three bodies of the Buddha, the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajnaparamita) Sutras, Pureland, and the philosophical systematizations of the Mahayana doctrines by the Mahayana Buddhist philosophers belonging to the Madhyamaka and the Yogacara schools.

Assessment: 60% coursework and 40% examination

B. Elective Courses

BSTC6006. Counselling and pastoral practice (6 credits)

This course aims at providing students with basic knowledge and understanding of the application of Buddhist theory and practices to counselling, in particular in a health care setting, and personal transformation in the provision of chaplaincy services. With the Four Noble Truths as the groundwork for Buddhist counselling, the course also covers practices of mindfulness and contemplation; basic skills in communication; issues on death and dying; and insights into caring for the dying and their carers. The course comprises lectures, discussions, role-plays and Buddhist practices. In order to acquire an experiential as well as intellectual understanding of the subject, students are expected to participate in class exercises as well as contemplation practices at home.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6011. Buddhist mediation (6 credits)

By integrating the techniques of Solution-focused brief therapy and the mediation process with Buddhist theories and practices, the course will teach a model of conflict resolution which reflects the Mahayana ideal of the practice of the Way of Bodhichitta of benefiting oneself and others in being able to resolve conflicts for oneself and for others and learn about the process of change and transformation through applications of the model. Students will acquire basic knowledge of theories and practices of Buddhism and mediation in an integral approach and apply the appropriate skills to be their own mediator and to mediate other people's dispute in their peer group or community. The mode of teaching will be by lecture, demonstration by videotapes or role-plays, role-play exercises in small groups and self-reflective learning.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6012. Japanese Buddhism: history and doctrines (6 credits)

This course introduces students to the history, teachings, practice, and institutional realities of Japanese Buddhism. The course will focus its special attention on the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, Prince Shotoku's contribution to its spread, the Taika Reforms, the Nara Buddhism, its formation and further development in the Heian and Kamakura periods, its transformation in the Edo period, its encounter with modernity in the Meiji period, and recent developments within Japanese Buddhism since the end of World War II. The founders of different schools of Buddhist thought such as Saicho, Kukai, Honen, Shinran, Eisai, Dogen, Nichiren and others together with their main teachings are also examined. The course will further examine the Buddhist impact upon the ways of thinking of the Japanese people with a view to understanding Japan and her culture.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6013. Buddhism in Tibetan contexts: history and doctrines (6 credits)

In this course we will explore some of the main historical, doctrinal and sociological developments of Buddhism in Tibetan contexts. Lectures will cover the following topics: the historical agents and events leading to the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet; the formation and teachings of various Buddhist schools including their doctrinal differences and manifold socio-political spheres of influence; Tibetan sacred art and symbolism; tantric techniques, mysticism and religious experience.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6024. Special topics in Buddhist studies (1) (6 credits)

This course is offered from time to time. Students should consult the Centre of Buddhist Studies on the content of the course on offer.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6030. Special topics in Buddhist studies (2) (6 credits)

This course is offered from time to time. Students should consult the Centre of Buddhist Studies on the content of the course on offer.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6031. Special topics in Buddhist studies (3) (6 credits)

This course is offered from time to time. Students should consult the Centre of Buddhist Studies on the content of the course on offer.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6032. History of Indian Buddhism: a general survey (6 credits)

An objective understanding of the development of any Buddhist tradition presupposes a proper historical perspective. The course is designed to provide students with a general, but not superficial, survey of Indian Buddhism from a historical perspective highlighting all the important developments up to the emergence of Mahāyāna. The main themes for the course include: the origins of Buddhism and the Indian Background; process of the compilation of the Canon; the classification of the Buddha's teachings; the Councils; the popularization of Buddhism; the emergence and development of the major Buddhist sects; King Asoka and his contribution to the Buddhist cause; spread of Buddhism outside India; rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and other related topics.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6034. Mindfulness, stress reduction and well-being (6 credits)

This course aims at providing students with basic knowledge and understanding of the mindfulness in Buddhism and the application of mindfulness training in stress reduction and fostering well-being. This is an experiential as well as a theoretical course which covers the latest research and theories on mindfulness training in the health sector. Students will take part in exercises based on the eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Programme and discuss readings prescribed for the course. They are expected to deepen their experience through home practice and apply them in their daily lives.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6039. Abhidharma doctrines and controversies (6 credits)

The period of the Abhidharma represents the historical stage when Buddhist “philosophy” so-called truly began. A foundational knowledge of the Abhidharma doctrines will enable the students to acquire an integrated perspective of the Buddhist development as a whole: On the one hand, equipped with this knowledge which serves as a commentarial guide, they will be in a better position to comprehend the Buddhist tradition’s conceptions of the *sūtra* teachings in the preceding stage. On the other hand, they will be able to meaningfully relate the subsequent Mahāyāna development to the Abhidharma development, thereby gaining a deeper insight of the teachings of the former.

This course has as its scope the Abhidharma development in the northern tradition. It focuses primarily on the doctrines of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas and the Dārṣṭāntika-Sautrāntikas. While detailing the Abhidharma controversies, the relevant doctrines of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Vātsīputrīya-Sāṃmitīyas, etc., will also be discussed. The early part of the course will outline the historical and doctrinal background necessary for understanding the controversial doctrines to be examined in details subsequently. The bulk of the course that follows will focus on selected controversial doctrines of importance, such as the tri-temporal existence of all dharma-s (*sarvāstitva*), simultaneous causality, the ontological status of the cittaviprayukta-saṃskāra-s, the avijñapti and the unconditioned dharma-s, etc. The discussion on these controversies will mainly be based on the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, supplemented with commentarial material from the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā*, the **Nyāyānusārā* of Saṃghabhadra, the *Abhidharmadīpa with Vibhāṣā-prabhāvṛtti*, and the *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā* of Yaśomitra. By studying these controversies, the students will gain a deeper insight into the doctrinal and spiritual concerns of the ancient masters in this period, and how these concerns fervently stimulated progressive articulation and development of Buddhist thoughts.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6044. History of Chinese Buddhism (6 credits)

This course examines the major events and thoughts in the history of Chinese Buddhism with a particular emphasis on the establishment of Chinese Buddhist Schools. A major aim is to show how Buddhism has been gradually and successfully incorporated into and became one of the

three pillars of Chinese thought and culture. The important Chinese Buddhist masters will also be examined against their historical background to show their contribution to the development of Chinese Buddhism.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6052. Study of important Buddhist meditation texts (6 credits)

Meditation is an integral part of the study and practice of Buddhism. This course will read and study important Buddhist texts related to the practice of meditation from various traditions. Passages will be selected from texts such as: the *Satipatthana Sutta*, *Visuddhimagga*, *Sandhinirmochana Sutra* (Sutra of the Explanation of the Profound Secrets, 解深密經), *The Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices* 《菩提達磨略辨大乘入道四行》, and *The Three Statements that Strike the Essential Points* by Garab Dorje. Students will also be introduced to the actual practice of mediation.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6055. Buddhist psychology I (6 credits)

This course takes a psychological perspective to introduce Buddhism as a moral and psychologically healthy way of life. The early Buddhist way of life as practiced by the Buddha and his disciples is introduced through selected readings from English translations of the original Pali texts Majjhima Nikaya and Anguttara Nikaya. This source is chosen over other more theoretically oriented secondary sources on the belief that the early Buddhist way of life provided the experiential (and empirical) basis for Buddhist philosophy. The narrative format offers lively and concrete examples of problem solving in daily life that are easily understood by most readers and more importantly- less readily misunderstood. Theories and important concepts in Buddhism are introduced later in the course to bind together the rather loosely organized teachings of the Nikaya texts. Finally, the epistemological foundation of Buddhism is introduced through selected readings from the Yogacara tradition (in particular the Thirty Stanzas) and compared with recent developments in theoretical psychology (in particular social constructionism).

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC6056. Special topics in Buddhist studies (4) (6 credits)

This course is offered from time to time. Students should consult the Centre of Buddhist Studies on the content of the course on offer.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6057. Special topics in Buddhist studies (5) (6 credits)

This course is offered from time to time. Students should consult the Centre of Buddhist Studies on the content of the course on offer.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6058. Buddhism and contemporary society (6 credits)

This course examines various contemporary social issues from the Buddhist perspectives. It starts with Buddhist attitudes towards society and social issues in order to dispel the misunderstanding that Buddhism has nothing to do with society but only an ascetic tradition for individual salvation. Then followed by discussions on special topics such as the foundation for a peaceful society, war and peace, social ethics, material wealth, environment, family, gender, suicide and euthanasia, death, etc. Each topic is discussed by drawing material from the original Buddhist texts and analyzed in the light of Buddhist thought and practice.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6066. Doctrines of the early Indian Yogācāra (6 credits)

This course introduces the students to the doctrinal development of Indian Yogācāra up to the period of Dharmapāla. The survey begins with a brief survey of the doctrinal contribution from the Sarvāstivādins in the milieu of the Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā, particularly the early yogācāras. It will then proceed to examine the doctrines in the Basic Section (本地分; *maulī bhūmiḥ) of the Yogācāra-bhūmi, which on the whole constitutes the earliest stratum of the textual sources of the Yogācāra as a Mahayāna school. Particular emphases are laid here on its doctrines of the two intrinsic natures, prajñaptivāda-svabhāva and nirabhilāpya-svabhāva, and its epistemological doctrines — both representing a realistic standpoint characteristic of this Section. This will be followed by a study of the relatively more developed doctrines in the texts of the Maitreya-Asaṅga complex and of Vasubandhu, et al., including: the system of eight consciousnesses (particularly the ālaya-vijñāna doctrine), the Threefold Intrinsic Nature, the Threefold Absence of Intrinsic Natures, vijñaptimātratā and āśraya-parāvṛtti. The course will end with a discussion on the developed doctrines in Xuanzang's *Vijñaptimātra-siddhi (成唯識論).

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6070. Research methodology in Buddhist Studies (6 credits)

The diversity and complexity of Buddhism as a historical, social, and cultural phenomenon, as well as a living world religion, mean that Buddhist Studies utilises an array of methodological approaches and research tools developed in both the humanities and the social sciences. Any good research into any aspect of Buddhism must account for its research methodology. It must explain the theory of research and the reasons for the way the research is designed, why the research question is important, and the relevant research methods and technical procedures applied to conduct the research.

This course introduces key methodological approaches used in Buddhist Studies research. Focusing on textual and philological research, it addresses the editing, translation, and interpretation of Buddhist texts, equipping students with key theories, principles, and skills to read and critically assess such works. It also provides an overview of the major textual resources in the primary language traditions along with notable examples of scholarship that demonstrate relevant methodologies. Beyond text-based research, the course offers an introduction to research methods in art history, qualitative fieldwork methods, and quantitative research tools. By successfully completing the course, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of diverse research methodologies and develop the skills necessary to critically evaluate and conduct their own research in the field of Buddhist Studies.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6075. The Pali commentarial literature (6 credits)

The course is designed to critically examine and analyze different aspects of the Pali commentaries. The course consists broadly of the following two areas: I. a textual analysis of the commentaries; II. examination of contents of the commentaries. Under the first category the following areas of study will be examined: the sources of the present Pali *Aṭṭhakathā* known collectively as the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*; the date of the composition of *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* and the sequence of their translation into Pali after the fifth century A.C.; the commentators, Buddhaghosa, Dhammapāla, etc. - their lives and works; etc. The second category will include: individual concepts as reflected in the commentaries; different interpretations between Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla; doctrinal and other differences between the Mahāvihāra and Abhayagiri fraternities; value of the Pali commentaries as source-material for the Study of Buddhism, etc.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6076. The Buddha-concept and Bodhisatta Ideal in Theravada Buddhism (6 credits)

This course is designed to examine from a historical perspective the Buddha-concept and Bodhisatta Ideal from the earliest Canonical texts to the exegetical literature of Theravada Buddhism. For this, the main topics for examination will include: the Buddha's biography; beginnings of his apotheosis; 'great man' (*mahāpurisa*); 'great compassion' (*mahākaruṇā*); 'four confidences' (*catu-vesārajja*); 'omniscient knowledge' (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*); 'spiritual power' (*ñāṇa-bala*) and 'physical power' (*kāya-bala*); '80 minor bodily marks' (*asīti-anuvyañjana*); and '18 qualities of the Buddha' (*aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma*). The course will also examine the Bodhisatta Ideal, an integral part of the Buddha-concept in Buddhism, and the topics for discussion will include the 'perfections' (*pāramitā*), 'aspirations' (*abhinīhāra*), '18 impossible states of birth for a bodhisatta' (*aṭṭhārasa-abhabbaṭṭhāna*), and others.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC6080. Chinese Buddhist art along the Silk Road (6 credits)

This course aims to introduce Buddhist art and architecture along the Silk Road from a historical and cultural heritage perspective. The transmission of Buddhism and Buddhist art from India to China (and from those sites to other area of East and Southeast Asia) constitutes one of the most significant cultural exchanges that took place along the Silk Road. The course focuses on the interpretation of iconography in Buddhist art and material culture. It examines the major Buddhist caves along the Silk Road, with special attention given to the interaction between Buddhist images, doctrines, and texts. Apart from Asian Buddhist art, this course also explores the traditions of Chinese Buddhist art and its interaction with Western culture.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7002. Tantric meditation traditions in Tibet: a survey of Vajrayāna texts and practices (6 credits)

The emergence of Vajrayāna in seventh and eighth-century India, also known as Tantric Buddhism, marked a systematic movement of religious practice, interpretation and understanding of the Buddha's teachings. A prolific production of esoteric scriptures requiring initiation and exegesis by lay or monastic tantric masters infused Mahāyāna Buddhism with new training techniques and ways of conceptualizing the soteriological goal of Buddhism. Tantras spread with various Buddhist traditions across India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Central Asia, China, Japan, Korea and Mongolia. In this course we will discuss the historical transmission of Indian Buddhist tantras to Tibet at the times of the Tibetan empire and during the medieval times. We will examine some representative Vajrayāna teachings and practices as they were received and developed in Tibetan monastic schools and lay tantric settings: Geluk (lower and higher tantras), Kagyu (*Six Dharmas of Naropa and Mahāmudra*), Sakya (*Lamdre and the Hevajra Tantra*) and the meditative tradition of the *Great Perfection*, or *Dzogchen*, as it was systematized in the Nyingma and Bön.

Prerequisites: Prior completion of at least one of the following courses: BSTC6002, BSTC6013, BSTC6032, BSTC6079, or with consent of instructor.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7003. Dunhuang Buddhist art and culture (6 credits)

This course is a theme-based study of Buddhist art and cultural relics preserved in the Dunhuang cave temples. It uses visual, textual and historical perspectives to examine the development of Buddhist art in Dunhuang. The course covers a range of topics including the early narrative art, the Maitreya culture, the illustration of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra and the Lotus Sūtra, the images of Pure Land Buddhism, the belief in Avalokiteśvara and the Bodhisattva path, the early Esoteric element in Dunhuang, the Dunhuang art in the Tubo period, the Mañjuśrī and Mount Wutai, the Dunhuang Library Cave, and other related topics. The course also explores the cultural interactions between India, Central Asia, Western Regions, and Central Plains of China in relation to the development of Dunhuang art and culture. It aims to introduce the unique value of Dunhuang Buddhist art and culture as a time capsule of the Silk Road history that was influenced by Buddhism.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7004. Buddhist psychology II (6 credits)

This course investigates an important piece of work in the Mahayana Yogacara tradition--“Cheng Wei Shi Lun/ 成唯識論”, so as to better understand and practice the Buddha’s teaching as elucidated in the suttas, and taught in Buddhist Psychology I (BSTC-6055). This work was chosen because knowledge integrated with practice- the definition of “Yogacara” itself, is also our approach in Buddhist Psychology. The book is a synopsis of Yogacara teachings in seventh century India, as encountered by the Chinese Tripitaka Master Xuan Zang in his epic journey to the West. We shall learn from this 7th century work the concept of “mind” in its widest and most comprehensive context: as biological, individual and cultural knowledge. We shall learn that psychological concepts such as consciousness and the subconscious, memory and plasticity, and nature and nurture had been postulated in ancient India over a millennium earlier than in the West. We shall see how these psychological concepts may provide the foundations for understanding Buddhist epistemology in particular its core concept of “emptiness”. But these concepts are not introduced to us as “given facts”, “discovered truths”, or “dictated by authority”. Concepts are established and debated upon according to accepted Buddhist thinking and teaching. Evidence is cited, alternative view-points are debated, and hypotheses eliminated in a systematic and vigorous way. Most importantly we shall learn to see Buddhist psychology as a body of acts leading to the Buddhist goal, and not just as an “academic study” in the conventional sense. A reader who had gone through the book cannot help being amazed how the book can achieve all these without violating the Buddha’s teaching, and in addition can serve as a source of inspiration, or even a wake-up call for modern students of psychology. Because of its systematic and comprehensive approach, the book is also a useful tool for integrating various Buddhist schools and terminologies, in particular Chinese Buddhist terms. Although a previous English translation exists- a monumental and excellent piece of work by the Hong Kong University scholar Wei Tat, an alternative translation from a psychological perspective is provided by the lecturer so as to integrate Yogacara thinking with Buddhist psychology, as taught in Buddhist Psychology I.

Prerequisite: BSTC6055 or teacher’s approval

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7006. Pāli I (6 credits)

Pāli is the language of Theravāda Buddhism commonly practiced in South and Southeast Asia. This Theravāda school of Buddhism is the only Buddhist school that has preserved a complete canon since the 3rd century B.C.E. This course is meant for those students who have no prior knowledge of the language and who wish to become familiar with Pāli expressions and idioms, and with the basic requirements to understand Pāli Buddhist texts. The main focus of the course is to introduce basic grammar together with exercises, including phonetics, parts of speech, nouns of different genders and their declensions, verbs and their conjugations, participles and their functions, syntax and classification of sentences. At the end of the course the students are expected to be able to read simple Pāli sentences and understand their religious and philosophical significance in context.

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7007. Pāli II (6 credits)

The main focus of the course is to introduce more practical knowledge of Pāli that enables students to read easy Pāli passages both prose and verse extracted directly from the Pāli texts. It also introduces remaining grammatical components not included in Pāli I such as basic grammar together with exercises, including phonetics, parts of speech, nouns of different genders and their declensions, verbs and their conjugations, participles and their functions, syntax and classification of sentences. At the end of the course the students are expected to be able to read simple Pāli sentences and understand their religious and philosophical significance in context.

Prerequisite: BSTC7006 Pāli I or teacher's approval
Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7008. Sanskrit I (6 credits)

Sanskrit, being one of the most ancient languages known to humankind, is considered to be a key to understanding human civilization, in particular, the rich cultural, philosophical and religious heritage of India whose influence on our world continues to be felt. Students of history, history of science, comparative literature, general and historical linguistics, philosophy and religions will discover that a basic knowledge of the language greatly enriches their studies. For students who intend to specialize in different aspects of Buddhism, an ability in reading and comprehending of Buddhist Sanskrit texts is essential. This course will give an overview of the history of Sanskrit Buddhist literature and basic grammar and of the language, covering topics such as scripts, phonetics, declensions, conjugations, participles and *sandhi*.

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7009. Sanskrit II (6 credits)

The main focus of the course is to guide students to read Buddhist Sanskrit passages and comprehend Sanskrit Buddhist literature. This course covers Sanskrit grammatical components together with exercises selected from Sanskrit Buddhist texts which are not included in Readings in Sanskrit Buddhist Texts I. This course covers, parts of speech, nouns of different genders and their declensions, verbs and their conjugations, participles and their functions, compounds, different forms of past tense, future tense, locative and genitive absolutes, syntax and classification of sentences.

Prerequisite: BSTC7008 Sanskrit I or teacher's approval
Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7010. Classical Tibetan I (6 credits)

This is an introductory course on learning how to read literary Tibetan and does not require

prior knowledge of the language. In this course students will learn to read and write basic Tibetan, while acquiring a practical understanding of grammar and the ability to translate sentences and short Buddhist passages mainly from Tibetan to English, but also from English to Tibetan.

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7011. Classical Tibetan II (6 credits)

This course is designed for students with basic knowledge of literary Tibetan and grammar. It will cover advanced features of Tibetan grammar and syntax, complex sentences, and specialised Buddhist vocabulary. Students will be introduced to reading and translating selected passages from different genres of Tibetan literature. Tibetan I or an equivalent qualification is required for enrolling in this course.

Prerequisite: BSTC7010 Classical Tibetan I or teacher's approval

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7110. Reading early Buddhist discourses (6 credits)

The discourses of the Buddha called Suttas are preserved in a collection called a 'basket of discourses'. They offer a rich source of inspirational teachings on compassion, ethical responsibility, mental tranquility, and insight into true state of affairs, that are as relevant today as it was over two and a half millennium ago. In this course selected simple but profound short discourses and verses, prose passages and sections from the large discourses will critically be studied in their English translations supported by the original texts and their Theravāda commentaries in Pali. The readings will take students in a fascinating journey through the Buddha's progressive teaching while also mastering the linguistic features and literary forms of the Sutta genre. The readings will empower students not only to understand the ethical, psychological and philosophical teachings of the Buddha but also to find their relevance for achieving sustainable happiness by improving behavior in a more considerate and kindly way, nurturing more positive attitudes and states of mind that let go of the causes of stress, and developing a wiser understanding of the nature of life and the world. Knowledge of Pali is not required.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7111. Chan Buddhism: history, culture and thought (6 credits)

The tradition of Chan (meditation) in Chinese Buddhism is arguably the most distinctive feature of sinicization of Indian Buddhism. While exerting a great influence on post Song Chinese culture, Chinese Chan is also one of the basic Buddhist elements that made Chinese culture cross national boundaries in East Asia, giving birth to Korean *son* and Japanese *zen*. This course deals with important topics in the history and traditions (practices included) of Chinese Chan Buddhism. Apart from highlighting the connection of early Chinese Buddhist meditational techniques to Indian Buddhist sources, the emphasis will be on the transformation of the Indian elements as well as the Chinese innovation under the influence of other Mahayana

Buddhist philosophies and Chinese culture.

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7112. Buddhist ethics (6 credits)

Ethics is the foundation of the Buddhist path, and a dimension of human life which Buddhism accords critical importance. This course seeks to equip students with an understanding of the concepts and teachings that may be said to comprise a foundational Buddhist ethical repertoire. It also seeks to bring these concepts and teachings into dialogue with topical real-life ethical issues that include animals rights and the environment, gender equality, abortion, suicide and euthanasia, violence, economics, and the AI-human relationship. To this end, the course begins by exploring the nature of Buddhist ethics, the Buddhist view of good and bad, the Buddhist view of an ethically meaningful life, role of ethical training in the pursuit of Buddhist spiritual goal, and Buddhist social ethics. As we progress to specific applied topics, we explore whether Buddhism has a defined ethical stance on these issues. If not, we consider how to draw on Buddhist ethical resources to develop a position and examine how Buddhist ethical teachings can enrich our understanding of these topics. In doing so, students will gain practical insights into applying Buddhist ethical principles to navigate complex ethical dilemmas in contemporary society.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7119. Reading Chinese Buddhist texts (6 credits)

As one of the three living Buddhist traditions, Chinese Buddhism possesses a large canon comprised of translations of Indian Buddhist texts and writings of Chinese Buddhists of the imperial times, including catalogues of Buddhist texts of different dynasties, commentaries to scriptures, biographies of monastics, apologetics, histories of Buddhism, and travel records on Central Asia, India and Sri Lanka. Being able to make direct use of all these Chinese Buddhist sources through reading is unquestionably required for the study of pre-modern Chinese Buddhism but also conducive to studies in Indian Buddhism as they contain many now-lost Indian texts of early Buddhism and early Mahayana Buddhism. This course consists of in-depth readings of a diverse range of Chinese Buddhist texts. In close reading these texts the students will not only familiarize themselves with different genres of Chinese Buddhist texts but also learn about important teachings, spiritual practices, ethical values, cosmologies, social norms, and myths from both the Chinese translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures and the works of pre-modern Chinese Buddhists.

Note: Chinese is an integrate part of this course and course materials will be in Chinese or where appropriate, in English translation. Students are expected to have an understanding of basic classical Chinese. Those with no prior knowledge of Chinese characters should seek advice from the teacher prior to enrolling in this course.

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

BSTC7120. Buddhist psychology and mental cultivation (6 credits)

The course introduces positive psychological concepts and meditation theory of the Buddha based on early Buddhist discourses and Abhidhamma philosophy of Theravāda Buddhism. It critically analyses those doctrines and meditation techniques that have their aim to amplify and foster in young people positive human emotions, strengths, virtues, and skills that are conducive to achieving success, well-being, and happiness in their personal, family, social and professional lives, and compares them with those of modern positive psychology. It investigates not only the positive emotions, strengths and virtues but also positive institutions such as family, democracy and free inquiry that support fostering them.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7121. Chinese Buddhist texts: a survey and sample readings (6 credits)

As one of the three living Buddhist traditions, Chinese Buddhism possesses a large canon comprised of translations of Indian Buddhist texts and writings of Chinese Buddhists of the imperial times, including catalogues of Buddhist texts of different dynasties, commentaries and sub-commentaries on the translated scriptures, biographies of monastics, apologetics, histories of Buddhism, encyclopedia; dictionaries; ritual manuals; anthology of sayings; monastic regulations; temple gazettes, and Buddhist pilgrims' travel records containing information on Central Asia, India and Sri Lanka. In addition, there is a large corpus of hand-copied Buddhist manuscripts outside the canon and equally various in genres. All the texts are not only primary sources for such fields as the study of Chinese Buddhism, Chinese history of translation, Chinese manuscript culture, and so forth, but also for the study of Indian Buddhism as they have preserved many early Indic Buddhist texts (in translation) which have long lost. This course provides an overview and the characteristics of all these Buddhist texts, as well as a hand-on experience of reading some major genres of them. It shows the dynamic development and transmission of the Chinese Buddhist Canon, Chinese Buddhist manuscript culture, while at the same time offering a personal contact with the contents of the texts.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7122. Yogācāra Models of Reality (6 credits)

This course introduces students to the key elements of Yogācāra philosophy from a historical perspective. Having developed from Abhidharma, Yogācāra has interacted with all other major strands of Mahāyāna, notably Tathāgatagarbha and Madhyamaka thought. This laid the ground for the interesting variety of Tibetan and East Asian Buddhist schools. After a historical survey of Yogācāra and its syntheses with other Buddhist systems in India, we will discuss the models of reality, which resulted from this. The topics covered include “mind-only,” ālayavijñāna, the three nature theory, fundamental transformation, and buddhahood.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7123. The concept of emptiness in Buddhist literature (6 credits)

Śūnyatā (often translated as emptiness) is a central concept in the Buddhist teachings. In Buddhist soteriology, it is the foundational practice for one's liberation as well as for the attainment of ultimate realization. In the early canonical texts, the concept was often used in association with the teaching of the three marks of existent, anicca (impermanence), dukkha (suffering) and anattā (no-self), as a practice for those on the path to arhathood. In its developed form, the Mahāyāna tradition highlights the realization of dharma-śūnyatā (emptiness of all phenomena) and dharma of non-arising as the key to bodhisattva's cultivation of prajñāpāramitā (wisdom perfection).

This course will study and examine the development of the concept of śūnyatā, from the earliest texts, such as the Suttanipāta and other texts from the four main Nikāya. Furthermore, it will trace its blossoming in the early Mahāyāna literature, specifically the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, such as the Aṣṭasāhasrikā (the perfection of wisdom in eight-thousand [lines]), Hṛdaya (Heart sutra), Vajracchedikā (Diamond sutra), and its maturation in Yogācāra texts, such as the Sandhinirmocana Sūtra.

In addition to the study of the teaching of the concept of śūnyatā, in this course, we will explore how to incorporate this doctrine into contemplative practices, according to relevant texts from different traditions.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7124. Anthropology of Buddhism (6 credits)

This course offers an in-depth exploration of Buddhism as a lived tradition, examining the practices, beliefs, institutions, and relationships that shape Buddhist communities across diverse cultural settings. Students will critically explore a range of important topics in the anthropology of Buddhism, including lay-monastic relations, gifts and merit-making, ritual and magic, monastic education, gender, transmission and lineage, death and reincarnation, pilgrimage and sacred landscapes, and modern transformations of Buddhist thought and practice. Through close analysis of ethnographic materials, they will engage with key debates, concepts, and methods in the anthropology of Buddhism. The course will also equip students with foundational ethnographic research skills and guide them through the process of conducting a collaborative mini-ethnographic project. By studying Buddhism through its lived expressions, the course invites students to deepen their understanding of the diverse and evolving practices of Buddhist communities across time and space.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7125. Buddhism in Central Asia (6 credits)

While Central Asia is predominantly Islamic today, it was once one of the most important regions in the Buddhist world. This course explores the lost history of Buddhism in Central Asia and examines its enduring Buddhist legacies. Organized largely along geographical and chronological lines, the course guides students from the early development of Buddhism in Gandhāra after the Buddha's Nirvāṇa to the conversion of the last Uyghur Buddhist king to Islam in the fifteenth century.

A central theme of the course is how diverse indigenous cultural traditions across Central Asia shaped distinctive local forms of Buddhism. Students will engage with Buddhist texts preserved in a variety of Central Asian languages and explore their historical, religious, and cultural significance. The course also encourages students to connect Central Asian Buddhism with their own academic interests, whether in the study of Buddhism in other regions or in specific subjects such as art history. More broadly, it invites reflection on students' own lives and their relationship with the contemporary world through the lens of Central Asian Buddhist legacies.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC7607. Buddhist liturgy and rituals (6 credits)

Although many claim (based on a selective reading of canonical Buddhist literature) that the Buddha's "original teaching" involved a rejection of ritual activity, from the very early period and throughout the entire Buddhist history, the Buddhist traditions have adopted indigenous rituals and practices and have devised a great variety of their own rituals. This course provides an introduction to Buddhist ritual practice in different Buddhist tradition to the students who are interested in Buddhist studies. We will begin by exploring several theories and research methods of adopting rituals in anthropology and religious studies. After having grasped the theoretical basis of ritual studies, the students will go further to study the doctrinal, mythic, and other dimensions of Buddhist practice, identify the various sources of ritual power, examine the structural patterns of various rituals, survey the different categories of ceremonies, and analyse the most important groups of rituals, especially different death rituals that are performed to assist the deceased to enable rebirth into the better realms. It will focus on how experiences of ritual site and ritual time will generate meanings that affect individual enlightenment as well as the understanding of Buddhist teaching. As a comparative approach to Buddhist rituals, this course will cover materials such as myths, texts, and video records of rituals. Rituals are studied in some detail by reading ritual texts and conducting fieldwork (or studying rituals by watching video recordings of them) to examine the actual ritual practice.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Students may choose a maximum of two undergraduate electives (i.e. a maximum of 12 credits) from the following list. Students will not be permitted to re-enrol in the undergraduate elective if they previously enrolled in it whilst studying for any undergraduate degree at HKU.

BSTC3040. Sanskrit language III (6 credits)

Sanskrit is one of the most ancient languages in the world and is studied by scholars of language and literature, religion, history and anthropology and by anyone who is interested in India's Buddhist cultural heritage. Sanskrit is the language not just of the religious literature of Hinduism and Buddhism, but extends to the fields of philosophy, science, art, music, mathematics, architecture, history, covering over three thousand years of development. Knowledge of Sanskrit grants access to an enormous body of Indian and Buddhist literature. The main focus of this course is grammar of the language, covering parts of speech, nouns of different gender and their declensions, verbs and their conjugations, participles and their functions, syntax and reading and translation of selected Sanskrit passages from the

Jātakamāla and the *Mahāvastu*. Students will be able to read and comprehend simple Sanskrit passages by the end of the course.

Prerequisite: BSTC7009 Sanskrit II or teacher's approval

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

Non-permissible combination: BSTC7115

BSTC3041. Sanskrit language IV (6 credits)

Sanskrit, being one of the most ancient languages, is studied by scholars of language, religion, literature, history and anthropology and anyone who is interested in Indian and Buddhist cultural heritage. It is one of the three languages in which Buddhist teachings are preserved. Indian Buddhist schools such as Sarvāstivāda, Yogācāra, Mādhyamikā and Indian Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna composed their texts in Sanskrit. Therefore, for students who intend to specialize in different aspects of Buddhism, a reading knowledge of Sanskrit is essential. Students of Buddhist philosophy and history will discover that knowledge of the Sanskrit language greatly enrich their studies. This course is designed for students who wish to read and comprehend Buddhist Sanskrit texts and employ Sanskrit Buddhist resources for their future research.

Prerequisite: BSTC3040 Sanskrit language III or teacher's approval

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

Non-permissible combination: BSTC7116

BSTC3042. Tibetan language III (6 credits)

The purpose of this course is to provide comprehensive knowledge of classical Tibetan Buddhist texts translated from Sanskrit. These include both canonical and later commentarial texts written by Indian scholars. In this course students will be guided in reading, comprehension and translation of classical Tibetan texts from different genres. At the same time idiomatic and typical expressions and terminologies will be explained. This course will not deal with topics such as basic grammar, phonetics and transliteration.

Prerequisite: BSTC7011 Classical Tibetan II or teacher's approval

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

Non-permissible combination: BSTC7117

BSTC3043. Tibetan language IV (6 credits)

The purpose of this course is to provide comprehensive knowledge of classical Tibetan Buddhist texts composed for the most part by native Tibetan Buddhist scholars. Some translations made from Sanskrit into Tibetan may also be included for the purpose of comparison with native Tibetan writings. This course will focus on understanding the structure and syntax of classical texts of different genres. Idiomatic and typical expressions and terminologies will be explained to aid students in their translation.

Prerequisite: BSTC3042 Tibetan language III or teacher's approval

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination
 Non-permissible combination: BSTC7118

BSTC3044. Pāli language III (6 credits)

Pāli is the language of a large body of Theravāda canonical and non-canonical Buddhist literature. Here we find a rich variety of texts that contain valuable information on the religious, social, political, literary and linguistic history of South Asia. Important contributions are made in Pāli to philosophy and psychology through the analysis of the nature of *dharmas*, the classification of various kinds of mind and mental states, phenomenal processes and their causal relations. All of these topics can be understood through a careful study of Pāli literature. The course is devoted to the understating and translating of selected Pāli passages, as well as explaining the content of the Pāli canon and its commentaries and gradually building sufficient vocabularies for the purpose of reading the Pāli texts independently.

Prerequisite: BSTC7007 Pāli II or teacher's approval
 Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination
 Non-permissible combination: BSTC7113

BSTC3045. Pāli language IV (6 credits)

This course enables students to independently read Pali texts with the help of dictionaries. Every assigned reading will be self-contained in its relation to Buddhist teachings and their significance. The main focus of this course is to make grammatical explanations as clear as possible, while also gaining access to Pāli original sources for textual studies research using the Pāli dictionary and vocabulary. Each lesson includes a set of readings with an accompanying glossary and grammatical notes covering different nouns and their declensions, verbs and their conjugations, compounds, primary and secondary derivatives, syntax, clause and numerals.

Prerequisite: BSTC3044 Pāli language III or teacher's approval
 Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination
 Non-permissible combination: BSTC7114

C. Capstone Experience

BSTC8997. Capstone Experience: Portfolio (6 credits)

This portfolio serves as the culminating component of the Master of Buddhist Studies programme. Students will create a comprehensive portfolio that integrates their learning experiences and synthesizes the essential Buddhist teachings learnt in the programme. The portfolio will serve to showcase students' understanding of these teachings while also exploring their practical applications in real-world contexts. Each portfolio must include a title that reflects the central theme of the student's studies. This theme should analyze and articulate what students have learnt throughout the programme, highlighting their specific areas of focus and insight.

The portfolio includes an essay of 5,000 to 7,000 words and a 5-minutes video-recorded presentation. The title of portfolio shall be submitted for approval by January 15 of the final academic year in which the curriculum ends and the portfolio shall be presented by a deadline of the same year prescribed by the programme. Candidates shall submit a statement that the portfolio represents their own work undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.

Assessment: 100% coursework

BSTC8999. Capstone Experience: Dissertation (12 credits)

The purpose of the dissertation is to enable candidates to demonstrate the overall knowledge and skills they have learned from the curriculum through a guided independent research of a substantial piece of academic work. Candidates will be assessed on their capacity to define a topic for analysis and examination, to articulate a coherent scheme and logical arguments of the issues involved, to gather the necessary information, and to examine and present their ideas in a satisfactory way.

The dissertation shall be 10,000-15,000 words in length. The title of dissertation shall be submitted for approval by January 15 of the final academic year in which the curriculum ends and the dissertation shall be presented by a deadline of the same year prescribed by the programme. Candidates shall submit a statement that the dissertation represents their own work undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.

Assessment: 100% coursework
