

RELI 362 RELIGIONS OF TIBET (3 credits) 2016

LECTURE : Location : FG B055 SGW

Day : MoWe 13:15 - 14:30

Instructor: **Marc des Jardins, Ph.D., C.M.D.**

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Students are responsible for taking notes of the contents of class lectures. The best way to prevent any inconveniences in this regard is to find a buddy with whom to share lecture notes. Emails are not meant to recapitulate topics dealt in class.

**Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 – 13:00 or by appointment**

**Religions of Tibet** - This course examines the "nameless" popular religions of Tibet (mountain cults, shamanism, and spirit possession) as well as the other competing alternatives that have flourished since the Imperial area (6-9th century). It will examine the relationships between dogma, lineages, philosophical enquiries, ritual and ascetic practices. The goal of this course is to familiarize the student with current issues in Tibetan and Buddhist studies. It also seeks to foster understanding of the phenomenon of Tibetan religion in Tibet, China and the rest of the world.

Topics include: Tibetan Buddhism: its four principal schools and their major branches; the Bön Religion; Tibetan core religious practices, philosophical tenets and rituals; the Tantric Path (Generation and Perfection Stages); Mahamudra; the Great Perfection Systems (Nyingma and Bön); and key figures of the different spiritual lineages.

**Note from Concordia University:** In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change

**Requirements:**

1. **Four quizzes Sep 28 (10%), Oct 12 (10%), Nov. 2 (10%), Nov 30 (10%).**  
Only the best three marks will be entered for the final grade. Students can miss one, however, there will not be any test outside assigned dates. Students are recommended to “bank” these in order to cover any unforeseen absence due to emergencies, sickness or any other reasons. No exceptions. 30%
2. **A short interpretative essay on either one of the hagiographies of Tibetan Saints (Milarepa (4 chapters) or Ra Lotsawa (6 chapters). Nov 7 (6 pages maximum with text references) 20%**
3. **One research project focusing on a specific aspect of the Chinese traditions on the theme of your choice. The following two themes are examples:**
  - A) The practice of religion: ritual, social functions, belief and meaning.
  - B) Scripture: Exegesis, interpretation and orthodoxy. This section has to be based on a primary source in translation together with a traditional commentary. Please, do not rely on your own take on the meaning of the primary source! Always refer to traditional sources, ancillary literature and commentaries.

**Due date: Dec 6 without fail 40%**

**By University regulation, final grades have to be entered in the system no later than 5 open days after the last class. Late assignments handed in during the day of the final submission of grades may not be corrected in time to be included in the final grade. Responsibility to submit the essay on time will rest ultimately in the hands of the student.**

**4. Class participation (mandatory) 10 %****Interpretive Essay of a saint's hagiography**

The Essay outline (no longer than 6 pages) will consist of:

1. a synopsis of the life of the saint (with important dates) as portrayed in his hagiography
2. a contextualisation the text using the introduction of the book and the times the saint lived
3. a retelling of the action or main events from the selected chapters
4. statements highlighting the import of these selected chapters

The class will be divided in two and each group will focus on one of the two hagiographies from the textbooks section. The division will be determined in class the first week.

**Essay:****READ THIS!**

**All essay topics have to be reviewed and confirmed by the instructor.**

Essays must have 1) a coherent thesis, 2) be supported by evidence, and 3) be constructed using objective and balanced arguments. The length should be approximately 10-15 pages excluding bibliography and endnotes. You must provide documentation for all references and quotations. Social Sciences format (APA) is highly recommended. Ideally, only peer-reviewed literature (journals and academic publications) should be used. You must include a bibliography of at least 8 items **EXCLUDING textbooks used in this class.** For many topics the **Encyclopaedia of Religion** is a good starting point. **ALL STUDENTS MUST PROVIDE A DIGITAL COPY OF THE SUBMITTED PAPER ON DEMAND! FAILURE TO COMPLY MAY RESULT IN DISMISSAL FROM THE COURSE AND FURTHER SANCTIONS. THE ESSAYS ARE DUE THE LAST DAY OF CLASS AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.**

**Do not use textbooks for this class as a reference.**

**Do not use class notes as reference.**

**Do not use WebPages (such as Wikipedia, etc...) as references. These can, however, help you to choose a research topic as well as give you a quick overview of keywords. Use with caution and rely on standard academic publications. Wikipedia and other internet non-scholarly references are fraught with errors.**

**Structure of the essay will follow this general outline:**

- a. Introduce the essay with a question which will be the thread of your discussion.
- b. Highlight the issues and why it is important to research them.
- c. Conduct a good exposition of the problematic and its ramifications.
- d. Explain the topic and its relations with society, the environment, history, *et cetera*, according to the relevance to your topic. Focus on one or two of these and do not try to be too exhaustive in

**your argument.**

- e. Bring forth your views and support them with evidence and corroborations.**
- f. Examine other's points of view.**
- g. Highlight their errors, or contributions.**
- h. Conclude by answering your central question(s).**
- i. Statements need to be supported with valid references.**

**Do not forget to put the title of the essay, your name and ID, the course number and title. Also, page numbers and alphabetically organised bibliography, and to spell check your essay. Use footnotes for points and observations other than references, NOT endnotes. Put references in-text (des Jardins 45) or (des Jardins 2010: 45).**

**All essays can be written either in French or English.**

**If you follow all these guidelines, you should get a B for a reasonable paper. If your arguments and general exposition are done with tact, resourcefulness, obvious knowledge of the topic, well researched and carefully written, you should get an A.**

**Late Assignments:** Students may only submit assignments late with a good reason and must provide a note explaining these reasons to the Instructor in advance of the due date. Students submitting late work without following this protocol will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends.

**Textbooks (available at the university bookstore):**

Samuel, G. B. 2012. *Introducing Tibetan Buddhism*. World Religions. Abingdon: Routledge.

Dreyfus, Georges. 2003. *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping. The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*. A Philip E. Lilienthal Book in Asian Studies, University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520232600

Tsangnyon Heruka. 2010. *The Life of Milarepa*. Donald S. Lopez (Introduction), Andrew Quintman Penguin Classics. ISBN-10: 0143106228 ISBN-13: 978-0143106227

Or

Ra Yeshe Senge. 2015. *The All-Pervading Melodious Drumbeat: The Life of Ra Lotsawa*. Bryan J. Cuevas (Editor, Introduction, Translator). Penguin Classics ISBN-10: 0142422614 ISBN-13: 978-0142422618

**Not required but recommended readings**

Cozort, Daniel. Highest Yoga Tantra. Ithaca: Snow Lion. ISBN-10: 1559392355; ISBN-13: 978-1559392358

**Supplementary readings**

Snellgrove, David. 2010. "Introduction" in *The Nine Ways of Bon*. 1-21. Pdf on Moodle

**Fall 2016 Schedule****Important: Please, complete your readings BEFORE class.****1. Week 1 (Sep 7) Introduction to the class and to the topic of Tibetan religions**

Sep 2 Introduction to the class, the topic, assignments and other matters

**2. Week 2 (Sep 12, 14) Historical developments**

Sep 12: Samuel: 1 Background 1-23

Sep 14: Samuel: 2 The Development of Buddhism in Tibet 24-43; Dreyfus: Historical Overview 1:17-31

**3. Week 3 (Sep 19, 21)**

Sep 19 Samuel: 3 Tibetan Buddhism as a Path to Liberation: I. Sūtra Teachings

Sep 21 Dreyfus: Introduction 1-14; 2: 32-53.

**4. Week 4 (Sep 26, 28)**

Sep 26: Samuel: 4 Tibetan Buddhism as a Path to Liberation: II. Tantric Teachings

**Sep 28: Quiz 1**

**5. Week 5 (Oct 3, 5)**

Oct 3: Samuel: 5 Tibetan Buddhism as a System of Knowledge

Oct 5: Dreyfus: Tibetan monasticism 2: 32-53; Becoming a monk 3: 54-75

**6. Week 6 (Oct 10, 12) Quiz 2**

Oct 10: THANKS GIVING, No class!

**Oct 12: Quiz 2**

**7. Week 7 (Oct 17, 19) Ethics and institutions**

Oct 17: Samuel: 6 Ethics and Tibetan Buddhism

Oct 19: Samuel: 7 Lamas and Lay Practitioners, Monasteries and Temples

**8. Week 8 (Oct 24, 26) Education and practice**

Oct 24: Samuel: 8 Tibetan Buddhism as Practical Religion

Oct 26: Dreyfus: 5 General Structure of Tibetan Curriculum 98-110; 6 Two Curricular Models 111-148

**9. Week 9 (Oct 31, Nov 2) Cultural assimilation of Buddhism & Quiz 3**

Oct 31: Samuel: 9. Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan Identity

**Nov 2: Quiz 3**

**10. Week 10 (Nov 7, 9) The Bon Religion**

Nov 7: Snellgrove: Introduction from *The Nine ways of Bon* 1-21

**Nov 7: Interpretive essay due!**

Nov 9: Samuel: 11. The Bon Religion of Tibet: Pre-Buddhist Survival or Variant Form of Buddhism?

**11. Week 11 (Nov 14, 16) Gender and tradition**

Nov 14: Samuel: 10. Tibetan Buddhism, Women and Gender

Nov 16: Dreyfus: 7 Scholasticism and orality 149-163; 8 Commentary and meditation 164-182

**12. Week 12 (Nov 21, 23) Debate as a religious path of inquiry**

Nov 21: Dreyfus: 10 Debate and practice 195-228

Nov 23: Dreyfus: 11 Debate in the Curriculum 229-266

**13. Week 13 (Nov 29, 30) Debate and inquiry & Quiz 4**

Nov 29: Dreyfus: 12 Is debate a mode of inquiry? 267-291

**Nov 30: Quiz 4**

**14. Week 14 (Dec 5, 6) Spirit cult**

Dec 5: Dreyfus: 13 Rationality and spirit cult 295-305

**Last Day of Class!!!**

**Dec 6 Final essay due!!!**