

Nepal

Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples

Examine Tibetan and Himalayan history and culture, Buddhism, and the pressing contemporary issues facing communities in exile, particularly in the case of Tibet.

Coursework

Please note: This program will have credit distribution and/or other curriculum changes beginning in the fall 2012 semester. Please visit www.sit.edu/NPT for details.

Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples Seminar

ASIA 3000 / 6 credits / 90 class hours

An interdisciplinary course conducted in English with required readings, critical analysis papers, exams, and relevant educational excursions. The seminar examines the diversity of Himalayan peoples and societies, with special emphasis on the Tibetan experience and identity. High-altitude Himalayan cultures and the contemporary and historical religious, economic, and social linkages of these mountain communities provide the context within which issues of cultural preservation, religious revival, and sub-regional geopolitics are explored. Lecturers include prominent Tibetan scholars and Buddhist masters and reflect the rich diversity of academic resources in the Kathmandu Valley.

Seminar topics typically include:

History and Politics

Tibet: introduction to Tibetan history; twentieth-century occupation and exile; the CIA intervention in Tibet; present and future of the exile community; His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his Middle Way Approach; negotiations with China; Chinese perspectives on Tibet; human rights in Tibet.

Buddhism across the Himalayas

History and practices of Buddhism; monasticism; Tibetan scholastics; Tantra myth and realities; Newari and Theravada Buddhist traditions in Nepal; shamanism; religious tourism and pilgrimage; discovery and rediscovery of texts in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition; meditation and retreat.

Contemporary Tibetan Culture

Overview of women's issues in exile; education in exile; the Tibetan dream of going to the West; nongovernmental organizations; monastic versus modern education.

Cultural Anthropology

Social structures in Tibetan exile communities and Tibet; polyandry in Tibet and other Himalayan regions.

Arts and Sciences

An introduction to Tibetan medicine and astrology; Tibetan *thangka* painting; symbolism and art in the Tibetan tradition; secular music of Tibet.

Educational Excursions

Program excursions are designed to enhance understanding of Tibetan cultural traditions in the Himalayas and the recent refugee and exile experience. Excursions vary from semester to semester but may include visiting Tibetan communities in Nepal (Pokhara or Solu Khumbu); Ladakh, Dharamsala, or Darjeeling in India; the Tibetan Autonomous Region or other Tibetan regions in the People's Republic of China; and/or the Kingdom of Bhutan. High-altitude treks are usually included in the program to visit relatively isolated Tibetan rural communities in the mountains.

Intensive Language Study: Tibetan

TIBE 1000 / 4 credits / 60 class hours

The emphasis is on beginning oral and comprehension skills. Formal classroom instruction in Tibetan language is given daily during the program period in Kathmandu, and less formal instruction continues during excursion periods. Nepali language instruction is also available and optional, for example, for students who wish to pursue Independent Study Projects in Nepal.

Field Study Seminar

ANTH 3500 / 2 credits / 30 class hours

A course in the concepts of learning across cultures and from field experience. Introduction to the Independent Study Project. Material includes cross-cultural adaptation and skills building; project selection and refinement; appropriate methodologies; field study ethics and the World Learning/SIT Human Subjects Review Policy; developing contacts and finding resources; developing skills in observation and interviewing; gathering, organizing, and communicating data; maintaining a work journal; twentieth-century ethnography.



Credits 16

Duration Fall/Spring 15 weeks

Program Base Kathmandu

Language Study Tibetan

Homestay Kathmandu, 6 weeks

Rural Visit/Homestay 2 to 4 weeks, depending on location

Other Accommodations Guest houses, hostels, educational institutions, and/or small hotels. The group may do some camping while on excursions and treks in the Himalayas.

Independent Study Project 4 weeks

Prerequisites None

Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 / 4 credits / 120 class hours

Conducted in Tibetan and Himalayan communities in Nepal; in Dharamsala, India; or another approved location appropriate to the project. **Sample topic areas:** the politics of language and education in Tibetan communities; reflections from former political prisoners; traditional Tibetan medicine; the reemergence of the Bon tradition; Tibetan Muslims; the economics of the Tibetan carpet industry in Nepal; critical thinking in Bhutan's education system; a case study of a traditional Buddhist college; nuns and Tibetan female mystics; migration and Tibetan exile settlements.