



S F S THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Language, Religion, and Culture of Bhutan

SFS 2010

Syllabus

2 credits

The School for Field Studies (SFS)
Center for Climate and Sustainable Futures (CCSF)
Paro, Bhutan

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

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COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that they may present. In other words, this is a field program, and the field can change.

Course Overview

Religious and cultural principles and beliefs underlie much of the Bhutanese attitudes and practices in the environment. Students will learn about basic Buddhism including to read religious symbols and understand local culture and belief through various activities such as overnight stay in homestays and visiting and observation of Dzongs and Bhutanese festivals. Students will also learn and practice Dzongkha the Bhutan's national language, enough to engage in pleasantries on the street.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will develop a conceptual and practical understanding of cultural principles and some basic Bhutanese languages. Specific learning objectives are the following:

- 1) Understand and experience basic principles of Bhutanese culture, beliefs and practices
- 2) Understand basic concepts of Buddhism practices in Bhutan
- 3) Be able to read and write *Dzongkha* consonants and numbers, and perform basic communication in *Dzongkha*, the national language

Assessment

Our goal is to conduct ongoing assessment of student learning throughout the course, and provide timely and constructive feedback. Some assignments encourage students to work together, to share ideas and knowledge. This allows students to take advantage of the range of backgrounds within the group. Assessment will be conducted on an individual basis, unless otherwise stated. The final course grade will be based on the following assessment items.

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Write up on Buddhist Iconography	30
<i>Dzongkha</i> Language Aptitude Test	30
Reflective Essay on Culture and Rural Livelihoods	30
Participation	10
TOTAL	100

Write up on Buddhist Iconography (30%)

Each student will write a narrative on minimum two Buddhist iconographies of their choice based on class lectures, their observations in monasteries, dzongs, and other sacred places. Students shall understand, and critically reflect and compare the iconographies with their own or others' culture.

Dzongkha Language Aptitude Test (25%)

Students will take a 60-minute *Dzongkha* language aptitude test with the instructor. The test will include *Dzongkha* alphabets, numbering, basic *Dzongkha* names and conversations.

Reflective Essay on Culture and Rural Livelihoods (35%)

Drawing from day-to-day experience from the center, with homestays, and after partaking in a festival or cultural events, each student will write a reflective essay on the cultural underpinnings of rural life in Bhutan and how the environment plays a role in Bhutan's rural livelihoods. Students are encouraged to use this as an opportunity for personal reflection to connect what they have learned in classes, including in other courses, to a wider understanding about the interconnectedness of the culture, religion, environment, and livelihoods in Bhutan.

Participation (10%)

Students are expected to maintain 100% attendance and be actively involved in all indoor and outdoor classes. All students will start the semester with 100 marks and lose 3 marks each time they show up for class unprepared or unwilling to participate. Students are expected to attend all classes; exceptions will only be made through the HWM, if a student is ill.

Grading Scheme

A	95.00 - 100.00%	B+	86.00 - 89.99%	C+	76.00 - 79.99%	D	60.00 - 69.99%
A-	90.00 - 94.99%	B	83.00 - 85.99%	C	73.00 - 75.99%	F	0.00 - 59.99%
		B-	80.00 - 82.99%	C-	70.00 - 72.99%		

General Reminders

Honor Code/Plagiarism – SFS places high expectations on their students and we hold students accountable for their behaviors. SFS students are held to the honor code below. SFS has a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior. Using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. Any SFS student found to have engaged in or facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that activity.

"I approach coursework, fieldwork, and research with integrity and commit to full participation. I do my own work with honesty and give credit where it's due. I use tools and technology responsibly and only as permitted. I speak up when something conflicts with our shared values. I respect the communities we learn from and commit to ethical, non-extractive research that keeps knowledge connected to the places and people who share it with us."

Deadlines – Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated to promote equity among students and to allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due. As such, deadlines are firm; extensions will only be considered under extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a penalty of 10% of your grade for each day you are late. After two days past the deadline, assignments will no longer be accepted. Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period. Grade corrections for any assessment item should be requested in writing at least 24 hours after assignments are returned. No corrections will be considered afterwards.

Content Statement – Every student comes to SFS with unique life experiences, which contribute to the way various information is processed. Some of the content in this course may be intellectually or emotionally challenging but has been intentionally selected to achieve certain learning goals and/or showcase the complexity of many modern issues. If you anticipate a challenge engaging with a certain topic or find that you are struggling with certain discussions, we encourage you to talk about it with faculty, friends, family, the HWM, or access available mental health resources.

Participation – Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the

course is mandatory, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and class activities, and simply get involved.

AI Usage for Assignments – SFS acknowledges the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in education and professional settings. While AI can be a valuable resource for learning and productivity, its use must align with the learning goals and integrity of each assignment. For this reason, students are encouraged to discuss the acceptable uses of AI for each assignment with the instructor. If you wish to use AI for any part of an assignment, consult with the instructor beforehand to ensure that its use adheres to the academic expectations of the course. Let's work together to navigate this evolving landscape responsibly!

Course Content

Type- L: Lecture, FL: Field Lecture, FEX: Field Exercise, D: Discussion, O: Observation, P: Practical

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)
01	Course Overview Overview of course, schedule, assignments, grading systems and syllabus.	L, D	1.0
02	Introduction to basic Culture of Bhutan Briefing on Bhutanese culture and etiquette.	L	1.0
03	Introduction to Bhutanese Language and Conversation I Learn basic <i>Dzongkha</i> words for communication.	L	1.0
04	Introduction to Bhutanese Language and Conversation II Learn basic <i>Dzongkha</i> words for communication. Introduction to <i>Dzongkha</i> sayings and proverbs, common names for fruits, vegetables and grocery.	L, P	1.0
05	Introduction to Buddhism I&II Introduction to the basic ideas of Buddhism with reference to the Buddhism followed in Bhutan.	L	2.0
06	Introduction to Bhutanese Language and Conversation III Students will learn basic <i>Dzongkha</i> words for communication. Students in pairs or groups shall discuss and present their <i>Dzongkha</i> communication in class. Students will also be introduced to <i>Dzongkha</i> sayings and proverbs.	L, D, P	1.0
07	Introduction to Dzongkha: Alphabet and Numbering Learn <i>Dzongkha</i> alphabets and numbers, their pronunciations and writing.	L, P	1.0
08	Practice of Dzongkha Alphabet and Numbers Practice pronunciations and writing of <i>Dzongkha</i> alphabets and numbers.	L, P	1.0
09	Review for Dzongkha Language Aptitude Test	L, D	1.0
10	Tantric Buddhist Iconography Intro to Tantric Buddhist iconography, symbology, meaning, interpretation.	L	1.0
11	Iconography Observation Exercise Following the class on <i>Tantric Buddhist Iconography</i> , students will visit one of the monasteries and observe Buddhist iconography. Each student will write a narrative on a Buddhist iconography of their choice.	FEX	2.0
12	Observe Tsechu Students will try to attend one of the <i>Tsechus</i> , an annual festival held to commemorate the enlightened activities of the Buddhist master Guru Rinpoche. Students will observe how culture is interwoven within Buddhist religious festivities and the on-going impact it has on Bhutanese life.	O	2.5

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)
13	Visit Dzongs & Lhakhangs Visit the <i>Dzongs</i> (Fortresses) and learn about Bhutanese architecture and the significance of dzongs, and how they shaped much of modern Bhutanese culture and etiquette. This will be followed by a visit to some <i>Lhakhangs</i> (Monasteries/temples) to learn about the great Buddhist icons in Bhutan and in general and their vision and expression of the Buddhist teachings.	FL	3.0
14	Rural Life Students will experience homestays at Phobjikha. Students will be asked to reflect on their experience and glean on the relationship between rural life, culture and the environment. Based on this experience, each student will write a reflective essay on the cultural underpinnings of rural life in Bhutan and how the environment plays a role in Bhutan's rural livelihoods.	O	3.0
15	Mindfulness Meditation/Yoga Mindfulness meditation and yoga offer a holistic approach that nurtures both inner peace and physical health whereby reducing suffering and cultivating compassion and wisdom support for overall well-being. Students will be introduced to beginners' meditation class.	FL, O	1.0
16	Bhutanese Cuisine Learn the basics of Bhutanese cuisine and cook common Bhutanese dishes, such as <i>Ema Datsi</i> , <i>Momos</i> , and traditional snacks (<i>Khabzey</i>).	L, P	1.0
	Total		23.5
	UMN Instructional Hours*		28.2

*[UMN defines](#) an instructional hour as a 50-minute block. SFS syllabi are written in full 60-minute hours for programming purposes. Therefore 50 full hours = 60 UMN instructional hours (for four credit courses) and 25 full hours = 30 UMN instructional hours (for two credit courses).