

Constructing Culture: Imagine Tibet  
Instructor: Nicole Willock  
e-mail: nwillock@indiana.edu

**Synopsis:**

Over the past fifty years, an imagined Tibetan community has emerged, bound together across huge expanses of geographical space despite linguistic challenges, vastly different political orientations, and religious frictions. Who participates in and creates this community? How has Tibetan culture become globalized?

The aim of this course is two-fold. Taking an historical approach, we will examine “traditional” Tibetan cultural forms. Then, we will explore current centers of cultural production as well as its various forms including film, art, music, fiction and poetry. By comparing historical and contemporary modes of cultural production, this course aims to identify the imagined community of modern Tibet which reaches beyond the borders of nation-states, and modes of linguistic and religious unification.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, you should:

- 1) know the characteristics of centers of Tibetan cultural production
- 2) become familiar with the complexities of modern Tibetan identity
- 3) be able to think critically about modern Tibetan culture

***Block 1: “Traditional” Tibetan Culture***

**Week One-Two:**

*Introductions, understanding course goals.*

***Art and Literature from the Tibetan Empire & Introduction of Buddhism***

Amy Heller. 2000. *Tibetan Art: Tracing the Development of Spiritual Ideals and Art in Tibet 600-2000 A. D.*, Milano, Italy: Jaca Book, pp.7-14, 33-37, 49-52.

David Snellgrove & Hugh Richardson. 1995. *A Cultural History of Tibet*. Boston: Shambhala, chapters 1-3.

R. A. Stein. 1972. “Arts & Letters-Ancient Poetry,” *Tibetan Civilization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 248-259.

**Graduate students:** Paul Harrison. “A Brief History of the bKa’ ‘gyur,” In Cabezón & Jackson eds. *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, pp.70-94.

**Week Three:**

***Establishing New Traditions: Importing the Five Sciences & the Indian Kavya Tradition***

Jose Cabezón & Roger Jackson eds. 1996. *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, pp.11-32.

Lozang Jamspal. 2003. *Treasury of Good Sayings of Sa skya Pandita the Eminent Tibetan Lama, 1182-1251: Development of Awareness and Conduct*, pp. xvii-17  
Matthew Kapstein, "The Indian Literary Identity in Tibet," In Sheldon Pollock ed. 2003. *Literary Cultures in History*. Berkeley: University of California, pp. 747-751, 768-776.  
David Snellgrove & Hugh Richardson. 1995. *A Cultural History of Tibet*. Boston: Shambhala, chapters 4-6.

**Graduate students:**

Matthew Kapstein, "The Indian Literary Identity in Tibet," In Sheldon Pollock ed. 2003. *Literary Cultures in History*. Berkeley: University of California, pp. 747-802.  
Leonard van der Kuijp. "Tibetan Belles-Lettres: The Influence of Dandin and Ksemendra," In Cabezón & Jackson eds. *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*. Snow Lion Publications, pp. 393-410.  
Geoffrey Samuel. "Gesar of Ling: The Origins and Meanings of the East Tibet Epic" In *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Seminar of the IATS*. Narita: Naritasan Shinshoji, pp. 711-722.

**Week Four:**

***Between Lhasa and Beijing: Cultural Exchange during the Ming & Qing dynasties***

Patricia Berger. 2003. *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China*. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, chapter 2.  
K. Dhondrup. 1981. *Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama*. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives: Dharamsala, pp. 43-51.  
Snellgrove & Richardson. 1995. *A Cultural History of Tibet*. Chapters 7-8.  
Per K. Sorensen. 1990. *Divinity Secularized: An Inquiry into the Nature and Form of the Songs ascribed to the Sixth Dalai Lama*. Wien: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, pp. 9-32.

**Graduate students:** K. Dhondrup. 1981. *Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama*. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives: Dharamsala, pp. 9-39.  
Mdo khar Tshe ring Dbang rgyal. 1997. *The Tale of the Incomparable Prince*. Beth Newman (ed. and trans.). New York: Harper Collins.

**Graduate student session:** to be arranged.

***Block 2: "Traditional" Culture Today: Between Dharamsala and Hollywood***

**Week Five:**

***From de-facto Independence to Dharamsala as the Center of Modern "Traditional" Tibet***

Tibetan Government in Exile website on Culture: <http://www.tibet.com>

**Student assignment:** Print out or write down the main headings under the Tibetan culture category. Choose one of those headings, and be prepared to make a five minute presentation on that aspect of Tibetan culture according to the official Tibetan Government in Exile website.

Georges Dreyfus. 1998. "The Shuk-Den Affair: Origins of a Controversy," In *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*: Vol. 21, no.2, pp. 227-270.

**Week Six:**

***Tibetan Diaspora***

Joy Blakeslee & Adhe Tapontsang, *Ama Adhe: The Voice that Remembers, the Heroic Story of a Woman's Fight to Free Tibet*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, Part IV: An Unstilled Voice & Epilogues, pp. 189-250.

Toni Huber. "Shangri-la in Exile: Representations of Tibetan Identity and Transnational Culture," In Thierry Dodin & Heinz Räther. 2001. *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections and Fantasies*. Boston: Wisdom Publication, pp. 357-372.

Ann Frechette. 2004. "Friends of Tibet: Variations on a Theme of Liberal Humanism," In *Tibetans in Nepal: The Dynamics of International Assistance among a Community in Exile*. Berghahn Books: New York, pp. 92-119.

Excerpts from documentary *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* (2002)

**Week Seven:**

***Orientalists and Tibet***

Per Kvaerne. "Tibet Images among Researchers on Tibet", In Thierry Dodin & Heinz Räther. 2001. *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections and Fantasies*. Boston: Wisdom Publication, pp. 47-63.

Gustavo Benavides. "Giuseppe Tucci, or Buddhology in the Age of Fascism," In Donald Lopez (ed.). 1995. *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 161-196.

Donald Lopez. 1998. *Prisoners of Shangri-la*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, chapter 6.

Luciano Petech. "The Missions of Bogle and Turner according to Tibetan Texts" in *T'oung Pao* XXXIX (1950): 330-346.

**Graduate students:** Elliot Sperling. "'Orientalism' and Aspects of Violence in the Tibetan Tradition," In Thierry Dodin & Heinz Räther. 2001. *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections and Fantasies*. Boston: Wisdom Publication, pp. 317-330.

Emily Yeh. "Exile meets Homeland: politics, performance, and authenticity in the Tibetan Diaspora," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. Forthcoming. Used with permission of author, pp. 1-34.

**Week Eight:**

***Western cinematic representations of Tibet***

In class viewing and analysis of *Seven Years in Tibet*, *Kundun*, & select early documentary films

Peter H. Hansen. "Tibetan Horizon: Tibet and the Cinema in the Early Twentieth Century," In Thierry Dodin & Heinz R  ther. 2001. *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections and Fantasies*. Boston: Wisdom Publication, pp. 91-110  
Aislinn Scofield, "Tibet: Projections and Perceptions," In *East-West Film Journal* (1993): 106-136.

**Mini-research assignment:** Work in small groups. Bring in the name of **ten** films about Tibet. Find out where they were produced and who produced them. Are they readily available for viewing?

**Graduate student session:** to be arranged.

**Week Nine:**

*Midterm Review & Midterm*

### ***Block 3: Lhasa—the Heart of Tradition or Modernity?***

**Week Ten:**

*Monasteries or Museums? Tourism & Lhasa Culture*

Melvyn Goldstein. 1998. "The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung," In *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 15-52.  
Clare Harris. 2000. *In the Image of Tibet: Tibetan Painting after 1959*. Reaktion Books, pp.7-15, 150-191.  
Joshua Kurlantzick. "Tibet Now," In *New York Times*, Sunday Dec. 10, 2006.  
View website: [www.mechak.org](http://www.mechak.org)  
Instructor's materials on Tibetan nightclubs (*nang-ma*), Lhasa rock, Gesar today, *dram-snyan*, and the local art scene.

**Week Eleven**

*Lhasa, a New Chinese City?*

**Student assignment:** Go to the webpage of the Tibet Heritage Fund, click under THF works. Read about one of their projects and present it to the class.  
<http://www.tibetheritagefund.org/>

Robert Barnett. *Lhasa: Streets with Memories*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-69.  
Knud Larsen & Amund Sinding-Larsen. *The Lhasa Atlas*. Boston: Shambala, chapter 4: The Conservation and Future of Lhasa, pp. 150-164.

**Week Twelve**

*Chinese Perceptions of Tibet*

Per Kvaerne, "The Ideological Impact on Tibetan Art," In Robert Barnett & Shirin Akiner. 1996. *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers: Delhi, pp. 166-185.  
In class analysis and showing of *Horse Thief (Dao ma zei)* 1986 and *Red River Valley (Hong he gu)* 1997.

#### ***Block 4: Translating Culture: Amdo, Khams, & Beijing***

##### **Week Thirteen:**

##### ***Modern Tibetan fiction in Chinese***

Alai. 2003. *Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Books, Selected Readings.

Tashi Dawa. "Chimi, the Free Man" & "The Glory of the Windhorse," In Edward Batt & Tsering Sakya, eds. 2000. *Songs of the Snow Lion: Manoa*, 12:2. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 1-18, pp. 96-124.

Alice Grünfelder, "Tashi Dawa and Modern Tibetan Literature," In Helmut Krasser, et. al. ed 1997. *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Seventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Beitrage zur Kultur und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, No. 21, Wien: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Lara Maconi. "Lion of the Snowy Mountains, the Tibetan Poet Yi dan Tshe ring and his Chinese Poetry: Reconstructing Tibetan Cultural Identity in Chinese" In Christian Klieger, ed. 2002. *Tibet, Self and the Tibetan Diaspora: Voices of Difference*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, pp. 165-193.

##### **Week Fourteen:**

##### ***Amdo as a Center of Cultural Production***

Pema Bhum. "The Heartbeat of a New Generation: A Discussion of the New Poetry," In *Lungta* 12 (summer 1999), pp. 2-16.

Dhondrup Gyal. "Waterfall of Youth," In Edward Batt & Tsering Sakya, eds. 2000. *Songs of the Snow Lion: Manoa* 12:2. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 9-14.

Dhondrup Gyal. "A Blighted Flower," In Riika J. Virtanene, trans. & ed. 2000. *A Blighted Flower and Other Stories*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Tsering Shakya. "The Waterfall and Fragrant Flowers: The Development of Tibetan Literature Since 1950," In Edward Batt & Tsering Sakya, eds. *Manoa: Songs of the Snow Lion*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 28-40. (ERes)

Heather Stoddard, "Tibetan Publications and National Identity," In Robert Barnett & Shirin Akiner. 1996. *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers: Delhi, pp.121-155.

##### **Week Fifteen**

Trip to Tibetan Cultural Center—meeting with Arjia Rinpoche (subject to change)  
Writer's Workshop

##### **Week Sixteen**

Final paper due