

Columbia University

Rock in a Hard Place:

Cultural Innovation in Contemporary Tibet

Lecturer: Dr. Robert Barnett

Sessions: Mondays, 210-4.00pm

Class size: maximum 30 students, any level

The Course

Since Tibet was absorbed into the People's Republic of China some 50 years ago, it has undergone a turbulent and contested history. But since about 1990 the years of conflict and warfare over Tibet's status and sovereignty have increasingly given place to arguments about culture. International powers have been drawn into arguments about tradition, heritage, culture and continuity, and accusations of cultural extinction or degradation have become common, with many people saying that Tibetan culture as a distinctive entity had been lost from Tibet or wiped out, or replaced by a pale simulacrum. How useful or meaningful is this kind of narrative? Is it even possible or productive to describe contemporary Tibetan culture in a way that might not be part of in the political debate? And what is a culture anyway?

In this course, we study films, poems, stories, paintings, pop songs and other forms of cultural product that have been made by Tibetans in the last 3 or 4 decades, together with some made by others in their name or in their areas. We discuss questions of identity, survival, history and the politics of representation. We'll look at questions about cultures and continuity; about whether and how we as outsiders can come to understand or interpret the culture of a country whose language and history we may barely know; about the interplay of texts, politics, and power; and about ways of reading and interpreting artworks and the meanings that they generate in politically charged societies and communities.

The course will be primarily a seminar led by students, together with lectures. Besides theoretical and background readings, students will watch films and TV shows, study artworks, read stories and listen to pop songs. Translations will be provided and no previous knowledge of Tibetan or Chinese or of their histories is required.

Course Requirements

There are no prerequisites for this course. Any student can attend, and no previous knowledge of the area or of the relevant languages is required.

The course will consist of one session per week. Each session will begin with a 15 minute introduction, followed by a joint presentation by two students, who will then lead a discussion, lasting in total for one hour. The presenters can use a projector for powerpoint presentations or distribute handouts, if they wish. The discussion will be followed by a brief lecture. Images and film clips will be shown.

Students should attend classes regularly and participate in class sessions. Non-attendance or repeated late attendance will affect grades. You will be expected to complete all required readings before the classes, and to read or look briefly at optional pieces wherever possible. Most or all of the reading materials will be included in course packs or on the web, since some of them are hard to find. By each Sunday evening students will be required to post a brief comment on one or other of the required readings for the coming Monday's class. There will be at least one additional session for film viewings.

Assignments

1. Post your responses to one or more of the readings for the Monday class to the rest of the class, at least two paragraphs (Undergraduates) or one page (Graduates) in length.
2. Two students will each give at least one class presentation during the term, with their summary of and comments on a reading for that class, and will lead part or all of the discussion for that session.
3. There will be one take-home paper at mid-term.
4. One month before the end of the term, each student will submit a one page proposal for their research paper, due at the end of the term.
5. There will be a research paper requiring some basic library or similar research.

Reading List - Books

Required Texts

Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, Berkeley, University of California, 1989.
 Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Optional Texts:

Robert Barnett (ed.), *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994, pp. 285-89
 Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet – Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, Berkeley: University of California, 1998.

Readings which are out of print or difficult to obtain will be available in photocopy in the course packs or as files which you can access on the Columbia course website. Copies of the reading packs will be held on reserve at the East Asian Library. The correct, updated version of the syllabus and the web-readings are on the courseworks site.

Readings and Syllabus for each Session

The readings will be available on the web or in photocopy in the course packs. The reading load will be heavy at the beginning of the course, but lighter in the second half of term.

U means that this reading is required for undergraduate and graduate students.

G means that this reading is required for graduate students and should at least be skim-read by undergraduates

Optional readings: Some optional texts are listed here for reference only; you should treat this as a bibliography in case you want to further research in the future. You should try to read at least one optional reading and to skim the others wherever possible, even if you don't have time to read them in full. Presenters must read at least two of the optional readings for their week and produce a summary of their contents for the rest of the class.

Introduction

Session 1: Background to the course and the subject

Briefing papers will be handed out giving background information, including notes on pronunciation, spelling systems, chronology and geography.

Session 2: Tibetan History and Civilization: Key Representations

Web Readings

U Tomoko Masuzawa, "Culture" in Mark Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1998, pp. 70-93

U Wang Jiawei and Nyima Gyaincain. *The Historic Status of China's Tibet*, China Intercontinental Press, Beijing 1997. Chapters 7-8: "The Founding of the People's Republic of China and the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet." & "Armed Rebellion in Tibet Opposed the Democratic Reform Through Which Serfs Win Human Rights." (Internet).

U W.D. Shakapba, *Tibet: A Political History*, New York: Potala, 1984 (first published 1966), pp.23-53

U Tiley Chodag, *Tibet, The Land and the People*, New World Press, Beijing, 1988, pp. 3-21, 281-283

G Geoffrey Samuel: *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*, Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993, pp.3-13, 39-63.

G Melvyn Goldstein, "The Balance between Centralization and Decentralization in the Traditional Tibetan Political System: An Essay on the Nature of Tibetan Political Macro-Structure", in *Central Asiatic Journal*, xv (1971), pp. 170-82.

Optional/For Reference:

Turrell Wylie: "Reincarnation: a Political Innovation", in *Proceedings of the Csoma de Koros Memorial eSymposium*, ed. Louis Ligeti, Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1978,

David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, Boston: Shambhala, 1986 (first ed. c.1968) pp. 177-203 (see reading pack)

Melvyn Goldstein, "Religious Conflict in the Traditional Tibetan State" in Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne, (eds.), *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, Lewiston, Maine: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, pp.231-247 (see reading pack)

Georges Dreyfus: "Proto-nationalism in Tibet", Per Kvaerne (ed.), *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Vol.1, Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994, pp. 205-218 (see reading pack)

Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, pp.1-43, 69-83 .

Uradyn E. Bulag, "From Inequality to Difference: Colonial Contradictions of Class and Ethnicity in 'Socialist' China" in "*Post-colonialism and Its Discontents*", special issue of *Cultural Studies*, 2000

Pictures: early Tibetan emperors, kings and palaces

Session 3: The Commissar: CCP Views on Art

U Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" in Bonnie McDougall, *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*, Ann Arbor 1980, pp. 36-41, 53-67, 82-85 (see reading pack)

U Geremie R. Barmé, *In the Red, On Contemporary Chinese Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp, 273-287, 333-344 (see reading pack)

G Chen Kuiyuan, *Lantian baixue* ('Blue Sky, White Snow'), Beijing Chubanshe, Beijing, 1999 (selections in translation)

U Chen Kuiyuan, "Speech on Literature and Art", delivered 11th July 1997; as published by *Xizang Ribao* ("Tibet Daily"), Lhasa, 16th July 1997; published in translation as "Tibet party secretary criticizes "erroneous views" of literature, art" in *The BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 4th August 1997

Optional:

Deng Xiaoping, "Congratulatory Speech at the Fourth National Literary Representatives' Meeting"....

Pictures: Images, signs and architecture; websites and blogs. See Transational China site at Rice

Session 4: Chinese Representations of Minority Culture

Web Readings

U Dru Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities" in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 53 (1), 1994, pp 92-123

U Ma Yin, "Introduction" in Ma Yin (ed.), *China's Minority Nationalities*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989

U Stevan Harrell, "Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them", in Stevan Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, Seattle: University of Washington, 1995, pp. 3-36 (see reading pack)

G Jin Binggao, "When Does The Word 'Minority Nationality' [*shaoshu minzu*] [First] Appear in Our Country?", *Bulletin of the History of the Tibet Communist Party*, 1988 Vol. 1 (No.19 of the General Series), 5th January 1988, pp. 45ff., published in translation in *Background Papers on Tibet - September 1992*, Part 2 London: Tibet Information Network, 1992 (extracted from Jin Binggao's article in *Minzu Tuanjie* ("Nationality Solidarity"), Volume 6, 1987)

U Ma Jian, "Show me the colour of your tongue or Fuck All" in Geremie Barmé and John Minford (eds.), *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*, New York: Noonday, 1989", Hill and Wang New York 1988, pp. 414-416, 432-452, including editor's introduction (Also translated as "Stick Out the Fur on Your Tongue or It's All a Void" in Herbert Batt (ed.), *Tales Of Tibet: Sky Burials, Prayer Wheels, And Wind Horses*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001) (see reading pack)

Optional/Reference:

Almaz Khan, "Who Are the Mongols? State, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Representation in the PRC" in Melissa Brown, (ed.), *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*, Berkeley, CA: East Asian Institute, University of California, 1995, pp. 125-159 (see reading pack)

Louisa Schein, "Performing Modernity" in *Cultural Anthropology*, 14 (3), 1997, pp. 361-395 (see reading pack)

Frank Dikötter, "Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations" in Frank Dikötter (ed.), *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1997, pp. 12-18, 25-33 (see reading pack)

Barry Sautman, "Myths of Descent, Racial Nationalism and Ethnic Minorities in the People's Republic of China", in Frank Dikötter (ed.), *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1997, pp.75-77, 91-95

Vincanne Adams, "Karaoke as Modern Lhasa, Tibet: Western Encounters with Cultural Politics", in *Cultural Anthropology*, 11 (4), 1996, pp. 510-546 (see reading pack)

Pictures: See Stefan Landsberger's site on CCP posters.

Session 5: Religion and the post-1980 religious revival of Buddhism in Tibet

U David Germano, "Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet: Contemporary Tibetan Visionary Movements in the People's Republic of China" in Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet – Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, Berkeley: University of California, 1998, pp. 53-95

U Pama Namgyal, "Lamaism in the Tibetan Autonomous Region" in James D. Seymour and Eugen Wehrli, "Religion in China", in *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol.26, No.3, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Spring 1994, pp. 61-72

U Donald McInnis, *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989, pp.7-10, 20-22, 32-34, 154-156, 165-172, 367-374, 403-405 (see reading pack)

Optional:

Anon. "Nang khul gyi dus deb yin bas nyar chags bya rgyud do snang byed dgos" in *Bod sjongs 'phrin deb* ("Tibet Information Book"), Volume 9, pp. 39ff., partially published in translation as "The Heroes of Ling: Elimination of a Sect" (including postscript by John Hillary) in *Background Papers on Tibet - September 1992*, Part 2, London: Tibet Information Network, 1992, pp. 30-33

Lawrence Epstein and Peng Weibin, "Ritual, Ethnicity and Generational Identity" in Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet – Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, Berkeley: University of California, 1998, pp. 120-138

Guiseppa Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Roma: Libreria dello Stato. Vol.1, 1949, pp 17-24 (see reading pack)

Pictures: Religious activities in Tibet

Session 6: Modern Literature and the Dispute over Chinese Tibetan and Tibetan Tibetan

Web Readings:

U Tsering Shakya, "Introductory Essay: The Waterfall and Fragrant Flowers" in *Song of the Snow Lion - Special Focus: New Writing from Tibet*, *Manoa* 12.2, 2000 (Issue on contemporary Tibetan literature), available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/toc/man12.2.html>

U Heather Stoddard, "Don grub rgyal (1953-1985): Suicide of a Modern Tibetan Writer and Scholar" in Per Kvaerne (ed.), *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994, pp. 825-34

G Pema Bhum, (Ronald Schwartz, translator) "The Heartbeat of a New Generation: A Discussion of the New Poetry," in *Lungta* (special issue on Modern Tibetan Literature), Dharamsala: Amnyemachen, May 1999

U Anonymous (Adrian Moon, translator), "A Monk's Story," published in translation in *Background Papers on Tibet - September 1992*, Part 2, London: Tibet Information Network, 1992, p.20-26

U Dhondup Gyal (Tsering Shakya, translator) "The Waterfall" (from *Manoa*, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/v012/12.2cover_art00.html *Song of the Snow Lion*) (available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/toc/man12.2.html>)

U Tashi Pelden (Yangdon Dhondup, translator) "Tomorrow's Weather Will be Better" (*Manoa*, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/v012/12.2cover_art00.html *Song of the Snow Lion*) (available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/toc/man12.2.html>)

U Yangtso Kyi (Lauran Hartley, translator), "Journal of the Grassland" (from *Manoa*, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/v012/12.2cover_art00.html *Song of the Snow Lion*) (available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/toc/man12.2.html>)

Optional/Reference

Heather Stoddard, "Tibetan Publications and National Identity" in Robert Barnett (ed.), *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994, pp. 121-157

Session 6: Course Assessment

Quiz on information covered so far in the course, and class discussion about issues raised so far.

Session 8: Chinese Tibetan? Modern Sinophone Literature by Tibetans

U Tashi Dawa (Herbert Batt, translator) "The Glory of the Wind Horse" in http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/v012/12.2cover_art00.html *Song of the Snow Lion - Special Focus: New Writing from Tibet*, *Manoa* 12.2, 2000 (available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/toc/man12.2.html>)

U Yidam Tsering (Herbert Batt, translator) "Two Poems" (from *Manoa*, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/v012/12.2cover_art00.html *Song of the Snow Lion*) (available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/toc/man12.2.html>)

U Ma Lihua, *Glimpses of Northern Tibet*, Beijing: Panda Books, 1991, pp. 6-11, 106-111, 242-257, 262-265, 313-313 (see reading pack)

G Alai, *Red Poppies*, trans. Howard Goldblatt, chapters 1-2.

U Patricia Schiaffini, "The language divide: identity and literary choices in modern Tibet", *Journal of International Affairs*, March 2004

Optional/Reference

Alice Grunfelder (in manuscript - title to be completed)

Laura Marconi, "Yidam Tsering", in *Journal of Latse Library*, 2006 (title to be completed)

Session 9: Modern Art: Socialist Realism and the Sweet Teahouse Group

U Clare Harris, *In the Image of Tibet: Tibetan Painting after 1959*, Reaktion Books, 2000, pp.7-15, 150-191

U Tsewang Tashi, "20th Century Tibetan Painting", in Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwartz (eds), *Tibetan Modernities*, Brill, Leiden (forthcoming). Available in ms.

G Leigh Sangster Miller, "Contemporary Art and Collective Memory in Lhasa", Paper presented at the Xith Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Bonn, 2006. Available in ms.

Optional:

Per Kvaerne, "The ideological impact on Tibetan art" in Robert Barnett (ed.), *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994, pp. 166-185

Clare Harris, "Struggling with Shangri-La: a Tibetan artist in exile" in Frank J. Korom (ed.), *Constructing Tibetan culture. Contemporary perspectives*, Québec: World Heritage Press, 1997, pp. 160-177

Pictures: Han Zhuli, Gade, Nyima Tsering, Tsewang Tashi, Nortse. See Mechak website.

Session 10: Tibetan Modernity: images, language and programming on Tibet TV

Video: Extracts from Tibet TV

Additional viewing session to watch TV Dramas

Session 11: Television drama series: The Rise of Local Family Dramas

TV Films:

Lhasa wangshi (Lha sa'i 'da sor gdam rgyud, or Lha sa'i sngon byung gdam rgyud? Old times in Lhasa), CCTV/Tibet TV, 2001

Xiangwang Lasa (Lha sar phyogs pa - In the direction of Lhasa, Tibet TV, 2002)

- U* Yangdon, "God Without Gender" in Herbert Batt, *Tales of Tibet: Sky Burials, Prayer Wheels, And Wind Horses*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001, pp. 177-88, 266-67
- U* Lisa B. Rofel, "Yearnings": Televisual Love and Melodramatic Politics in Contemporary China", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Nov., 1994), pp. 700-722
- G* Sheldon H. Lu, "Soap Opera in China: The Transnational Politics of Visuality, Sexuality and Masculinity", *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Autumn 2000), pp. 25-47
- U* Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, University of California Press, 1989, pp. 186-212

Additional viewing session to watch Films

Session 12: Films

Magpa (Tibet TV)

The Silent Mani-Stone (dir. Wanma Caidan, 2005)

Longing (dir. Phagmo Tashi, 1993)

- U* Robert Barnett: "The Secret *Secret*: Cinema, Ethnicity and Seventeenth Century Tibetan-Mongolian Relations", in *Inner Asia*, vol 4, no 2, Winter 2002, pp. 277-346
- U* Poshek Fu, "The Ambiguity of Entertainment: Chinese Cinema in Japanese-occupied Shanghai, 1941-1945", *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Autumn 1997), pp. 66-84
- U* Andrei Plesu, "Intellectual Life Under Dictatorship," *Representations*, 1995, Number 49, pp. 61-71.
- G* Han Ju Kwak, "Discourse on Modernization in 1990s Korean Cinema" in Jenny Kwok Wah Lau (ed.), *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2003, pp. 90-113
- G* Ljangbu, "A History of Tibetan Film". Available in manuscript.

Session 13: Pop Music

- U* Yangdon Dhondup, "Dancing to the Beat of Modernity: The Rise and Development of Tibetan Pop Music" in Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwartz (eds), *Tibetan Modernities*, Brill, Leiden (forthcoming). Available in ms.
- U* Nimrod Baranovitch, *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics, 1978-1997*, University of California, Berkeley, 2003, pp. 54-107 (extracts)
- G* Gregory Lee, "'The East is Red' goes pop: commodification, hybridity and nationalism in Chinese popular song and its televisual performance", *Popular Music* (1995), 14/1

Music and lyrics: Tseten Drolma, Dechen Wangmo, Dadron, Yadong, Namchak.

Session 14: Assessment and Conclusion

Discussion about the course, final research papers and the findings of the research so far.