World Cultures: Tibet (V55.0530)
Instructor: Meg McLagan
SILVER (Main) Building, Room 713
Tuesdays and Thursday 11:00 - 12:45

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 pm   Teaching assistants: Ilka Datig
25 Waverly Place, Room 506   Barney Murray
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Course description
Tibet is home to a unique form of Buddhism which has both repelled and attracted foreigners for centuries. As a result, Tibet has frequently been conceived and constructed by outsiders as a sort of "counterpoint" to various modernities, whether they be Western, Chinese, Indian, or diasporic Tibetan. We will examine this phenomenon, focusing on the role religion has played in shaping Tibetan interactions with the outside world and the problems its singularity has posed for analysts of 20th century Tibetan history and politics. Topics include the religio-political system of pre-1950 Tibet, rule by incarnation and the Dalai Lama, mass monasticism, and the ongoing transformation of these institutions under Chinese rule. Readings will be organized around a number of "encounters"—with missionaries, colonial officials, explorers, traders, scholars, and activists, as well as with ideas. Primary and secondary accounts of these encounters, along with Western and Chinese cultural materials, will be analyzed using theoretical frameworks drawn from postcolonial critiques of orientalism as well as contemporary cultural and literary theory on globalization processes and the uneven transactions or exchanges of difference that define them. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how Tibetans historically have played an active role in shaping various modernities, including their own.

Course requirements
Students will be asked to write five short papers (3 pages) which will be due at even intervals throughout the semester. In addition, students will conduct a mini-research project on Tibetan businesses in the Greenwich Village area. Grades for the course will be based on papers (75%-15% each) and attendance, and participation in the research project (25%).

Books:
Bhum, Pema (translated by Lauran R. Hartley) Six stars with a crooked neck: Tibetan memoirs of the cultural revolution.

You will also be required to purchase a course packet at New University Copy Shop, 11 Waverly Place. 473-7369.

Week 1 Introduction
January 21
Overview of the course
January 23 Tibetan Buddhism

PART ONE: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN PRE-1950 TIBET

Week 2 Religions of Tibet
January 28 Tibetan Buddhism in practice

January 30 Mass monasticism

Question for essay #1 will be handed out in class

Week 3 Rule by incarnation
February 4 The four sects
The political role of the four sects in Tibetan history. Hugh Richardson.

February 6 The Institution of the Dalai Lama
Essay #1 due in class
Film: Compassion in Exile. Mickey Lemle. 1992. 60 min.

PART TWO: ENCOUNTERS WITH POWERFUL OTHERS

Week 4 Religious observers
February 11 Western Buddhism

February 13 Missionaries

Week 5 Ritual, religion, and politics
February 18 Mongol and Central Asian Patronage
February 20  The Anglo-Tibetan encounter
*Question for essay #2 will be handed out in class*

**Week 6  Imposters and adventurers**
February 25  The story of Lobsang Rampa

February 27  Romantic travellers
*Question for essay #2 will be handed out in class*

*Essay #2 due*

**PART THREE: ENCOUNTERS WITH NEW IDEAS**

**Week 7  Tibetan moderns I: Religious reformers**
March 4  The 13th Dalai Lama
Guest speaker Tashi Tsering, Library of Tibetan Archives, Dharamsala, India

March 6  Tibetan nationalism

**Week 8  Tibetan moderns II: The emergence of secular intellectuals**
March 11  Gedun Choephel
Heather Stoddard.

March 13  Ragpa Pangdatsang
chapter from Carole McGranahan ms.
*Question for essay #3 will be handed out in class*

**Week 9  Spring break  March 17-21**
PART FOUR: TIBET AFTER 1959

Week 10 Tibet and the Cold War
March 25 Chushi Gangdrug: The Tibetan Resistance
Essay #3 due

March 27 Encounters with the CIA

Week 11 Life under Chinese rule
April 1 The Cultural Revolution

April 3 Women and resistance
Guest speaker: Robbie Barnett, Columbia University

Week 12 Negotiating Tibetan modernity in the post-Mao era
April 8 Creating a public sphere in Amdo
“Inventing modernity” in Amdo: Views on the role of Traditional Tibetan culture in a developing society.

Question for essay #4 will be handed out in class

April 10 Buddhism in the post-1950 period

Week 13 Tibetan Buddhism in the diaspora
April 15 Reincarnation in exile
Film: The reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche. Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin. 62 min. 1991.
Essay #4 due

April 17 Dharma Bums: Transmission to the West

**Week 14 Mediating Shangri-la**
April 22 Encounters with Hollywood
Screen film clips: Kundun, Seven Years in Tibet

April 24 Contemporary Tibetan perspectives
Dances with wolves. Jamyang Norbu. Tibetan Review

**Week 15 Rewriting Tibet**
April 29 Modern Tibetan literature
Guest speaker: Lauran Hartley
Themes of tradition and change in modern Tibetan literature. Lauran R. Hartley.


May 1 Last class
*Question for essay #5 will be handed out in class

May 8 *Essay #5 due