

M.PHIL. IN BUDDHIST STUDIES: COURSE DETAILS

Course organiser: Prof. Stefano Zacchetti
Academic Year 2016-17

YEAR 1

In their first year, students will mainly focus on the study of their primary Buddhist language (Sanskrit, Classical Chinese, or Tibetan), while at the same time acquiring a basic knowledge of Buddhist thought and history (Introduction to Buddhism).

1. Language training

1.a Classical Chinese (3 hours per week in Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity Terms; Prof. Robert Chard)

All students selecting Chinese as a primary Buddhist language are required to follow a general course in Classical Chinese for a three-hour qualifying examination at the end of the third term. Normally instruction would be the standard class in elementary Classical Chinese for undergraduates and graduates, but for students with previous knowledge it may take the form of more advanced lectures and/or text classes. Students will develop the skill of translating from Classical Chinese to English.

The qualifying examination paper will consist of prepared and unprepared passages in Classical Chinese for translation into English.

1.b Sanskrit (3 hours per week in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, 2 hours per week in Trinity Term; Prof. James Benson)

The course book for the first year course in Sanskrit is *Teach Yourself Sanskrit* by M.A. Coulson, which is fairly widely available, and gives good advice on auxiliary material. It is unnecessary to know any Sanskrit before beginning the course (though students may find it valuable to familiarise themselves with devanagari, the script in which Sanskrit is usually printed). A basic knowledge of English grammar is however essential. For more advanced students of Indology, ability to read French is virtually essential, and German hardly less valuable, so that the best preparation for this course may well be to acquire a reading knowledge of those languages.

1. Texts for the first two terms: C. R. Lanman, *Sanskrit Reader*, pp. 1-34, l. 11. *Bhagavad-Gītā* (ed. Belvalkar), Books II, IV, VI, and XI. Other texts will be taught in Trinity Term.
2. Grammar: the subject will be studied from M. A. Coulson, *Teach Yourself Sanskrit*; A. A. Macdonell, *Sanskrit Grammar for Students*.

1.c Tibetan (5 hours per week in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, 2 hours per week in Trinity Term; Prof. Ulrike Roesler, Mr. Tsering Gonkatsang)

Term 1 – The emphasis in the early stages of the course will be on the acquisition of language, with five hours of elementary Tibetan per week. The teaching will be based primarily on Nicolas Tournadre and Sangda Dorje's *Manual of Standard Tibetan* (Ithaca, Snow Lion Publications, 2003). It is expected that, within the first two weeks, students will have grasped the essential features of Tibetan phonology, and learned the alphabet and the principles of syllable structure. The remaining weeks of term will cover lessons 1 to 10 of the *Manual*.

Homework will consist of completing the grammar exercises that follow each lesson. There will also be a brief vocabulary test each week.

Term 2 – Hilary term will begin with a one-hour collection (minor examination) to ensure that the lessons of the first term have been retained. Collections will be held at the beginning of every term hereafter. The aim of the language course this term is to complete and revise lessons 1-15 of the *Manual*, and to read a number of short pieces from different sources in modern and/or classical Tibetan.

The Tibetan Language Instructor is going to do exercises in reading and speaking the colloquial language.

Term 3 – During Trinity term, work on the *Manual* will continue up to lesson 20. Extracts from a range of texts will be read and knowledge of grammar further developed. Students are not obliged to attend any further classes in spoken Tibetan offered by the language instructor, although they are free to do so if they wish.

2. Introduction to Buddhism (Prof. Stefano Zacchetti)

During the first year of the MPhil, students are required to attend the following series of lectures (with related tutorials):

- *Foundations of Buddhism (Buddhism I)* (eight lectures and four tutorials in Michaelmas Term).

Basic reading list:

1. Conze E, I.B. Horner, D. Snellgrove and A. Whaley eds. *Buddhist Texts Through The Ages One World* 1995.
2. Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* OUP 1998.
3. Rupert Gethin (tr.), *Sayings of the Buddha. New Translations from the Pali Nikayas* OUP 2008.
4. Richard Gombrich, *What the Buddha Thought* Equinox 2009.
5. Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism* 2nd. ed. Routledge 2006.
6. Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism* CUP 1990.
7. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* One World edition 1997.
8. Paul Williams (with Anthony Tribe), *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* Routledge 2000.

Other texts will be suggested by the course instructor.

- *Buddhism in Space and Time (Buddhism II)* (eight lectures and four tutorials in Hilary Term; four tutorials in Trinity Term).

Basic reading list:

1. Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich (eds.), *The World of Buddhism* Thames and Hudson 1984.
2. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* Princeton University Press, 1964.
3. David Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest* CUP 1992.
4. Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism* 2nd. ed. Routledge 2006.
5. John Powers *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* rev. ed. Snow Lion 2007.
6. Melford Spiro, *Buddhism and Society* University of California Press 2nd. ed. 1982.
7. Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900-1950* Harvard University Press 1967.
8. Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism* 2nd. ed. Routledge 2009.

Other texts will be suggested by the course instructor.

Year 1 – Assessment (Qualifying Examination)

Students must pass a qualifying examination not later than the end of the third term from the commencement of the course. The examination will consist of two papers:

- (i) A three-hour examination in the chosen primary Buddhist Language (either Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Classical Chinese).
- (ii) A three-hour examination on basic aspects of Buddhist thought and history.

Students are not allowed to proceed to the second part of the course (year 2) unless they pass this examination.

YEAR 2

In their second year, students will move on to the study of important Buddhist texts in the original language they are specializing in (Reading Buddhist texts in primary languages). Concurrently, they will deepen their understanding of Buddhism through lectures and tutorials exploring fundamental aspects of its literature and thought, and discussing the relevant research approaches and methodological issues (Approaches to the study of Buddhism).

In addition, students are also required to choose an optional subject. This could be either a language paper in a second primary Buddhist language, or a paper chosen from a list (see below). Apart from taught courses, students will also work on their thesis. All candidates must make a written application for approval of the topic no later than Monday of eighth week of Hilary Term (of the second year).

1. Reading Buddhist texts in primary languages

1.a Chinese (Prof. Stefano Zacchetti)

Students who have studied classical Chinese in their first year will now read, in weekly classes, passages from Buddhist texts in Chinese (these could be both translations from Indic originals and texts composed in Chinese). The aim of the course is to introduce students to the main linguistic and stylistic features of Buddhist Chinese literature as reflected by its various forms (translations, commentaries, treatises, historiographical works etc.).

1.b Sanskrit (Prof. Stefano Zacchetti)

The course consists of weekly classes devoted to reading and interpreting selected Buddhist texts (especially Mahāyāna *sūtras*) written in different varieties of Buddhist Sanskrit. The course aims at introducing students to the study of Buddhist literature in Sanskrit, paying particular attention to philological and doctrinal issues.

1.c Tibetan (Prof. Ulrike Roesler)

In this course students will read selected passages from Tibetan Buddhist texts. The course will provide an introduction to the features of literary Tibetan in general and Tibetan translations from Sanskrit originals in particular, introduce some basic Buddhist terminology in Tibetan, and give students experience in translating Buddhist texts from the Tibetan. The

course will enable students to read Tibetan Buddhist literature on their own with the help of a dictionary.

2 Approaches to the study of Buddhism (Prof. Stefano Zacchetti)

During the second year students are required to attend the following series of lectures (with related tutorials):

- *Approaches to the Study of Buddhism* (four lectures and four tutorials in each of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms).

3. Optional paper

3.a Second primary Buddhist language

The optional paper students are required to choose in their second year can be a second primary Buddhist language (Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Classical Chinese). This can be studied either at a basic or at an advanced level. The former will be assessed by a three-hour examination in the chosen second primary Buddhist language; the latter by a translation from seen and unseen texts in the chosen second primary Buddhist language, to be assessed by a three-hour examination. Students who intend to study a second primary Buddhist language at an advanced level must satisfy the Faculty Board that they possess an adequate knowledge of the chosen language.

3.b Other optional subjects

Alternatively, students can choose an optional paper (assessed as specified by the course instructor) from the following list:

1. *Advanced Themes and Theories in the Study of Religion* – Prof. Sondra Hausner (MSt in Study of Religions). The paper will be assessed by a three-hour examination.
2. *Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy* – Prof. Jan Westerhoff. This paper provides an overview of the development of Buddhist thought in India during the first millennium CE. It will focus on the four main schools of Indian Buddhism, Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and the logico-epistemological school, analyzing their specific views and arguments in their historical context of intra-Buddhist discussion and debate with non-Buddhist Indian philosophical schools. The teaching for the paper consists of eight lectures (“Foundations of Buddhist thought”), given in Michaelmas Term or Hilary Term, and four graduate classes in Trinity Term. The paper will be assessed by a three-hour written examination at the end of Trinity Term.
3. *Pali* – Dr Andrew Skilton (subject to availability of teaching).
4. *History and Civilization of Tibet and the Himalaya* (Michaelmas and Hilary terms) – Prof. Ulrike Roesler. This option is only available to students who take Tibetan as their first primary Buddhist language. The teaching for this paper consists of eight lectures in Michaelmas Term and a set of four tutorials. The paper will be assessed by a three-hour written examination.
5. A language paper in advanced Classical Chinese – Prof. Barend ter Haar (for students who take Chinese as their first primary Buddhist language). The paper will be assessed by a three-hour written examination.
6. Any other subject approved by the Board of Oriental Studies.

Some of these options will be subject to the availability of teaching each year.

Applications for approval of the chosen topic must be sent to the Senior Academic Administrator on or before the Monday in second week of Michaelmas Full Term preceding the examination.

Year 2 – Assessment (Final Examination)

The Final Examination, to be taken in the Trinity Term of the second year, will have four components:

- (i) an advanced language paper consisting in a translation from seen and unseen texts in the chosen primary Buddhist Language, to be assessed by a three-hour examination.
- (ii) a thesis of not more than 20,000 words on a subject approved by the Board.
- (iii) a paper on Approaches to the study of Buddhism, to be assessed by a three-hour examination.
- (iv) *Either*
 - (a) A language paper in a second primary Buddhist language (either Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Classical Chinese), to be assessed by a three-hour examination (see the description above).
- *Or*
 - (b) An optional paper chosen from the list given above.

NOTE: the examination regulations relating to all Oriental Studies courses are available at <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/> . If there is a conflict between information in any of the faculty handbooks and the exam regulations, you should always follow the exam regulations. If you have any concerns please contact academic@administrator.ox.ac.uk. The information in this handbook is accurate as at 1st October 2016, however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges . If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes. Students will also be informed.