MODULE DESCRIPTION

Module title	Code
Introduction to Tibetan History, Culture and Philosophy Įvadas į Tibeto istoriją, kultūrą ir filosofiją	

Teacher	Unit
Co-ordinating: dr. Tėja Snuviškė	Vilnius University, Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies, Universiteto 5, LT-01513 Vilnius

Cycle of studies	Level of module	Type of module
1st cycle	1/1	Optional

Mode of implementation	Period of instruction	Language of instruction
Lectures / seminars	Autumn semester	English

Requirements for students	
Prerequisites: none	**Additional requirements (if any):** none

Module volume in credits	Total student workload	Contact hours	Independent study hours
5	133	32	101

Aim of module: competences developed by the study programme		
This module introduces the history, culture and philosophy of Tibet in their wider Asian contexts, from the emergence of the Tibetan Empire to the present. It examines political and social change; the transmission and transformation of Buddhism and the development of Bön; Tibetan language, literature, art and intellectual culture; and major philosophical traditions and debates. Particular attention is given to Madhyamaka, Buddhist epistemology, scholastic debate, and contemplative traditions. Through engagement with translated primary sources, visual materials and authoritative academic scholarship, students develop historical understanding, philosophical literacy, intercultural awareness and the ability to construct evidence-based arguments. Participation in seminars and critical discussion is expected.		
Learning outcomes of the module	**Study methods**	**Assessment methods**
Establish a critical chronology of Tibetan history from the imperial period to the present, identifying major changes and relationships with neighbouring Asian societies.	Lectures; historical maps and timelines; guided reading of translated historical sources.	Final written examination; seminar discussions.

Explain the formation and development of Tibetan Buddhist and Bön traditions, and their relationships with political, social and cultural institutions.	Lectures; comparative reading; seminar discussion.	Final written examination; written work.
Identify, explain and compare central concepts and arguments in Tibetan philosophy, including emptiness, the two truths, Buddhist epistemology, scholastic reasoning and contemplative approaches.	Lectures; close reading of philosophical texts in translation; analytical seminars.	Final written examination; written work.
Analyse Tibetan cultural production through literary, visual and social sources, including canonical literature, book culture, ritual, art, medicine and gendered experiences.	Case studies; image and text analysis; interdisciplinary discussion.	Final written examination; written work.
Critically assess historical and philosophical sources, distinguishing primary evidence from later interpretation and recognising the influence of translation, historiography and political context.	Source comparison; guided debate; methodological discussion.	Final written examination; written work.
Formulate an appropriate research question and produce a coherent, independent argument supported by relevant academic literature and accurate citation.	Individual consultations; bibliographic research; supervised academic writing.	Written work (30%): argument, source use, structure and scholarly presentation.

Topics	**Contact hours**							**Independent study time and assignments**	
	Lectures	Consultations	Seminars	Exercises	Laboratory work	Practice	Total contact hours	Independent work	**Assignments**
1. Tibet in space and time: historical sources and the imperial period. Geography and historical regions; forms of evidence and historical method; Tibetan state formation and the Empire (seventh–ninth centuries); Dunhuang; interactions with neighbouring societies.	2		2				**4**	**14**	van Schaik (2011); Dotson (2009); Tuttle and Schaeffer (2013). Historical map and translated-source analysis.
2. Buddhism and Bön in Tibetan history. Early Buddhist transmissions; the post-imperial period and later dissemination; monastic and tantric lineages; religious communities and their evolving institutions; historical accounts and self-representations of Bön.	2						**2**	**12**	Kapstein (2006, 2013); Davidson (2005); Kværne (1995). Compare two historical interpretations.
3. Political and social history from the Mongol period to the present. Sakya–Mongol relations, the Ganden Phodrang and the Dalai Lama institution; Tibet under Qing rule; imperial rivalries; twentieth-century transformations; the PRC, exile and diaspora; historical controversies.	2		2				**4**	**14**	van Schaik (2011); Goldstein (1997); Shakya (1999). Compare competing historical narratives.

4. Tibetan language, literature and intellectual culture. Tibetan script and translation practices; the Kangyur and Tengyur; textual genres, commentaries, biographies and histories; manuscripts, printing and the transmission of knowledge; interpretation and translation.	2		2				**4**	**14**	Schaeffer et al. (2013); Cabezón (1994); Schaeffer (2009). Analyse a literary or historical source.
5. The philosophical foundations of Tibetan Buddhism. Indian Buddhist inheritances; Abhidharma, Yogācāra and Madhyamaka; emptiness, dependent origination and the two truths; epistemology (pramāṇa), reasoning and monastic debate; philosophical inquiry and liberation.	2		4				**6**	**16**	Kapstein (2013); Dreyfus (2003, 1997); Thakchoe (2007). Close reading of philosophical arguments.
6. Tibetan philosophical traditions and intellectual debates. Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug in historical perspective; interpretations of Madhyamaka; Tsongkhapa and Gorampa; tantra, Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen; the relationship between philosophical analysis and contemplative practice.	2		2				**4**	**12**	Thakchoe (2007); Karmay (1988); Powers (2007). Compare two philosophical positions.
7. Cultural worlds of Tibet. Household and monastic life; pilgrimage, ritual and festivals; religious painting, sculpture and architecture; women and gender; Tibetan medicine and systems of knowledge; cultural diversity and continuity across Tibetan regions.	2						**2**	**9**	Gyatso and Havnevik (2006); Gyatso (2015); Jackson (1996). Visual and social-history case study.
8. Supervised written work. Selection and refinement of a research question; identification and evaluation of primary and secondary sources; bibliographic research; argument development, academic citation, feedback and revision.		6					**6**	**10**	Independent literature review, source analysis, drafting and revision of the written work.
Total:	**14**	**6**	**12**				**32**	**101**	

Assessment strategy	Weight, %	Assessment time	Assessment criteria
Final written examination	70	During the examination session	The ten-point grading scale and cumulative assessment system apply. The written examination tests knowledge of Tibetan historical chronology and context, major philosophical concepts and arguments, and the analysis of historical, literary and philosophical sources. Students answer theoretical and source-based questions and respond to analytical problems. Assessment considers factual accuracy, conceptual clarity, the appropriate use of evidence, and the ability to formulate and defend a reasoned argument.
			The examination contributes 70% of the final grade.

Written work	30	Submitted during the examination session	An analytical paper (approximately 6,000 characters, including spaces, footnotes and bibliography) presenting a focused, independent argument on a question in Tibetan history, culture or philosophy. Assessment considers critical source use, methodological awareness, the quality and coherence of the argument, accuracy, academic English and consistent scholarly citation.

Author	**Year of publication**	**Title**	**Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication**	**Publishing place and house or a web link**
Compulsory reading list				
van Schaik, Sam	2011	*Tibet: A History*		Yale University Press
Kapstein, Matthew T.	2006	*The Tibetans*		Blackwell Publishing
Schaeffer, Kurtis R.; Kapstein, Matthew T.; Tuttle, Gray (eds.)	2013	*Sources of Tibetan Tradition*		Columbia University Press
Tuttle, Gray; Schaeffer, Kurtis R. (eds.)	2013	*The Tibetan History Reader*		Columbia University Press
Kapstein, Matthew T.	2013	*Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*		Oxford University Press
Dreyfus, Georges B. J.	2003	*The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*		University of California Press
Cabezón, José Ignacio	1994	*Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism*		State University of New York Press
Thakchoe, Sonam	2007	*The Two Truths Debate: Tsongkhapa and Gorampa on the Middle Way*		Wisdom Publications
Schaeffer, Kurtis R.	2009	*The Culture of the Book in Tibet*		Columbia University Press
Additional reading list				
Beckwith, Christopher I.	1987	*The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages*		Princeton University Press
Dotson, Brandon	2009	*The Old Tibetan Annals: An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History*		Austrian Academy of Sciences Press
Davidson, Ronald M.	2005	*Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture*		Columbia University Press

Goldstein, Melvyn C.	1997	*The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*		University of California Press
Shakya, Tsering	1999	*The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*		Columbia University Press
Smith, E. Gene	2001	*Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*		Wisdom Publications
Cabezón, José Ignacio; Jackson, Roger R. (eds.)	1996	*Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*		Snow Lion Publications
Karmay, Samten G.	1988	*The Great Perfection (rDzogs chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*		Brill
Dreyfus, Georges B. J.	1997	*Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations*		State University of New York Press
Powers, John	2007	*Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*	Revised edition	Snow Lion Publications
Kværne, Per	1995	*The Bon Religion of Tibet: The Iconography of a Living Tradition*		Shambhala Publications
Gyatso, Janet; Havnevik, Hanna (eds.)	2006	*Women in Tibet: Past and Present*		Columbia University Press
Gyatso, Janet	2015	*Being Human in a Buddhist World: An Intellectual History of Medicine in Early Modern Tibet*		Columbia University Press
Jackson, David	1996	*A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions*		Austrian Academy of Sciences Press
Lopez, Donald S., Jr.	1998	*Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*		University of Chicago Press
Samuel, Geoffrey	1993	*Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*		Smithsonian Institution Press
Kapstein, Matthew T.	2001	*Reason's Traces: Identity and Interpretation in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Thought*		Wisdom Publications
Gyatso, Janet	1998	*Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary*		Princeton University Press