Course Code: TSTD 101

Course Title: Buddhist Philosophy and Hermeneutics I

Semester, Year: Fall 2024

Schedule:

**On-Campus:**
- Main Lecture: Mon to Fri 11:30am – 1:00pm
- Review class: Tuesday and Thursday 5:00p-6:00p

**Online:**
- Main Lecture: Mon to Fri 11:30am – 1:00pm
- Review class: Tuesday and Thursday 5:00p-6:00p

Note: all times in NPT


Prerequisites: TSTD 101

**Course Description:**

The course is dedicated to the study of the renowned text *Entering Way of the Bodhisattva* (Skt. *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*, Tib. *Byang chub sems dpa’i phyod pa la ’jug pa*) composed by Śāntideva (c.685-763) — a great Indian scholar, bodhisattva and mahāsiddha. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* teaches the complete Mahāyāna path to enlightenment, including all necessary preliminary, main and concluding practices. Students will learn how to develop the motivation of *bodhicitta*, as well as how to carry out the application of the six *pāramitās*: generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditative concentration and wisdom. It is said that the purpose of the Dharma is to transform our minds. Among all Buddhist treatises, *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is one of the most powerful texts that serves this purpose. It is considered extremely important as it lays the Mahāyāna foundation for the rest of Buddhist philosophical studies.

The in-depth study of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* provides a unique opportunity for the application of traditional Buddhist mind training (Tib. *blo sbyong*). For this method to be effective, students need an on-going transmission of the traditional teachings, serious personal dedication, and continuous active engagement. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* course is designed to serve this purpose in the most effective way. It consists of two main components: (1) daily 90-minute lectures taught by an experienced Ka-Nying monastery’s khenpo or lopön and translated into English, and (2) a weekly one-hour review class taught with two time zone options.
In the daily lecture class, the monastic instructor will provide oral commentary on the text, following in the tradition of Indian and Tibetan masters over the centuries since the verses were composed. Additionally, there will be a review / discussion class led by the translator, which will meet once a week for an hour in two different time zones. This review / discussion class is a required part of the course and is intended to clarify and support the material covered in lecture classes. The review / discussion provides a forum for students to ask questions and raise topics covered in the lecture that they would prefer to discuss with other students or have clarified by the translator. In the review / discussion class, students will also consider the material covered in lectures from different perspectives, as well as study and discuss additional video, audio and textual materials to expand and deepen their understanding.

**Course Requirements & Grading:**

Course requirements are aimed at helping students to develop vital academic skills. During the semester, there will be two oral memorization quizzes: students will be given a selection of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* verses to memorize either in English, Tibetan, or Sanskrit, to be tested orally during a review class. Additionally, students will be assigned two short academic papers (~3-4 pages). Academic paper writing is an extremely important skill that will be reinforced in the review classes and course assignments: students will practice writing academic papers, acquiring practical experience in the process. In the middle of the semester, there will be a written midterm exam to stimulate integration of the studied material. At the end of the semester, students’ final assessment will include a final paper (~5-6 pages) and a written final exam.

Grades will be assigned according to the following categories:

- Content / Memorization Quizzes (10): 15% of final grade (1.5% each)
- Short Papers (2): 20% of final grade (10% each)
- Midterm Exam (1): 15% of final grade
- Final Assessment (1): 50% of final grade (final paper 25% and final exam 25%)