KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES AT
RANGJUNG YESHE INSTITUTE

Web Syllabus

Course Code	BSTD 204
Course Title	Buddhist Scripture & the Lumbini Fall Seminar
Course Topic	Scripture in Practice, Lumbini, and Buddhist Ecumenism
Credits	3
Semester, Year	Fall 2027
Schedule: class day & time	Please consult F27 course schedule
Class Location	Please consult F27 course schedule
Course Delivery Mode	In-person, with field-based participation in the Lumbini Fall Seminar
Required text(s)	All required readings will be distributed through Teams.
Optional Readings	N/A
Prerequisites	No prerequisite is required for this course

Course Description

This course prepares students for Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche's annual Fall Seminar in Lumbini through three connected strands: Buddhist scripture as lived practice; Lumbini as a historical and contemporary Buddhist centre; and Buddhist ecumenism. The first strand examines how scriptures are read, recited, chanted, transmitted, translated, interpreted, and used ritually across Buddhist traditions, with particular attention to recitation as a practice rather than only as engagement with textual content.

Building on this, the course introduces Lumbini's narrative, historical, archaeological, institutional, and contemporary contexts before turning to inter-traditional encounter. The Fall Seminar brings Buddhist traditions together in a shared ritual space, where communities recite their own canons alongside one another. The course asks how such an encounter might be deepened: How might Buddhist ecumenism move from reciting alongside one another to learning from one another's scriptures?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will have developed experience in:

1. explaining how Buddhist scriptures function as texts, recited words, ritual objects, sources of authority, and vehicles of practice;
2. comparing forms of scriptural recitation, transmission, interpretation, and canonical authority across selected Buddhist traditions;
3. understanding Lumbini's narrative, historical, archaeological, institutional, and contemporary significance, and the setting of the annual Fall Seminar;
4. analysing the possibilities and limits of Buddhist ecumenism, especially where

traditions meet through shared or parallel scriptural practice;
5. relating academic study to first-hand observation during the Fall Seminar and considering how cross-traditional engagement with scripture might be deepened.

Course Requirements

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1. **Regular attendance and active participation in all course components**
   The course includes twice-weekly 90-minute class meetings during the semester together with required participation in Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche's Fall Seminar in Lumbini.
2. **Completion of assigned readings and other preparatory materials before class.**
   Students are expected to come to class prepared to engage the material.
3. **Completion of all written assignments.** These include the Pre-Seminar Research Paper, the daily Reflection Journal kept throughout the seminar period, and the Final Blog Post.

Note: Transport for the Fall Seminar will be provided. Accommodation options will be arranged, though students will be responsible for the cost.

How do I succeed in the course?

1. **Keep up with the readings.** This course asks you to move between historical study, contemporary Buddhist life, and seminar-based learning. You will need to come to class having completed the readings and thought about the questions they raise.
2. **Take part seriously in discussion.** Much of the value of the course lies in discussion, comparison, and shared reflection. Careful listening and thoughtful contributions are expected.
3. **Use the pre-seminar paper well.** This is not just a written assignment but a preparation for the seminar itself. A focused research question will help you engage the Lumbinī component of the course more sharply.
4. **Be observant during the seminar.** The Reflection Journal should be based on careful daily attention to teachings, practices, sites, and conversations. Good note-taking during the seminar will make both the journal and final blog post much stronger.
5. **Connect experience to research.** The strongest work in this course will relate first-hand observation to course themes, readings, and evidence-based analysis.
6. **Manage your time steadily.** Because the course includes both preparatory academic work and intensive field-based participation, it is important not to fall behind before the seminar begins.

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Assessments	Weight
Class Participation	10%
Pre-Seminar Research Paper	40%
Reflection Journal	25%
Blog Post	25%

Note: The Final Exam (50%) consists of two components: Reflection Journal (25%) and Blog Post (25%).

Course Outline

The course is organised around three main strands, which together prepare students for participation in the Fall Seminar:

1. **Scripture in Practice**
   This strand examines how Buddhist scriptures function within living Buddhist traditions. It considers canon and textual authority, but focuses especially on what Buddhists *do* with scripture: reading, reciting, chanting, memorising, translating, transmitting, studying, and using texts ritually. Attention will be given to the different ways in which scriptures are encountered across Buddhist traditions, and to the relationship between textual understanding, ritual performance, and religious practice.

2. **Lumbinī and the Fall Seminar**
   This strand introduces the historical and contemporary setting of the Fall Seminar. It examines Buddhist narratives of the Buddha's birth, the rediscovery and modern development of Lumbinī, the archaeology and heritage of the Greater Lumbinī Area, and the Buddhist communities and institutions that have established a presence there. Students will consider how Lumbinī has become a meeting place for Buddhists from different traditions and regions.

3. **Buddhist Ecumenism and Scriptural Encounter**
   This strand considers the possibilities and limits of ecumenical engagement between Buddhist traditions. Particular attention will be given to the Fall Seminar's practice of bringing different Buddhist communities together to recite their respective canonical collections at the Thousand Buddha Temple. The course asks how this important form of shared participation might be developed further: how might Buddhist ecumenism move from reciting alongside one another to learning from one another's scriptures?