KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES AT
RANGJUNG YESHE INSTITUTE

Web Syllabus

Course Code	TSTD 201/301/401
Course Title	Advanced Studies in Buddhist Philosophy and Hermeneutics I, III, V
Course Topic	Entering the Middle Way, Introduction to the Middle Way, Madhyamakāvatāra
Credits	6
Semester, Year	Fall 2027
Schedule: class day & time	Please consult F27 course schedule
Class Location	Please consult F27 course schedule
Course Delivery Mode	Concurrent: on campus and live streamed (only for NC students), Tibetan language with translation
Required texts	dbu ma la 'jug pa
Optional Readings	TBD

Course Description

Entering the Middle Way by Candrakīrti is a seminal work of Madhyamaka philosophy that systematically presents the path to enlightenment grounded in the realization of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Structured as a commentary on Nāgārjuna's thought, the text integrates philosophical analysis with the stages of the bodhisattva path.

The work is organized around the ten *bhūmis* (stages of spiritual development), emphasizing both ethical cultivation and wisdom. Candrakīrti argues that all phenomena lack inherent existence and arise dependently (*pratītyasamutpāda*), thereby rejecting essentialist metaphysics. He critiques rival Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools, particularly those that posit intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*).

A central contribution of the text is its defense of the *Prāsaṅgika* method, which employs *reductio* arguments to reveal contradictions in opponents' views rather than asserting independent theses. Ultimately, the *Madhyamakāvatāra* presents the Middle Way as a balance between nihilism and eternalism, guiding practitioners toward non-conceptual wisdom and compassionate engagement with the world.

Course Requirements	
How do I succeed in the course?	Attending all classes and being prepared by reading the assigned texts
Assessments	Weight
1. Class participation	5%
2. Quizzes and presentations	20%

3. Short papers	10%
4. Midterm exam	15%
5. Final assessment [may consist of different parts, for example, final paper and final exam, each worth 25%]	50%