KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES AT
RANGJUNG YESHE INSTITUTE

Web Syllabus

Course Code	BSTD 404
Course Title	Epistemology
Course Topic	Epistemology and Debate Workshop
Semester, Year	Fall 27
Credits	3
Schedule: class day & time	Please consult F27 Course Schedule
Class location	Please consult F27 Course Schedule
Required text(s)	BSTD 404 course reader provided by the instructors
Prerequisites	BSTD 101, 102, or 203, or permission of the instructor. One year of classical Tibetan language recommended.

Course Description

The investigation of truth and the validity of knowledge have long been a central concern of Indian philosophical traditions. A general premise shared by many of these traditions is that liberation can be attained only through correct knowledge. The great Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti states in his *Nyāyabindu* that valid knowledge (*samyagjñāna*) is essential and prerequisite for the successful accomplishment of any undertaking. This raises a fundamental question for Buddhist epistemology (*pramāṇa*): How do we know that something is true? How can our knowledge be examined, tested, and verified?

The systematic study of logic and epistemology, known as the *pramāṇa* tradition, developed in India among both Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical schools. Among the non-Buddhist traditions, the Nyāya school played a particularly important role in developing systematic theories of knowledge and logical reasoning. Buddhist thinkers subsequently engaged critically with these theories, developing their own distinctive approaches to logic and epistemology. Buddhist masters such as Dignāga and Dharmakīrti made significant contributions, profoundly shaping the development of the Indian *pramāṇa* tradition.

This course introduces the foundational concepts and major developments of Buddhist *pramāṇa* (Tib. *tshad ma*) through a historical survey. The first part traces the emergence and development of Buddhist pramāṇa theory in India, with particular attention to the works of Dignāga/Dharmakīrti and their influence on later Indian Buddhist thinkers, including Bhāviveka, Śāntarakṣita, and Candrakīrti. Students will also engage with selected primary texts by Dharmakīrti and other Buddhist philosophers.

The second part examines the Tibetan reception, interpretation, and further development of the Buddhist *pramāṇa* tradition. The course will also briefly explore the influence of Buddhist epistemology and logic on Indian tantric literature.

Note: The course will be delivered in total 3 hours of weekly class meetings (twice a week, each 90

minutes) and one hour of debate training by an experienced debate student of Sangye Yeshe Shedra.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will develop critical thinking skills about the cross-cultural exploration of ideas and practices
- Students will be introduced to the basic features of *pramāṇa* thought and practice that are foundational for understanding Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions
- Students will heighten sensitivity to the emergence and development of select themes in Buddhist logico-epistemological thought within their specific social and historical settings
- Students will develop written and oral skills necessary for the communication of complex ideas and social practices on the topic
- Additionally, students will get first-hand experience with debate in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition

Course Requirements	
How do I succeed in the course?	Lectures will supplement the class readings. Read the assigned articles, participate actively in class and debate training sessions, and seek out support from the instructors if needed.
Assessments	Weight
1. Debate workshop	10%
2. Short reflection papers (3)	15%
3. Midterm exam	25%
4. Final Assessment [consists of final paper and final exam, each worth 20% and debate 10%]	50%