

# TSTD 101: Buddhist Philosophy and Hermeneutics I

## Fall 2021

**Instructor:** Lopon Norbu Samphel

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**Credits:** 6

**Class Time:** Daily (Monday to Friday) 90-minute lectures (time TBD)

**Review Class Time:** a weekly one-hour review class taught per time zone (time TBD)

### **Required Root Text:**

Śāntideva, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group. (Boston: Shambhala, 2006).

### **Required Commentary:**

Kunzang Pelden, *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech: A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva*. Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group. (Boston: Shambhala, 2007).

### **Course Description:**

The course is dedicated to the study of the renowned *Way of the Bodhisattva* (Skt. *Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra*, Tib. *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod 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 the traditional Buddhist mind training (Tib. *blo sbyong*). For this method to be effective, students need an ongoing 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 per time zones.

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 class. 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 that will expand and deepen their understanding.

**Course Requirements & Grading:**

Course requirements are aimed at helping the 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 and then tested on it orally during a review class. In addition, there will be two short (~3-4 pages) academic papers assigned. The academic paper writing is an extremely important skill. Thus, in the review classes, students will learn how to write academic papers and then acquire 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. And, in the end of the semester, final assessment will include a final paper (~5-6 pages) and a written final exam.

Grades will be assigned according to the following categories:

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

Per Kathmandu University policy, students must maintain a minimum of 80% class attendance in order to pass this course. If you are unable to attend a class session, please contact the instructor as far in advance as possible.

Students are expected to be familiar with RYI guidelines on academic honesty. Please refer to the Student Guidebook, section 1.9, for further details. If you have questions about the tenets of academic honesty and integrity, please consult the instructor and/or the RYI writing coach.

A numerical mark will be given for each of the course requirements. At the end of the semester, these will be averaged, and a letter grade given according to the following **grading scheme**:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	≥ 93.3%
A-	≥ 90.0%
B+	≥ 86.6%
B	≥ 83.3%
B-	≥ 80.0%
C+	≥ 76.6%
C	≥ 73.3%
C-	≥ 70.0%
D	≥ 60-69%
F	< 60%

**Academic Integrity:**

Students must be familiar with what academic integrity (or dishonesty) and plagiarism mean and behave accordingly (refer to the Student Guidebook for further details). In case of uncertainty about what academic integrity means, please consult with the translator.

**Assignment Schedule:**

Dates TBD.