International Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts (IITBT)

Graduate Certificate in Buddhist Translation

**TRNC 52, Canonical Languages**

**Fall 2023**

**Thursday 2:45–4:45 pm, Room S126**

**Instructors:** Bhikshuni Jin Xiang and Petra Lamberson (Translation Fellow)

**Office Hours:** 10 mins after each class or by appointment.

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**Course Description:**

This course is designed to introduce the basic linguistic characteristics of Sanskrit: alphabets, sounds, and sentence structure. Students will learn how to look up Sanskrit words in a Sanskrit-English dictionary, how to parse compounds, how to make the best choice from among different variations, and how to interpret and select the best meaning from them. From these exercises, students will gain some basic knowledge to do research in their translation of Buddhist texts. The Sanskrit versions of familiar texts such as the Heart Sutra and Amitabha Sutra will be used to further students’ confidence in their future research endeavors.

**Program Learning Outcomes:**

• Demonstrate fluency in the use of tools and methods of inquiry from different traditions and disciplines presented in the curriculum (PLO 6)

• Practice thoughtful and probing dialogue combined with close listening to assess the context and the character of the audience (PLO 7)

• Evaluate and responsibly use and share information resources (PLO 9)

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

* Students will be able to learn the sounds and characteristics of Sanskrit (vowels, consonants) and read/pronounce Sanskrit words and sentences.
* Students will be able to learn and understand the basic grammar of a Sanskrit sentence: the grammatical components of words, their syntactical functions in standard sentence formation.
* Students will be able to parse and analyze words in Sanskrit compound words through the aid of Sanskrit dictionaries and by the knowledge of sandhi rules.
* Students will apply their knowledge of Sanskrit words, sandhi, and grammar to:
  + parse or separate words in a compound word;
  + translate/interpret passages of classic Sanskrit source texts and compare with the Chinese source texts;
  + to determine the accuracy or a possible/alternate meanings of word(s) or of a sentence in the source texts through analyses of Sanskrit words and sentences.

**Format and Procedures:**

Part of the class will be devoted to the practice of Sanskrit sounds, memorizing the alphabet order, studying the grammatical structure of sentences, and the use of various dictionaries. Students are expected to set aside time for daily practice of review and preview; to come to class having already read and taken notes on the material to be covered in class; and to prepare exercises that were assigned before coming to class.

There will be both individual and collaborative exercises and translation work in class. Collaborative reading and study groups are encouraged.

**Attendance Policy:** Please let the instructor know in advance if you will be missing a class (or after the fact, if the absence was unforeseen). Attendance and student participation are essential in a discussion-driven method of instruction. Learning through shared inquiry assumes a shared responsibility from all members in the process of learning. As such, attendance is generally expected at all scheduled meetings of classes for which students have registered. The maximum number of absences per semester (per class) is two weeks’ worth of instruction. More than one absence will begin to incrementally impact the attendance and participation grade and more than two absences will result in automatic failure.

**Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:** Each student is responsible for submitting his/her/their own, original work. All work submitted will be assumed to represent the student's own effort and skill and should not misrepresent the work of others as one's own. Collaboration in study and assignments is encouraged, in the form of study groups, helping each other, and mutual support, but please make sure that all work submitted represents your own understanding and not that of someone else. Collaborate; do not copy others’ work. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offense and breach of honesty and academic integrity.

**Disability Services:** The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you already receive services through the Office of Disability Services and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Please bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment.

**Course Requirements:** There will be regular in-class exercises, reading exercises to prepare prior to class, quizzes, and a final assignment.

**Grading Procedures**: Grades will be based on attendance, preparation and participation, completion of regular reading assignments and presentations, periodic quizzes, and a final exam. Breakdown:

Attendance (10%) (each absence will affect learning progress)

Preparation and Participation 40%

Homework 30%

Final Assignment 20%

Participation is judged by:

1. Listening and Attending Closely: Demonstrates active listening to instructor and peers.

2. Preparation: Reads materials thoroughly and prepares assignments in advance of class. Arrives to class with notes and questions in mind.

3. Quality of Contribution: Presents material in written and verbal form in a manner that reflects insight, clarity, and nuance. Contributes relevant and thoughtful comments and questions to classroom discussion that reflect meaningful engagement with the material and the contributions of others. Seeks to clarify own points of doubt, as a service to self and others.

4. Impact on Seminar: Maintains conduct both in and out of seminar that enhances everyone’s experience of the seminar and moves forward everyone’s learning.

5. Frequency of Participation: Remains actively engaged in class and participates sincerely and appropriately.

**Weekly Schedule** (subject to adjustment according to the requirements of the class):

| **Week 1**  (Aug. 17) | Introduction to Sanskrit alphabets and sounds. |
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| **Weeks 2–3**  (Aug. 24, 31) | Sanskrit sandhi (sound changes) between words, sentence structure; endings for nouns (declensions) and verbs (conjugations). |
| **Weeks 4–5**  (Sep. 7, 14) | How to use Sanskrit-English dictionaries (M-W, DDB, Hirakawa);  Exercises in close reading of short Sanskrit source texts. |
| **Week 6** (no class) | Sep. 19–22 (Tu–F): **CEI** |
| **Weeks 7–8**  (Sep. 28, Oct. 5) | Using Sanskrit-English dictionaries;  Sanskrit compounds; Sanskrit names in Chinese texts  (Oct. 4–6: WASC visit) |
| **Weeks 9**  (Oct. 12) | (Petra)  Review: Sandhi, syntax, declensions/ paradigms |
| **Weeks 10**  (Oct. 19) | Research exercises using Sanskrit source texts |
| **Weeks 11–12**  (Oct. 26, Nov. 2) | (Petra)  Exercises with Sanskrit texts |
| **Weeks 13**  (Nov. 9) | Research exercises using Sanskrit source texts |
| **Week 14**  (Nov. 16) | (Petra)  Exercises with Sanskrit texts |
| **Week 15** (no class) | Nov. 20–22: Student Conferences / Nov. 23–24: Thanksgiving holidays |
| **Weeks 16**  (Nov. 30) | (Petra)  Exercises with Sanskrit texts |
| **Week 17**  (Dec. 7, last class) | Presentation: Translation/Research Project |

**Texts**:

*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra* (shorter Heart Sutra)

*Sukhāvatīvyūha-sutram* (shorter Amitābha Sūtra), Sanskrit Lessons written by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien and published in Vajra Bodhi Sea, October 1997–April 2010, issue #s 329–479; lesson images at <http://cttbusa.org/sanskrit/sanskrit.asp.html>; sutra text in Romanization from <http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/book/58>.

*Mahākāruṇika-dhāraṇī*, Great Compassion Mantra in Sanskrit.

*Daśabhūmikasūtram*. <http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/39/286>.

**References & Dictionaries**:

Handouts of Sanskrit alphabet chart and relevant materials from:

Goldman, Robert P. and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman. *Devavāṇīpraveśikā*: *An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language*, 3rd edition. Berkeley: Center for South Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2004.

Monier-Williams Sanskrit-Dictionary, 1899; <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/mwquery/>

Hirakawa, Akira. *A Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary* (佛教漢梵大辭典). Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1997.

Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>.