Department of Religious Studies
Module: Religions of Northern India

Description:

Students will explore the major religious traditions of Northern India, with special attention granted to the traditions and teachings of Tibetan Buddhism.

Objectives:

1. To study Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and Islam in the socio-cultural context of Northern India
2. To study Tibetan Buddhism under several high lamas (Rinpoches)
3. To visit the major temples and shrines of these religious traditions, including the Taj Mahal
4. To establish an email relationship with a Tibetan refugee two months prior to departure and spend significant face-to-face time with their email partner while in Dharamsala, India
5. To provide students an optional opportunity to fulfill their Service Learning requirement while in Dharamsala.

Readings


Student are also required to view three DVDs on the religions of India, the life of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhist art. These DVDs located at the circulation desk of Magale Library.

Centenary College India Program – 2015 May Module
Tentative Itinerary: Mindful Awareness; Open Attitude; Relaxed Pace

Depart Shreveport on Monday, May 4

Tuesday, May 5

8:15PM – Arrive in Delhi. Airport pickup, transport to Hotel
If hungry go out with a guide, order room service or eat on the hotel rooftop.

Hotel Star Plaza Delhi
5158, Krishna Market, Main Bazaar, Pahar Ganj,
New Delhi - 110 055, INDIA
Tel: (91-11) 41698651, 23586810, 23586816, +91-8800635464,
E-mail: stargroupofhotels@gmail.com
Wednesday, May 6
7:00AM – (Optional) meet a guide in the hotel lobby to walk around the neighborhood in small groups and have breakfast, change money, internet, etc.
* If you missed the tour, go out with a guide for food or order room service.*
11:00AM - Group gathering in lobby – India Orientation and Agra Preparation. Safety issues when engaging local populations, staying healthy in India, and a brief introduction to cultural practices and taboos.

Spend the day resting, reading, writing, & drinking water. It will be hot!
Optional day trips on metro to Majnu Ka Tilla Tibetan Colony (Vidhan Sabha Metro Stop) and/or shopping for incidental items in Connaught Circle (Rajiv Chowk Metro Stop). If you feel up for it, visit Akshardam Hindu Temple, Lotus Bahai Temple, Guru Bangla Sahib Sikh Gurudwara, Nizamuddin Dargah Sufi Shrine, or Jama Masjid Mosque.
* Buy snacks and fruit for breakfast on the way to Agra and for Friday’s train. Reading, writing, and resting for the day.
Go out with guides for dinner – (not a group meal!)

Thursday, May 7 – Delhi–Agra–Delhi
* Today’s breakfast and lunch on your own – drink lots of water!
5:00AM - Jeeps depart from hotel for Agra. Tour of the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the modern world. Lunch at Priya restaurant in Agra.
7:00PM - Group Dinner at Tadka Restaurant, Paharganj
* Buy snacks and fruit for the tomorrow’s train ride

Friday, May 8 – Delhi-Dharamsala
7:00AM – Meet in hotel lobby for optional morning neighborhood walk and meditation at Ramakrishna Ashram Temple, Paharganj.
9:30AM – Meet in hotel lobby for visit to National Gandhi Museum, Raj Ghat and Nigamboodh Ghats to observe Hindu Cremation Rites.
1:00PM – South Indian style lunch near Connaught Place. Optional shopping around Connaught Place or return to hotel to rest, read, write, and drink water!
6:00PM – Leave hotel for Old Delhi Train Station
8:00PM – Train departs Old Delhi Train Station for Pathankot

Saturday, May 9 - Dharamsala – 2nd Saturday, offices and schools are closed.
7:00AM - Train arrives Pathankot; jeeps to Dharamsala. Group breakfast en route at Jyoti Restaurant, Pathankot
11:00AM - Arrive in McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala. Check into rooms at Ahimsa Guest House. Break into groups and enjoy brief tour and lunch in town.
* Free afternoon to rest, drink water, read and write. (Offices and schools closed on 2nd Saturday of the month.)
3:00PM - Dharamsala Orientation meeting at Guest House. We will review the possibilities and expectations of the mutual learning partner experience. This meeting will prepare participants to best serve the Tibetan refugee partner, primarily through teaching your partner English and assisting with
computing skills if needed. We will also discuss how one might avoid unintentional cultural clashes with Tibetans.

6:30PM - Tour of His Holiness Dalai Lama kora and Temple by Tsering
7:30-8:30PM - Group Dinner at Guest House
8:30PM – Movie in Group Room (Slum Dog Millionaire)

Ahimsha Guest House
Temple Road, Dharamsala
phone 9816689222

Sunday, May 10 - Dharamsala
7:00AM – Meditation in group room (optional)
7:30AM - Group breakfast at Ahimsa Guest House
9:00AM - Spend three hours with Tibetan Mutual Learning Partner. This time should be spent teaching your partner either English or computer skills while learning about their lives. Your partner's tendency will be to want to serve as your personal tour guide in an attempt to show hospitality (This could be a culture clash you can write about). Thank them for their willingness to show you the sights but remind your partner of the purpose of your scheduled time. You might accept the offer for another time other than the 9:00AM to Noon time period, should your schedule allow it. Also, this work should be done one on one; do not meet in groups. You may go to an internet café to work on internet and computing skills if your partner wishes.
12:00PM - Lunch on your own. You might treat your Tibetan Learning Partner to lunch if you wish.
3:00PM – Meet at Lha Office to walk to Karma Lhundrup Rinpoche’s house for talk and demonstration on Death and Dying in Tibetan Buddhist tradition.
5:30PM - Yoga on the guest house roof top with Pema (optional)
7:30PM - Group dinner at guest house
8:30PM - Movie in group room: Travelers and Magicians

Monday, May 11 - Dharamsala
7:00AM – Meditation in group room (optional)
7:30AM – Group breakfast at guest house
9:00AM – noon - Spend three hours with Tibetan Mutual Learning Partner. Lunch on your own.
12:00PM – Lunch on your own.
2:30PM – Meet at Ahimsa Guest House for presentation on Lha Charitable Trust history and activities, group discussion about India and the Mutual Learning Partner Experience thus far, and review of your readings.
5:30PM – Yoga on the guest house roof top with Pema (optional)
7:30PM – Group dinner at guest house
8:30PM – Movie in group room: TBA

Tuesday, May 12 – Dharamsala
7:00AM – Meditation in group room (optional)
7:30AM – Group breakfast at guest house.
9:00AM – Spend the morning with your Tibetan mutual learning partner
10:30AM – Meet at Ahimsa Guest House to go to Dharamsala to register for Bir Protected Area Permit (PAP), have lunch at Center Point Restaurant, hear
lecture from Jamyang, the founder of Tong-len, which works with impoverished migrant communities in Dharamsala, and visit Charankot, the slum community.

5:30PM – Meet at LHA downtown for yoga with Pema (optional)
7:30PM – Group dinner at guest house
8:30PM – Movie in group room (optional)

Wednesday, May 13 – Dharamsala
7:00AM – Meditation in group room (optional)
7:30AM – Group breakfast at guest house
9:00AM – Spend three hours with Tibetan Mutual Learning Partner.
12:00PM – Lunch on your own.
2:30PM – Meet at LHA Downtown Library - Lecture and Q&A with Ama Adhe, Elder Tibetan Woman, torture survivor of 28 years in a Chinese Communist work camp/prison. Lecture followed by a brief tour and talk at GuChuSum, which works with hundreds of former Tibetan political prisoners.
5:30PM – Yoga on the guest house roof top with Pema (optional)
7:30PM – Group dinner at guest house, followed by a short meeting about Saturday’s trip to Bir, Tso Pema, and Mandi
8:30PM – Movie in group room: The Cup

Thursday, May 14 - Dharamsala – Bir
7:00AM – Meditation in group room (optional)
7:30AM – Group breakfast at guest house
8:30AM – Clean rooms and pack
9:30AM – Jeeps depart from Guest House for Bir, about a three-hour ride.
12:30PM – Lunch in small groups and tour Bir... a very small Tibetan settlement. You pay for this meal.
4:00PM – Tour of Palyul Nyingma Gompa, Tsering’s monastery. Experience a little of the daily routine and lifestyle of Tibetan monks.
6:30PM – Sunset walk (optional)
7:30PM – Dinner on your own but you might consider Garden Café or Nyingma Peace House.

Choling Guest House
Bir Tibetan Colony
Bir, India (only one street with no name)
phone 9418913976

Friday, May 15 - Bir
7:30AM – Breakfast on your own
9:00AM – Either a two hour hike or a 15 minute taxi ride through the surrounding small Indian farming villages to the area's main monastery, Sherab Ling Kagyu Gompa. Experience the vast array of traditional Tibetan art work, and see stupas.
4:00PM – Meet in Hotel Lobby to visit Deer Park Institute for the Study of Ancient India Wisdom Traditions. Hear talk by the manager about Deer Park’s history and activities, and ask discuss Indian and Tibetan philosophy.
12:00PM - Group lunch at the Stupa Café. Walk or take taxis back to Bir.
6:30PM – Sunset walk (optional)
7:30PM – Dinner on your own. Pack in preparation for tomorrow's departure to Tso Pema.

Saturday, May 16 – Bir – Tso Pema
7:30AM – Breakfast on your own
9:00AM – Jeeps depart hotel for Tso Pema, which means Lotus Lake in Tibetan. This town is also known in Hindi language as Rewalsar. It will be a four-hour jeep ride. Please take motion sickness medication prior to departure. En route we will stop in the city of Mandi for lunch and to visit local tailors to have Indian-style clothing made. You will wear these clothes at a special group dinner to be held on our second night in Mandi. Women might consider traditional saris while men might look for Kurta Pajamas, basic traditional Indian menswear. Accessorize your attire with scarfs. The clothing will be ready for you upon our return to Mandi.
5:00PM – Arrive in Tso Pema and check into hotel. Tso Pema is a lake sacred to Buddhist due to a myth regarding the famous Tantric practitioner Padmasambhava and his Indian partner, Mandarava, who subsequently brought Vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet. The lake is also believed to be sacred by Hindus and Sikhs.
6:00PM – Meet in lobby to walk to Nyingmapa Buddhist Monastery Courtyard for talk on history of Tso Pema, then tour the Hindu temples, the Sikh Gurudwara and the LHA Community Library Project.
7:00PM – Optional experience evening puja at Sikh Gurudwara. Dress appropriately!
7:30PM – Dinner on your own.

Hotel Lotus Lake
Lotus Lake Kora
Rewalsar, India
phone 01905-280239

Sunday, May 17 - Tso Pema
7:30PM – Breakfast on your own.
9:00AM – Hike up the mountain! This hike is necessary preparation for those participants who want to do the Triune hike later in the trip. For those participants not interested to hike, are not planning to hike Triune, or are feeling under the weather; a jeep will be departing the hotel at 10:00AM to take you to the top of the mountain.
10:30AM – Tour the Tibetan nun's convent, consisting of a few buildings and several caves. Most of these women have been long-term retreatants. Experience Tantric Buddhist practices inside one of the caves and hang prayer flags after participating in a prayer incense offering (known as a type of Puja ceremony). The nuns will prepare a special vegetarian lunch for the group, a highlight of the trip. After lunch you may either take a jeep back to the hotel or hike down the mountain.
6:00PM – Meet in group room to reflect on your experiences of the day.
7:00PM – Dinner on your own.
Monday, May 18 – Tso Pema - Mandi
7:30AM – Breakfast on your own
8:30AM – Meet in hotel lobby to attend Dharma talk on compassion talk on compassion and emptiness by an elder Tibetan nun, “Anni Tenzie”. She is a 70 year-old Nun and Master of Dzogchen and Mahamudra in the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Annie Tenzin’s entire life is religious practice. She is a pure vegetarian and an expert in the Tibetan Nyung Nay fasting retreat. She is a main teacher to the Nuns in the Tso Pema area and is considered a living example of Bodhichitta, the good heart practice.
12:00PM – Lunch on your own
1:00PM – Load up in jeeps in front of hotel and depart for Mandi (a 45-minute drive).
2:00PM – Orientation meeting in group room with Michael, about Mandi history, taboos, where things are, etc...
3:30PM – Tour the Indian market and visit the tailors to do a fitting of the clothes you had made.
7:30PM – Group dinner in Copacabana restaurant at Raj Mahal (casual attire)

Raj Mahal Palace Hotel
Mandi, 175001, Mandi District, HP, India
Phone : +91-01905-222401, 322401
Mobile : 09816021126
Fax : +91-01905-223434

Tuesday, May 19 - Mandi
6:00AM – First departure group for walking tour, which will include numerous Hindu temples, shrines, and the dungeon where Mandarava was kept. Meet in the garden in front of hotel. This walk will be of greater interest than the second group tour because of the morning rituals that occur.
8:00AM – Second departing group for walking tour, which will include numerous Hindu temples, shrines, and the dungeon where Mandarava was kept. Meet in the garden in front of hotel. Lunch on your own. After lunch, go visit your tailors to pick up your clothes and make adjustments. The rest of the afternoon: relax, read and write.
2:00PM – Group meeting in common room with Michael: Readings Study Review, Troubleshooting the Journal, the India experience thus far.
5:30PM – Yoga with Pema (optional)
7:30PM – Group Dinner in Copacabana restaurant

Wednesday, May 20 – Mandi
9:00AM – Meet in Palace Garden for walking tour to Tarna Mandir, located on top of the hill in the center of Mandi with panorama views of the town. Tarna Mandir is a very unique Mother Goddess temple, with a set of two dozen paintings depicting various forms of the Mother Goddess. The garden by the Temple is the legendary location of Padmasambhava’s first teachings in
Zahor after he was freed by the Kind, and was consecrated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1957. The walk is steep.

9:30AM – Meet in Palace Garden for auto-rickshaw ride up to Tarna Mandir for those who don’t wish to walk. We will walk or take auto-rickshaws down from the hill.
Lunch on your own
After lunch, go visit your tailors to make final adjustments and pick up your clothes. The rest of the afternoon: relax, read and write.
6:00PM – Social Hour in the Palace Garden. Wear your new clothes. Bring your cameras.
7:30PM – Group Dinner in Main Royal Dining Hall (dress in your fancy clothes!)

Thursday, May 21 – Mandi - Dharamsala
8:00AM – Free morning for reflection, relaxation and packing. Be sure to eat a late breakfast or early lunch.
1:00PM – Jeeps leave for Dharamsala, a five-hour drive. Please take motion sickness medication at least 30 minutes prior to departure.
6:00PM – Arrive in Dharamsala
7:30PM – Group dinner at guest house
8:30PM – Movie in group room: TBA

Ahimsha Guest House
Temple Road, Dharamsala
phone 9816689222

Friday, May 22 – Dharamsala
7:00AM – Meditation in group room (optional)
7:30AM – Group breakfast at guest house.
9:00AM – Spend the morning with your Tibetan mutual learning partner
12:00PM – Lunch on your own
    Free afternoon for reading, journaling and Dharamsala exploration.
5:30PM – Meet at guest house for yoga with Pema (optional)
7:00PM – Group meeting about tomorrow’s hike up Triund.
7:30PM – Group dinner at guest house
8:30PM – Movie in group room (optional)

Saturday, May 23 – Dharamsala – Triund / Snow Line
7:00-8:00AM – Group breakfast at the guest house.

For those participants hiking up to Triund:
8:00AM – Start hike up Triund mountain. This hike is a popular nine km. walk from Dharamsala to a ridge at 2,827 m. (9,275 ft.). We will stay in a very rustic mountain lodge with no indoor or outdoor toilet facilities, indoor plumbing, electricity or heat. But any discomfort you experience will be offset by the incredible vistas and the sense of personal accomplishment. Will stop along the way to Triund several times for tea, lunch and snacks. Dinner
will be prepared by a local man who lives on the mountain. You may consider hiking all the way up to the Snow Line Café for dinner and a quieter evening.

6:00PM – Sunset hike in search of Hobbits, Yetis and other mystical creatures!
7:30PM – Group dinner

For those participants who chose not to hike to Triund:

9:00AM – Spend morning with your Tibetan Mutual Learning partner
12:00PM – Lunch on your own
2:00PM – Meet Tsering at the guest house for a tour of Norbulinka, the Tibetan handicraft village.
7:00PM – Dinner on your own, optional movie.

Sunday, May 24 – Dharamsala / Triund / Snow Line

For those participants on Triune

9:00AM – After breakfast, explore the mountain area while doing a hike to the snowline. Bring your cameras!
* Service learning with Mountain Cleaners TBA.
If you wish, after breakfast, pack up your stuff and begin the hike downhill to Dharamsala. Stop along the way for tea, lunch and snacks. Be careful on the way down and avoid walking by cattle...they might kick you.

For those participants who stayed behind

7:30AM – Breakfast at the guest house
10:00AM – Depart guest house for tour Norbulingka, group lunch at the Norbulingka garden.
* Or consider spending your afternoon volunteering at LHA downtown, doing service learning, a cooking class, getting massage, journaling, shopping etc. Dinner on your own.

Monday, May 25 – Dharamsala / Truind

For those participants on Triune

8:00AM – Breakfast on your own
After breakfast or lunch, pack up your stuff and begin the hike downhill to Dharamsala. Stop along the way for tea, lunch and snacks. Be careful on the way down and avoid walking by cattle...they might bump you!
Consider spending your afternoon volunteering at LHA downtown, doing service learning, a cooking class, getting massage, journaling, relaxing at the guest house, etc.
5:30PM – yoga (optional)
7:30PM – Group dinner at guest house.

For those participants who stayed behind

8:00AM – Breakfast on your own
9:00AM – Spend morning with your Tibetan Mutual Learning Partner
12:00PM – Lunch on your own
Consider spending your afternoon volunteering at LHA downtown, doing service learning, a cooking class, getting massage, journaling, relaxing at the guest house, etc.
5:30PM – yoga (optional)
7:30PM – Group dinner at guest house.

Tuesday, May 26 – Dharamsala
7:00AM – Meditation in group room (optional)
7:30AM – Group breakfast at guest house.
9:00AM – Spend the morning with your Tibetan mutual learning partner
12:00PM – Lunch on your own
5:30PM – Meet at LHA downtown for yoga with Pema (optional)
7:00PM – Group farewell dinner at guest house. Invite your email partners.
Consider wearing your fancy clothes you had made in Mandi.

Wednesday, May 27 – Dharamsala - Amritsar
7:30AM – Group breakfast at guest house. Pack before leaving.
8:30AM – Depart in jeeps for Amritsar (five hour ride), stop along the way for early lunch at City Restaurant, Gopalpur, Punjab.
4:00PM – Lecture by Dr. David Otto on Sikh Religion and Golden Temple.
Dinner on your own
7:00PM – Optional Golden Temple evening visit to have dinner at the Free Kitchen (langar).
Dinner and Ice Cream Outing (optional) on your own.

GRAND HOTEL Address: Queen's Road
Opp. Railway Station, Amritsar 143 001, India
Phone: 01832 562424

Thursday, May 28 – Amritsar - Delhi
7:00AM – Breakfast on your own.
8:00AM – Meet in Hotel Lobby to visit the Golden Temple
12:00PM – Lunch on your own. Pack for departure. Consider going to Sagar Ratna South Indian restaurant as a group.
4:00PM – Walk across the street to train station.
5:00PM – Train departs for Delhi. Local dinner (of sorts) on train. Bring fruit and snacks if you wish.
10:00PM – Arrive in Delhi, transit to Star Plaza Hotel

Friday, May 29 – Delhi

10:00AM – Optional Delhi options: Baha’i Lotus Temple, Lodi Gardens, Jama Masjid Mosque, Akshardam Hindu Temple, Sufi Mosque, Sulabh Toilet Museum, explore local markets.
   Lunch on your own.

Any last minute shopping? Now is the time!
5:30PM – Group discussion and debriefing the travel study experience.
7:30PM – Group Farewell Dinner
Note: be sure to exchange any Rupees you may have left for US dollars or Euros. Ask your guides about making change.

Saturday, May 30 –
Depart Delhi for Rome
Tuesday, June 2
Return to Shreveport