

Reading Religion in South Asia II (A006808)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 6.0

Study time 180 h

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2)

English

Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

DiSimone, Charles

LW21

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

Master of Science in Teaching in Languages(main subject Oriental Languages and Cultures)

6

A

Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject India)

6

A

Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures

6

A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Buddhism, religion in India, Sanskrit, Pali, manuscripts, paleography, codicology, textual history

Position of the course

This course focuses on different aspects of Buddhism, in South Asia and beyond, and will offer the opportunity for participants to read Sanskrit Buddhist sūtra material mainly edited from primary manuscript sources. Buddhist Sūtra Literature developed over approximately a 1,000-year period from the time of the life of the Buddha Gautama into the middle of the first millennium of the Common Era. This genre is highly modular in nature and utilizes specialized idioms and vernacular language making it unique from classical Sanskrit and related literature.

Throughout the course, we will read selected, edited sections of Buddhist sūtras from Mahāyāna and Śrāvakayāna (Mainstream) traditions. We will also examine the source manuscript witnesses of these readings with an eye for paleographical and codicological issues. Each year, specific topics are addressed in separate modules. The material is framed in broader ongoing academic discourses on South Asian religious and literary culture.

Participants will leave the course with a firm foundation in the nuances of the production, development, and transmission of Buddhist textuality and the ability to read and translate the genre of Buddhist Sūtra Literature with confidence as well as a fundamental familiarity with the philological, paleographical, and codicological study of Buddhist manuscript cultures in a number of Indic Brāhmī scripts. The course will focus on Sanskrit material, but it may also be possible to examine supplementary material in Pali, Tibetan, or Chinese depending upon the interest of the class participants.

Contents

- 1 Introduction to Buddhist Sanskrit and Pali language (grammar) and literature.
- 2 Reading, analyzing, and contextualizing text fragments from Buddhist canonical textual transmissions.
- 3 Reading and engaging in the study of Indic manuscript materials in a variety of Brāhmī scripts.
- 4 Framing of the texts within the broader religious and literary context of Buddhism.

- 5 Framing of these texts within the broader religious, social, and literary context of South Asia
- 6 Framing of these texts against relevant historiographical research.

Initial competences

This course requires a knowledge of Sanskrit (at least intermediary level) and of the basics of the religious traditions of India (especially Buddhism).

Final competences

- 1 Have a basic knowledge of Sanskrit and Buddhist Sanskrit language.
- 2 Have a basic knowledge of Buddhist literature.
- 3 Being able to read and explain the texts discussed in class.
- 4 Being able to sketch the historical frame and relevance of the treated text fragments.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Lecture: introduction to languages; background of the texts

Seminar: language exercises; reading and analyzing texts.

Self-reliant study: preparation, background literature.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: A Higher Sanskrit Grammar

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Author : M.R. Kale

Type: Handouts

Name: Handouts

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

References

- Nattier, Jan. A Few Good Men. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 2003.
- Gibson, Luke. Reading Sanskrit: A Complete Step-by-Step Introduction with Texts from the Buddhist Tradition. New York: Columbia University Press, 2025.
- Speijer, J. Sanskrit Syntax. Leiden: Brill, 1886.

Course content-related study coaching

Interactive support via e-mail, Ufora (forums, e-mail), or after appointment

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Oral assessment, Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Assignment: 1. assignments to practice the language grammars; 2. final paper

Oral exam: presentation and analysis of a selected text fragment

Calculation of the examination mark

- Oral exam (30%)

- Assignment (60%): assignments (30%); paper (30%)
- Participation: being present, and thinking along actively during class (10%)

Students who do not take part in the assessment of one or more parts of the course evaluation or obtain a mark of less than 10/20 for one of its parts cannot pass the course evaluation. Should the average mark be higher than 10/20, the final mark will be reduced to the highest non-pass mark (= 9).

Facilities for Working Students

- Concerning exemption from educational activities: presence is obligatory.
- Concerning rescheduling of examinations: possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year.
- Concerning alternative time for feedback: feedback can be given by email, telephone or during an appointment during or after office hours.

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and Philosophy.