



## *Syllabus*

# *The Desi Sangye Gyatso and the Tibetan State - 35869*

*Last update 16-02-2023*

*HU Credits:* 2

*Responsible Department:* Asian Studies

*Academic year:* 0

*Semester:* 2nd Semester

*Teaching Languages:* English

*Campus:* Mt. Scopus

*Course/Module Coordinator:* Ian MacCormack

*Coordinator Email:* [ian.maccormack@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:ian.maccormack@mail.huji.ac.il)

*Coordinator Office Hours:* Wednesdays 1300

*Teaching Staff:*

*Dr. Ian James Mac Cormack*

*Course/Module description:*

*A lecture course on the life and works of the Desi Sangye Gyatso (1653–1705), one*

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*of the most powerful and influential Tibetan rulers as well as a prolific Buddhist intellectual. The course situates the Desi's reign against the backdrop of the early modern central Tibetan state and its relations with neighboring polities in Mongolia and China.*

*We will address the Desi's rise to power and concealment of the death of the fifth Dalai Lama, the Desi's ideas about state and ruler, and his major works such as the Dalai Lama's golden tomb. The course will shed light on the history, theory, and practices of Buddhist politics in early modern Tibet.*

*Course/Module aims:*

*The main objective of the course is to provide an overview of early modern Tibetan political history with special attention to the role of Buddhism therein. We will pursue this goal through a combined exploration of the historical, theoretical, and practical dimensions of Tibetan rule. We will ask: how was political authority constituted in this era? What were the guiding principles, values, and objectives of political rule? How did Tibet's rulers speak about their own power and the regime that they ruled? What were their major material and practical works, and how were those works designed and justified?*

*Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:*

*Students taking the course will acquire:*

- General familiarity with Tibetan social and political history, especially regarding the rise of the Ganden Phodrang regime in the 17th century*
- A basic understanding of the key persons, events, and ideas that are essential to the study of early modern Tibetan politics and religion*
- Specific familiarity with the reigns of the fifth Dalai Lama and the Desi Sangye Gyatso, and major works such as the Potala Palace.*
- A general sense of the major political, cultural, and intellectual trends necessary for situating this era with respect to a wider geopolitical history over the long early modern and modern era.*

*Attendance requirements(%):*

*100*

*Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Virtual lecture and discussion*

*Course/Module Content:*

*The general outline of the lectures is as follows:*  
*Week 1 Introduction to the course; discussion of major themes and arguments*  
*Week 2 Historical background 1: society and politics in medieval Tibet*

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*Week 3 Historical background 2: the unification of central Tibet*  
*Week 4 The rule of the fifth Dalai Lama and his government; the early life of Sangye Gyatso*  
*Week 5 The education, rise to power and enthronement of Sangye Gyatso*  
*Week 6 The Desi's reign 1: secrecy and diplomacy*  
*Week 7 The Desi's reign 2: productivity and expansion*  
*Week 8 Divine kingship: the divinity of the Dalai Lama*  
*Week 9 Divine kingship: the mortality of the Dalai Lama*  
*Week 10 Cosmology: politics of space and time*  
*Week 11 Works: the Potala Palace*  
*Week 12 Works 2: the golden tomb*  
*Week 13 Works 3: the funerary holiday*  
*Week 14: Recap and review*

*Required Reading:*

*All readings will be provided prior to the corresponding lecture as a PDF file. Most readings will be general historical surveys and/or translations of primary texts*

*Additional Reading Material:*

*Grading Scheme:*

*Additional information:*

*The major requirements of the course are: (a) attendance and participation at all lectures; (b) preparation of all assigned readings; (c) participation in class; and (d) final essay, due at the end of the semester.*