

Advanced Khmer Syllabus

Languages and Cultures of Asia 513/514 is the equivalent of a year-long (two-semester) sequence designed to continue and refine the goals of LCA 413/414 by bringing students well beyond intermediate-level Khmer to a level of speaking, listening and reading, writing proficiency which allows them to communicate in a fairly sophisticated fashion with educated native speakers on a variety of topics, including religion, traditional village culture and the rice-farming cycle, and news and public information (including speeches and advertising). In the area of speaking and listening, special attention will be paid to two areas: colloquial, informal expression of feelings and subtle nuance in everyday storytelling (for non-native speakers), and the formal, eloquent expression of theories and opinions in educated debates (for all students).

The development of spoken proficiency relative to these topics is linked throughout the course with written material. Students will also spend a good deal of time honing their listening skills, involving “focused listening” of video and audio recordings of both colloquial and formal native speaker speech. Native speakers, while they will in no way be required to “give up” their colloquial, home-dialect way of speaking Khmer, will learn to conform to standard Khmer pronunciations and polite forms of verbs and other vocabulary appropriate for conversation in an academic/professional setting.

Only authentic Khmer texts--texts written by native speakers for native speakers--will be used as reading material in the course. The texts used this course will in many cases overlap with those used in Intermediate Khmer (LCA 413/414), but the level of analysis of and student engagement with the text will be far more detailed and rigorous than what students attempt in that course. Students will also read advanced texts covering the same topics as in 413/414, but written at a much higher level of difficulty. Special attention will also be paid to coherently developing arguments and expressing opinions in writing, using clear, standardized modern writing style. All students are expected to demonstrate intermediate to advanced proficiency in the use of Khmer Unicode on the computer.

The class will consist mostly of communicative, task-based or project-based activities which will give students the chance to use spoken and written Khmer in situations which mirror real-life social or academic situations. Lectures will also be given on Khmer grammar, the writing system and the use of final particles and other material to

indicate nuance of expression and to develop a spoken “style”. Except for short explanations in English of difficult material from time-to-time, these lectures will be entirely in Khmer. Students are expected to use appropriate classroom Khmer at all times in class, including when talking to other students.

Course prerequisites:

This course is intended for students who, through completing courses such as LCA 413/414, self-study, or family experience, have attained a solid “intermediate” level of spoken and written Khmer proficiency. The level of students’ spoken proficiency will be determined in a structured intake evaluation administered by instructors on the first day of class. The course assumes a clear knowledge of the basics of written Khmer, including instant recognition of all written consonants, vowels, subscripts and most diacritics, and the ability to write these during dictation. Students whose spelling exhibits many mistakes will still be admitted, as will students who have not formally learned all of the vowel sound change and vowel governance “rules” of written Khmer.

A large number of common sight words should also be recognized by students entering this course. Students should be able to read, with little difficulty, basic folk tales in Khmer, and be also able to read, though with some difficulty, newspaper articles and novel excerpts. It is strongly recommended that prior to beginning this course, students will have read at least one classic Khmer novel in its entirety, although this is not a strict requirement for entry into the course. Students should be able to relate events and express basic opinions in written Khmer, even though that writing may show a good deal of grammatical errors. Students should be able to perform a number of basic spoken tasks using educated vocabulary, such as expressing opinions on current events, talking with monks, and explaining the basics of their research or work interests.

Keep in mind that what is “advanced” in a given Khmer class is relative to the level of proficiency of the majority of the students, considered in comparison to the same semester’s Intermediate class, so all of the above prerequisites are open to interpretation by the instructor and flexible.

Course requirements:

Students will be evaluated according to the following criteria (separately for each course in the two-course sequence):

Overall Class Participation: **30%**

Three-page essays on folk legends (513) and short stories (514) which have been read and discussed in class: **20%**

Independent Study Project: **30%**

Weekly Dialog Journal (first two weeks of class only): **5%**

Completion of homework assignments, including using course multimedia materials: **10%**

Performance on final exam: **5%**

In general, students are expected to spend at least one hour per class hour preparing/studying outside of class. If you do not spend this minimum amount of time studying/practicing outside of class, you will not be able to reach the goals (described as "At the end of this Week, students will be able to...") listed in this syllabus.

Students will not be graded on attendance per se, but note that if you don't attend, you can't participate, and active participation in class activities makes up 45% of your grade. The instructors must always be addressed by either លោកគ្រូ for male teachers and អ្នកគ្រូ for female teachers. Please respect both your instructors and fellow students by coming to class on-time. Laptops/iPads may only be used in class to access readings currently being read in a given class. No cellphone activity will be permitted in class, including texting. **Cellphone use--or computer use not directly related to work currently being done as part of the class--will be severely penalized. The first offense will result in a 5% reduction of your total grade for the entire course. The second offense will result in a 10% reduction of your grade. Every subsequent offense will result in a 20% reduction of your grade. I'm serious about this one, and I keep records for every single day...so when you come to class, don't let yourself be tempted.**

Office hours: 2-4 pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, or by appointment. 4269 Humanities, 608-890-3307.

Textbook:

កម្ពុជាឯកសារ by Frank Smith (download-only). Includes videos, audio tracks of vocabulary and structures and clickable alphabet chart. Available for \$40 from <http://www.studykhmer.com/textbooks/heritage.html>

No physical dictionary is required for the course, but students may wish to purchase the *Cambodian Literary Glossary* by Frank Huffman and Im Proum. This book is very small and portable and contains a good deal of educated and poetic vocabulary which

we will be using in this course. Usually available on amazon.com. Students are encouraged to use the free online dictionary at <http://www.sealang.net/khmer>. Note that this dictionary requires that Khmer Unicode fonts are installed on one's computer. See the Coordinator for more info on this. It is expected that all students will have Khmer Unicode installed on their computers by the middle of the first week of class, and will have acquired intermediate Khmer typing skills by the middle of the course.

Daily Assignments:

Class assignments will all be given on the Course Blog, located at <http://seassikhmer2016.blogspot.com>. Students are responsible for checking this blog at least once per day; twice a day is better. Checking after 7 am and after 5 pm is recommended.

Course Content:

LCA 513

Week One: Review of “Classroom Spoken Khmer” and the Advanced Features of the Writing System

We will use no phonetic transcription in this class; Khmer script only will be used from day one. In the first day of class we will rapidly move through a review of the rules of Khmer vowel change in various spelling, many involving the use of diacritics, and the vowel governance rules for Khmer words. Students will also memorize (in reading and writing) at least 15 important educated “sight words” in Khmer in the first week. We will also work on pronunciation problems in students’ speech, so that everyone begins to conform to standard spoken Khmer when speaking in the classroom. We will also review the lesser-used diacritics in written Khmer, and important vocabulary and structures which are typically learned in an Intermediate Khmer course. Another major goal of this Unit is to review all appropriate polite and respectful forms of verbs and other vocabulary, which are to be used at all times in the classroom. We will review the names of classroom objects in Khmer, and how to talk about language learning in Khmer, so we can keep the use of English in the classroom to an absolute minimum. For general review, we will read several moderately difficult folk tales and newspaper articles in this Unit. We will also quickly learn the basics of typing in Khmer Unicode in this unit.

At the end of Week One, students will be able to:

-greet and converse with fellow students, teachers and elders and participate in

classroom discussions using appropriately polite and respectful vocabulary and speaking style

- ask fairly sophisticated questions regarding language learning in Khmer
- demonstrate knowledge of all important vowel change and vowel governance rules in Khmer, and the use of all diacritics
- be able to read and write at least 15 educated Khmer sight words
- narrate a fairly complex folk tale in Khmer
- be able to correctly parse (engage in the meaning of, identify embedded clauses and explain their meaning) a moderately difficult Khmer newspaper article

Week Two: Khmer Buddhism

Topics covered in this unit include how to discuss the basic tenets of Buddhism in Khmer, how to tell the story of the life of Siddhartha (the Buddha), and how to talk with monks. All of these are also covered in LCA 413, but in this course students will learn to discuss the above topics at a more sophisticated and refined level, and learn additional vocabulary for speaking with monks, beyond the “basics”. We will also continue our review of important basic vocabulary and grammatical structures typically covered in an Intermediate Khmer class which may not be known by all students. We will read a number of moderately difficult articles on Buddhism and various Khmer religious festivals, and learn to discuss them with educated native speakers.

At the end of Week Two, students will be able to:

- describe in a moderately sophisticated way the basic tenets of Buddhism
- tell the story of Siddhartha’s journey outside the palace, a key event in the life of the Buddha
- be able to converse at a moderately sophisticated level with Khmer Buddhist monks
- be able to perform two Buddhist chants from memory
- be able to discuss several important Khmer religious festivals appropriately
- read and write at least 15 additional educated Khmer sight words

The mid-term exam will consist of two sections: written and oral. The written section will be a short test comprising dictation and answering questions about the life of the Buddha and the tenets of Buddhism entirely in Khmer. The oral section will involve a short oral presentation on a Khmer religious festival or area of Buddhist or animist belief, or on a religion not covered in class study (such as Islam) made to the class in

Khmer.

Week Three: Traditional Village Culture

Topics in this Unit include the contours of traditional Khmer social structure and belief systems and how these are expressed, both formally in media such as proverbs and vocabulary relating to social status, and informally in everyday colloquial conversation. To explore these topics we will analyze and memorize several Khmer proverbs and read several advanced folk tales (ភ្នំសំពៅនិងព្រះគោព្រះកែវ) which interact in complex and interesting ways with Khmer geography, ecology, politics and history. We will also learn the basics of the Khmer rice-farming cycle, including a wide range of terms used in talking about it (planting, transplanting, harvest, etc.). We will watch a movie about Khmer rice farmers and focus in on several short segments in which rice-farming practices are discussed. These topics are also covered in LCA 413, but here we will approach them at a deeper level, and learn additional vocabulary not covered by Intermediate students. Related to this topic, we will learn the names of the lunar months in Khmer. We will study in detail two advanced Khmer folk tales (see above) with historical significance and relating to several of the themes of this Unit and also to specific geographical locations in Cambodia. We will engage with this folk tales beyond simply the written word, by watching excerpts of film versions of them and interviews with native speakers discussing their significance. We will also learn a basic set of royal vocabulary terms necessary for understanding many advanced folk tales.

Students will write a detailed formal proposal (entirely in Khmer) this week, outlining the research they will perform for the next several weeks as part of their Independent Study Project.

At the end of this Week, students will be able to:

- discuss (at a moderately sophisticated level) several aspects of Khmer village life, including social structure and rice farming
- read two quasi-historical folk tales containing a good deal of royal vocabulary, and discuss their significance
- recite from memory three Khmer proverbs and be able to correctly use them in conversation
- recognize basic royal vocabulary
- type in a basic to moderately proficient fashion in Khmer Unicode

Week Four: The Language of Public Information

Topics in this Unit include decoding the meaning in advanced-level Khmer newspaper articles, and understanding the language used in print, television and radio commercials, formal announcements, and speeches. We will also quickly review មួល or “rounded,” formal style of Khmer script used in signs, advertising, book and newspaper headlines and various public documents. We will also study ways formal Khmer is used by organizations such as NGOs in presenting information to a mass audience. We will review (or, in the case of some students, learn for the first time) the basic rules for pronouncing words of Sanskrit and Pali origin in Khmer.

This week, students will also begin research on their Independent Study Projects.

At the end of this Week, students will be able to:

- read and discuss several advanced-level newspaper articles
- make a short formal speech using grammatical forms and vocabulary appropriate to addressing a mass audience
- demonstrate appropriate spoken and written use of several advanced grammatical structures learned from various readings in Units Three and Four
- read signs, newspaper article headings and document titles fairly easily in មួល script
- recognize several conventions of Sanskrit pronunciation and several Sanskrit roots
- write text suitable for use in a public service announcement, pamphlet used by an NGO or research questionnaire (depending on student interests)

The final exam will consist of an oral and a written section, but neither will be an “exam” in the traditional sense. The oral section will be a “Khmer television public service announcement” (PSA) produced with other class members in a pair or group (depending on class size). Each group will design and script a commercial or public service announcement using appropriate grammar and vocabulary, and then videotape the PSA. If students in the group lack facilities for and/or familiarity with video editing, the instructor will edit their video for them. Each group member must have a significant speaking role in the PSA. The written section will comprise a pamphlet, flyer or questionnaire associated with the content of the PSA (which must be typed in Khmer Unicode). The topic for the PSA does not need to be “serious”-- though it certainly can be--as long as it demonstrates appropriate use of structures and vocabulary covered in class.

Midterm exam: June 24

All images and recordings (video, audio) due for PSA: July 7

Written materials for PSA (pamphlet): July 12

LCA 514

Week Five: Contemporary Phnom Penh

Students will learn how to intelligently discuss (with educated Khmer speakers) a variety of issues relevant to contemporary life in Phnom, and become familiar with modern Phnom Penh popular culture. This will involve reading newspaper and magazine articles, watching and analyzing films and karaoke videos, and reading a contemporary short story set in Phnom Penh. Students will learn a range of vocabulary needed to discuss social and political issues and popular culture, as well as practical terms such as the names of Phnom Penh neighborhoods and administrative districts. Students will also read two short stories which take place in contemporary Phnom Penh.

Students will continue to do research for their Independent Study Projects.

At the end of Week Five, students will be able to:

- discuss social and political issues relevant to contemporary Phnom Penh with educated native speakers. These issues include pollution, traffic, the pros and cons of economic development, poverty, and the sex industry.
- identify major neighborhoods, landmarks and administrative districts of Phnom Penh and discuss their historical significance
- discuss several historically important films made in and set in Phnom Penh
- discuss two contemporary short stories set in Phnom Penh which deal with modern social and political issues
- understand poetic vocabulary used in contemporary Khmer popular music
- recognize important Chinese loanwords in modern Khmer and discuss the history and current situation of Sino-Khmers, especially in modern Phnom Penh

Week Six: History and Politics

A survey of Khmer history will be conducted, from pre-Angkorean times to the 1990s. Students will read scholarly articles analyzing several periods of Khmer history, including post-Angkorean, Colonial, post-Independence, Civil War (1970-1975), Khmer Rouge Era, and post-Khmer Rouge era (especially the 1980s). Students will

learn to recognize in print and use in conversation a wide range of educated vocabulary used to talk about history, development, government and politics. Special attention will be given to terms needed to discuss current and recent political events with educated native speakers raised in Cambodia. Excerpts from one or more novels and short stories which deal with historical and political themes will be read and analyzed. Several films dealing with various historical periods will also be viewed and discussed. Students will participate in a class elections activity with Intermediate students, forming political parties with those students and preparing campaign literature and speeches.

In this week students will finish up their original research for their Independent Study Projects.

At the end of Week Six, students will be able to:

- discuss in a broad fashion, using educated vocabulary, several periods of Khmer history and the key issues during those periods (which special emphasis on recent history)
- discuss politics in a broad fashion in Khmer, particularly concepts such as human rights and elections
- read and write written articles presenting, analyzing and offering opinions on key recurring themes in Khmer history and politics, using appropriate vocabulary
- present basic political concepts in formal spoken Khmer to a mass audience
- sing along to the Khmer national anthem (with lyric sheet)

Note that their work on the political parties/election activity will constitute students' mid-term grade for this course.

Week Seven: Classical Literature

In this unit students will learn (or in the case of some students, review) several important Khmer poetic meters used in classical literature prior to the 20th Century. Special emphasis will be placed on works from the 19th Century. Students will also watch movie versions and listen to pop songs and other media based on these literary works. Students will learn how to chant in several of the important poetic meters used in these works. Students will also learn about the historical and cultural contexts in which the various literary epics studied were first written down. Students will serve as mentors to Intermediate students during this week as those students write, practice

and perform a theatrical production based on Chapters 1-7 of the novel *Sophat*.

Students will begin final write-ups of their Independent Study Project research and begin to prepare their final oral presentations for next week.

At the end of this Unit, students will be able to:

- recognize several key poetic meters in Khmer
- relate, in narrative written and educated spoken Khmer, the main storylines and key themes of several important Khmer verse epics
- chant in at least two important poetic meters
- compose their own poems in at least two important poetic meters
- discuss, using appropriate terminology, key features of Khmer verse literature
- mentor others (in Khmer) in the production of a complex theatrical production using both colloquial and formal dialog, songs and traditional poetry chanting, in the style of a Khmer Lkhaon Bassac performance

Week Eight: Modern Literature

In this unit we will do a broad and quick survey/overview of Khmer narrative prose in the 20th Century. Students will read and discuss a key chapter from one or more Khmer novels from the 1940s to the present. A few contemporary poems may also be read, discussed and analyzed.

At the end of this Unit, students will be able to:

- discuss (at a moderately sophisticated level) key features of contemporary Khmer narrative prose/creative fiction, with special attention to the social and historical contexts in which the authors were writing, and how the novels and short stories relate to concepts of “being Khmer” and traditional culture vs. “modernity”
- recognize and (to a lesser extent) utilize in conversation and writing a range of poetic and literary descriptive vocabulary of the type commonly seen in novels, short stories, poems and pop songs
- write short analyses and discussions of contemporary Khmer literature in a format understandable and acceptable to educated native speakers

The final exam for the course will consist of several essay questions requiring students to synthesize class discussion they have had on several modern short stories they have read. In the last days of the course, each student will put finishing touches on

and carry out an oral presentation (and turn in written documents relevant to) the Independent Study project they have carried out for the course, beginning in Week Four. Work on this project will constitute 30% of the total grade for the course.

Holiday: Monday, July 4

Independent Study Project Presentations: August 4

**All final written materials and other documents due for Independent Study Project:
August 4**

Final Written Exam: August 5