

SEASSI Khmer Intermediate Syllabus

Languages and Cultures of Asia 413/414 are the equivalent of a year-long (two-semester) sequence designed to bring students well beyond “survival-level” Khmer to a level of speaking, listening and reading, writing proficiency which allows them to communicate in a basic fashion with educated native speakers on a variety of basic topics, including religion, traditional village culture and news and public information (including speeches and advertising). 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.

Non-native speaking students will benefit from special class hours (*Speaking Module*) dedicated to developing their command of informal, colloquial Khmer, especially the ways that the language is used to tell stories and express emotions and opinions. 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 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 problem areas of pronunciation. Except for explanations in English of difficult material from time-to-time, these lectures will be conducted mostly 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 313/314, self-study, or family experience, have attained a “survival” level of spoken Khmer proficiency. This will be determined in an intake evaluation conducted by the instructors on the first day of class. **The course assumes no prior knowledge of written Khmer**, although students who have already learned the basics of the writing system are welcome in the course. The literacy needs of students with prior knowledge of writing system basics will be served in the *Upper Level Literacy Module*, while students with no previous exposure to the alphabet will study in the *Accelerated Literacy Module*.

The First Week of the course will provide an intensive review of the basics of the alphabet and sight words for those with prior experience (*Upper Level Literacy Module*), and the first Three Weeks will provide an intensive introduction to the alphabet for those with no experience (*Accelerated Literacy Module*). It is "Accelerated" students' prior command of survival-level spoken Khmer, however, that will enable them to quickly “catch up” to those with prior knowledge of the writing system, so that by the second half of the second course in the

sequence (Week Seven in LCA 414), it is assumed that most students will be more or less equal in their literacy skills.

Course requirements:

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

Overall Class Participation: **45%** (*20% of this depends on whether or not you stick to using appropriate Khmer in the classroom...the more you use English or inappropriate Khmer, the more of those 20 points you will lose*)

Independent Study Project: **30%**

Weekly Dialog Journal : **5%** (Week Two onward)

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

Performance on mid-term (4%) and final exam (6%): **10%**

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.

Class assignments and other announcements will be posted on the class blog at <http://seassikhmer2016.blogspot.com> . Students are expected to check the blog at least once a day (preferably twice), and will be held responsible for everything posted there. After 7 am and 5 pm are good times to check.

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 the titles you will learn to use with them on the first day of class. Please respect both your instructors and fellow students by coming to class on-time. Laptops/iPads will not be allowed in class, except to access articles 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:

“Kamlang Phiasaa” 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>.

“Sophat” (Khmer novel with exercises and annotations) by Frank Smith (download-only). Available for \$15 from <http://www.studykhmer.com/textbooks/sophat.html>.

No physical dictionary is required for the course, but students may wish to purchase the Hippocrene Cambodian-English/English-Cambodian Dictionary. It’s not perfect (and note that the Khmer words in it are handwritten, which confuses some students) but it’s small, cheap, and goes in both directions. 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 instructor for more info on this. It is expected that all students will have Khmer Unicode installed on their computers by the end of the second week of class, and will have acquired basic Khmer typing skills by the end of the course. We will study typing in Unicode in class in Week Three.

Course Content:

LCA 413

Week One: “Classroom Spoken Khmer” and the Basics of the Writing System/Alphabet Review

We will use no phonetic transcription in this class; Khmer script only will be used from day one. In the first Week in *Accelerated Literacy Module* we will rapidly move through the Khmer consonants and vowels, including both “series” of vowel sounds. Students will also memorize (in reading and writing) at least 15 important “sight words” in Khmer. 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. *Upper Level Literacy* students will cover the material listed in the course content for the first three weeks for *Accelerated* students in the first *Week* of class, as review.

We will also review important vocabulary and structures which are typically learned in a Beginning Khmer course. A set of materials titled “*Bridge Materials*” (comprising mp3 audio recordings and printed material) will be provided to students in need of such review, free of charge. Another major goal of this Unit is to teach all students appropriate polite and respectful forms of verbs and other vocabulary, which are to be used at all times in the classroom. We will also learn 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.

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

- greet and converse with fellow students, teachers and elders using appropriately polite and respectful vocabulary and speaking style
- conduct themselves in body language appropriate to the Khmer classroom
- identify objects in the classroom and discuss a variety of typical school activities in Khmer
- understand typical teacher commands and respond appropriately
- ask questions regarding language learning in Khmer
- know the sounds of all 33 Khmer consonants and how to write them
- know the sounds of all Khmer vowels (first series) and how they are represented in the writing system

- be able to read and write at least 6 Khmer sight words
- narrate a simple folktale in Khmer

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. We will also continue our review of important basic vocabulary and grammatical structures typically covered in a Beginning Khmer class which may not be known by all students (especially in *Upper Level Literacy Module*). We will work with more folktales (especially in *Speaking Module*) and learn ways of describing a variety of common physical actions in Khmer (for some, this will be review). We will continue to polish our formal and polite “classroom Khmer,” and learn even more sophisticated ways to talk about language learning and other university-related activities. In our study of the writing system, we will learn the “rules” of the use of certain diacritics to alter the sounds of vowels and consonants, and memorize all of the consonant subscripts of Khmer.

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

- describe in a very basic 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 appropriately with Khmer Buddhist monks
- be able to perform two Buddhist chants from memory
- narrate several different Khmer folk tales, both in terms of description of action and generating spoken dialog
- read and write at least 15 additional Khmer sightwords
- read at least one short Khmer folktale
- know the sounds of all second series vowel sounds
- write all of the Khmer consonant subscripts
- correctly spell a series of unknown words based on knowledge of vowel rules
- be able to write Khmer numerals

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 in a mixture of Khmer and English. The oral section will involve a one-to-one meeting with the instructor during office hours, in which a short conversation on topics covered in class will take place.

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 folk tales. We will also learn the basics of the Khmer rice-farming cycle, including some very rudimentary 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. Related to this topic, we will review (in *Speaking Module*) ways of talking about the weather and the natural environment in Khmer, material normally covered toward the end of a Beginning Khmer course. We will also learn the names of the solar months in Khmer (spoken) and how to write (as well as speak) the names of the days of the week. We will study in detail one Khmer folk tale with historical significance and relating to several of the themes of this Unit, and in conjunction with that also learn to read/recognize some royal vocabulary. We will also learn the basics of typing in Khmer Unicode in this unit. In our study of literacy (*Accelerated Literacy Module*), we will learn additional diacritics and their function, and learn the rules of vowel governance and several spelling conventions. Also in this Unit, our grammar lessons (in *Grammar Module*) will turn away from review of material covered at the Beginning level and move toward more advanced structures commonly used in everyday conversation.

Students will write a formal proposal, due at the end of this week, detailing the work they will do on their Independent Study Project, the research for which will be carried out from Weeks Four through Seven. As much of the proposal should be in Khmer as is possible, but for difficult concepts and terminology English is fine.

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

- discuss (at a very basic level) several aspects of Khmer village life, including social structure, betel chewing, the weather, and rice farming
- read a quasi-historical folk tale containing some royal vocabulary
- recite from memory three Khmer proverbs and be able to correctly use them in conversation
- demonstrate command over several advanced grammatical structures covered in class
- read and narrate several additional Khmer folktales
- recognize and use appropriately additional respectful vocabulary and grammatical structures
- predict the sounds of vowels in unknown words based on knowledge of the rules of vowel governance
- type in a basic fashion in Khmer Unicode

Week Four: The Language of Public Information

Topics in this Unit include decoding the meaning in simple Khmer newspaper articles, and understanding the language used in print, television and radio commercials. We will learn to identify and isolate embedded clauses in Khmer newspaper articles, essential for understanding difficult and convoluted passages. We will also become familiar with the “Mool” or “rounded,” formal style of Khmer script used in signs, advertising and book and newspaper headlines. We will study some ways formal Khmer is used by organizations such as NGOs in presenting information to a mass audience. Our study of advanced colloquial grammatical structures in *Grammar Module* will continue. We will begin to learn some basic rules for pronouncing words of Sanskrit and Pali origin in Khmer, and learn some “educated” vocabulary items essential for discussing the news and other topics in Khmer.

Students will finalize all preparations for their Independent Study Project research this week,

including arranging interviews and locating written sources, and begin actual work on the Project.

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

- read and discuss several simple-to-moderately-difficult newspaper articles
- decode print advertisements in Khmer using knowledge of grammatical and sociolinguistic conventions
- make a short formal speech using grammatical forms and vocabulary appropriate to addressing a mass audience
- identify embedded clauses in Khmer prose
- recognize problematic consonants and vowels in Khmer writing using “Mool” or “rounded” script
- recognize several conventions of Sanskrit pronunciation and several Sanskrit roots
- be able to translate and write during dictation 10-15 important “educated vocabulary” terms commonly found in newspaper articles and advertisements
- write text suitable for use in announcements (such as advertising) intended for a general mass audience

The final exam will consist of an oral and a written section. The oral section will be a “Khmer television commercial” produced with other class members (mixed across *Accelerated and Upper Level Literacy Modules*) in groups. Each group will design and script a commercial or public service announcement using appropriate grammar and vocabulary, and then videotape the commercial. Each group member must have a significant speaking role in the commercial. The written section will comprise the on-screen text for the commercial (which must be typed in Khmer Unicode) and also a written exam, which will include translation of important vocabulary items covered in the Unit and the reading and decoding of a short newspaper article.

Midterm Exam: June 24

Final Written Exam: July 8

LCA 414

Week Five: “Phnom Penh, Continued Study of the Language of Public Information, and an Introduction to the Novel *Sopha* [Chapters 1-2]

In this week we will begin reading the first Khmer novel, *Sopha*. At the same time we will continue our study of formal, “public information” Khmer which we began in LCA 413, by reading several newspaper articles about contemporary Phnom Penh. We will also watch two films about contemporary Phnom Penh and study several scenes from those films, paying special attention to colloquial spoken language that we can adapt for our own everyday speech. In lectures, we will learn about important Sanskrit/Pali roots and how to spot them in unknown Khmer words. We will also begin to learn about infixation and how a knowledge of how it works can help guess the meaning of unknown words. Finally, we will learn several grammatical structures from our reading of *Sopha* and practice incorporating them into

everyday speech.

Students will continue work on their Independent Study Project.

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

- use several grammatical structures (first seen in a contemporary novel) in everyday speech
- use several “educated vocabulary” items learned in readings
- understand the basic processes of infixation and apply it to word formation and guessing the meaning of unknown words
- make intelligent predictions about the meaning of unknown Khmer words of Sanskrit origin based on knowledge of several Sanskrit roots
- type Khmer at a higher level than that learned in LCA 413, through practice creating writing assignments using typed Khmer Unicode

Week Six: Khmer History and Politics, Continued Study of *Sophat* [Chapters 3-5]

In this unit, through watching videos and reading a variety of articles, we will learn important vocabulary and concepts necessary to discuss Khmer history and politics with educated Cambodians. We will watch interviews (in Khmer) on a variety of historical topics, and watch a documentary (in English) on the Khmer civil war. We will also watch and study a political educational video prepared for Khmer television in the early 1990s, which deals with important topics such as freedom of expression and the right to form and meet in political parties. In order to put new vocabulary learned into practice, we will engage in a number of spoken activities such as debates and the preparation and presentation of political (campaign) literature, in groups, for imaginary political parties, culminating in an "election" at the end of the week. We will continue our study of the novel *Sophat*, with special attention to incorporating colloquial and formal spoken material from the novel into our everyday spoken Khmer.

Students will finish up research for their Independent Study Project this week.

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

- describe (in broad overview form) several periods in Khmer history, with special attention to recent history
- understand basic discussions on popular issues related to Khmer history and prepare responses to typical questions about their views on history
- discuss a variety of political topics in Khmer with educated Cambodians using appropriate vocabulary and structures
- express their views and positions on broad political topics in appropriate written Khmer
- incorporate key vocabulary and grammatical structures from the novel *Sophat* into everyday speech
- use a wide range of “educated vocabulary” necessary to discussing the topics of politics and history in Khmer, in both spoken and written form

The written portion of the mid-term exam will consist of a combination of definitions of

important Khmer political terms and essay questions related to videos on historical and political topics which were viewed and studied in class. The oral portion will comprise students' speeches and presentations in the class elections activity.

Week Seven: Traditional Verse Literature, Continued Study of *Sophat* [Chapters 6-8]

We will study three types of traditional Khmer verse and read excerpts from three popular literary works using the three different types of meter. Students will also try their hand at composing poetry using the meters studied. We will continue our study of the novel *Sophat*, with special attention to incorporating colloquial and formal spoken material from the novel into our everyday spoken Khmer. We will also study several contemporary Khmer pop songs which make use of much of the same poetic vocabulary we find in traditional verse literature. We will also watch a feature film version of a Khmer epic poem and study several scenes from it.

The culminating activity of the week will be a student-written, designed and acted theatrical production of Chapters 1-7 of *Sophat* (prepared and practiced throughout the week, performed on Friday), modeled on the Khmer theatrical style of *Lkhaon Bassac* and directed and assisted by members of the Advanced class. All students will act in the play, and have spoken parts comprising either dialog, traditional poetry or song.

Students will begin preparing their final presentation on their Independent Study Projects this week.

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

- recognize and chant in three traditional Khmer poetry meters
- compose simple poems using the three poetic meters studied, and chant those poems
- discuss in a basic fashion, using appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures relevant to literary analysis, some of the major themes and topics in the novel *Sophat*
- demonstrate use in everyday speech and writing a wide range of new vocabulary items and structures learned in the novel *Sophat*
- demonstrate an increased poetic Khmer vocabulary learned from the study of poetry and pop songs
- memorize and perform dialog in a variety of styles, in the form of Khmer *Lkhaon Bassac* performance style

Week Eight: Conclusion of *Sophat* [Chapters 9-11], Final Independent Study Project Presentations

The majority of this week will be devoted to putting the finishing touches and presenting research done in each student's Independent Study Project, though time will also be devoted to a discussion of the final three chapters of *Sophat*.

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

- summarize (in written and spoken Khmer) several main themes in the novel *Sophat* using

appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures

-prepare and deliver a 15-20 minute oral presentation in formal spoken Khmer on the topic of their independent research carried out over the course of one month

The final exam will consist of a written exercise summarizing the novel *Sopha*.

Holiday: Monday, July 4

Final Class Presentations: August 4

Final Written Exam: August 5