



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Application for funding - DIIF

PART I – Applicant & project information

Applicant (for correspondence and notification)				
Last Name GARRETT		First Name FRANCES		
Sponsoring department: STUDY OF RELIGION		Email Address (must be UTOR): frances.garrett@utoronto.ca		
Co-Applicant (if applicable)				
Last Name PRICE		First Name MATT		
Sponsoring department: HISTORY		Email Address (must be UTOR): matt.price@utoronto.ca		
This project involves research on/with:	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Subjects	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Subjects	<input type="checkbox"/> Biohazards	<input checked="" type="radio"/> None of the above

Project Title: Mapping Buddhist Landscapes in Sikkim

Location(s) of proposed activity:

Country and city: Gangtok, Sikkim, India

Institution/Organization (if applicable): Zurmang Monastery, Sikkim

Dates of activity: April 1-June 5, 2016 (field portion to take place May 1-20)

Number of Arts and Science Undergraduates participating: 5

Total number of students participating (if different from above): 6 (one student from UTSC, funded through other sources)

Specify the course or academic program this project relates to: This project is built on courses in Buddhist and Himalayan Studies, Pilgrimage Studies, and Religion in the Public Sphere, taught in the Department for the Study of Religion, and the Hacking History courses taught in the History Department.

AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE: \$10,800

PART II – Details of proposed project

1) Please briefly describe the proposed project or activity, including the role of any collaborating individuals or organizations.

We propose to travel with a group of students to Sikkim, in Northeast India, to study Buddhist landscape and pilgrimage practices in the Himalaya. Many of the region’s mountains, lakes, forests, rivers, and caves are associated with Buddhist histories and as such are important pilgrimage sites for local peoples.

After visiting Buddhist monasteries in Darjeeling and Gangtok, including our project's host monastery Zurmang, we will travel by foot along the Singalila Range to document a series landscape features, such as caves, rocks and lakes, that are historically attested in Tibetan texts and that are present-day key pilgrimage sites for Sikkimese Buddhists. Prior to our trip, in Toronto, students will have studied the region over several planning meetings, with their preparatory readings including pilgrimage texts translated from Tibetan and existing accounts by travelers. In addition to visiting a place of exceptional religious, environmental and cultural diversity, students will learn specifically about Buddhist place-based histories and pilgrimage practices, and how to engage respectfully and knowledgeably as travelers alongside local communities.

This proposed trip converges with global recognition of the region's natural and cultural importance: Sikkim's Khangchendzonga National Park, with its cultural diversity and extraordinary range of sub-tropical to alpine eco-systems, is in the process of being recognised by UNESCO as a natural and cultural World Heritage Site. The region is home to Bhutia, Lepcha, Limbu, Sherpa, Tamang, Tibetan, Nepali, and other ethnic groups, who express their experiences of landscape through pilgrimage stories, Buddhist and shamanic ritual, and environmental knowledge. Climate change and adventure tourism have brought Himalayan mountains into the public eye more than ever – as scientists, the film industry, and the media begin to speak more forcefully about the dramatic role mountains play in shaping global environments, this project will offer students cultural, historical, and religious contexts for these conversations.

2) What are the planned outcomes for this project or activity? (e.g. research/joint conference with another University/performance at an international venue)

The group's objective will be to create an online guide to sacred places along the Singalila Range, directed at English-reading travelers to the region. At present few resources for visitors to the region are easily available, and none of these approaches its cultural and historical richness with any great degree of sophistication. The production of an online "guidebook" will not only grant students a remarkable opportunity to engage in public dialogue around their chosen fields of inquiry, but will also provide an important service to both local residents and Western tourists, who frequently come into conflict, based on mutual misunderstandings of religious and cultural practices. Students will document their experiences with audio-visual and written field essays and photography, and help to assemble the guide over a series of follow-up meetings with instructors in Toronto.

3) Is this project related to an academic course or a program of study? If so, describe how.

This project combines key teaching programs in the Department for the Study of Religion and the History Department. Religion teaches courses on Buddhist, Himalayan and Tibetan studies and Pilgrimage (RLG206, RLG372, RLG378, RLG215) that are directly relevant to the field experience targeted by this international studies proposal. It is also tied to the Religion in the Public Sphere program, and to its popular Service-Learning course (RLG426). Hacking History (HIS 495), taught yearly since 2010, is the keystone of a History department initiative to train History students in digital humanities methods as well as local history practices and theories, through engagements with local historical organizations to create online public history projects. This project's design brings the Hacking History model of community engagement through new technologies to an international location. This project's design requires two instructors, given their complementary areas of expertise: Garrett teaches in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies and Buddhist Studies, and Price teaches in digital humanities and public history. The project is designed specifically to unite these two areas and thus both instructors will lead the group.

4) Are there long-term outcomes for this project (e.g. a new program, new international opportunities for Arts and Science students)? How are they sustainable? What criteria and

methods will be used to measure success of the proposed project?

We would be interested in seeing this project develop into a new program bringing public-history-oriented student research and community engagement to an international arena. This project has been designed to bring students and international communities together in a form of engaged scholarship that we believe encourages a transformative vision of the University’s place in a rapidly-evolving landscape of knowledge production. Foregrounding conversations between academics, students, and mountain dwellers, this project is designed with the conviction that such partnerships are vital to the health of the public sphere, the future of the University, and the production of knowledge. If we can continue to find support for this kind of program, we would be interested in developing it further. Garrett (as PI) and Price (collaborating as researcher and public history and community engagement expert) have applied for a SSHRC Insight grant to support a five-year research project focused in Sikkim, which is the inspiration for this proposed teaching initiative.

5) How is the planned project or activity different from current international opportunities available for Arts and Science undergraduates?

This project is unlike an International Course Module Program in that it is not associated with a particular course, but rather a series of courses in two departments; additionally, the work conducted by students here is not graded.

6) How will you share these experiences with the wider Arts and Science community?

The project’s most public outcome is a website that will be accessible internationally. The website has two main functions: first, to provide a public record of the group’s progress throughout the learning experience; second, and with wider import, to craft a lasting resource for visitors to Sikkim with an interest in the history and religious significance of this Himalayan region. During the excursion (May 1-20), the site will operate as a blog for students and instructors. Blog postings will also be shared through social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). On the group's return to Toronto, materials collected and worked on throughout the trip (photographs, essays, audio-visual recordings, etc.) will be assembled into geographically-tagged exhibits, which together will comprise a research-enhanced “tour book” with particular attention paid to historical and religious dimensions. The group will also be available for university presentations about their work at FAS Go Global Week events and other public events run through the Religion or History departments.

7) What are the preliminary plans for meeting U of T [Safety Abroad](#) guidelines?

In addition to participating in U of T Safety Abroad programs, our trip will be hosted by Zurmang Monastery in Sikkim. This major institution in the region will arrange a monastery stay for several days, coordinate travel permits in Sikkim, and identify skilled and knowledgeable local drivers and guides who will accompany us for the entirety of the trip. Our connection with this highly placed local institutional host is critical to the program’s success and safety. Both instructors traveling with students are currently trained in First Aid, and prior to this trip they will take a Wilderness First Responder certification course. Both instructors combine extensive experience traveling in remote and high altitude regions of Asia or in deep wilderness areas in other parts of the world.

PART III – Itinerary and Budget Information

BRIEF ITINERARY (list dates and daily activity)

Dates	Location	Activity
April 1, 8, 15, 22	Toronto	Preparation workshops on Buddhist practice,

		Sikkimese culture and history, public history practice
May 1	Depart Toronto for Sikkim	Depart Toronto for Sikkim
May 2-5	Outside Gangtok, Sikkim	Monastery stay at Zurmang; observe monastic life and ritual
May 6-7	Gangtok, Sikkim	Tour Gangtok, visit Namgyal Institute of Tibetology
May 8-16	Singalila Range	Trekking along Singalila Range to pilgrimage sites
May 17-19	Darjeeling	Heading via Darjeeling to airport; visit Darjeeling museums and Buddhist sites
May 20	Depart for Toronto	Fly back to Toronto
May 25, May 31, June 5	Toronto	Post-trip fieldwork assessment, data processing plan, and website workplan; Group build of website

ESTIMATED BUDGET IN CANADIAN DOLLARS

Item	Amount and description	Total
Travel - Flights: Toronto – Gangtok, Sikkim, India	\$1700 x 5 students	\$8,500
Food & Accommodations – each student will be provided a \$500 stipend to cover these costs (see below)		
Car rental, including driver and fuel, to and from Singalila Range and around Gangtok, 6 days total	\$100/day	\$600
Local guide for travel along Singalila Range	\$500	\$500
Wilderness First Responder course for instructors	\$600/each	\$1200
Subtotal		\$10,800
Other funds received – Dept for the Study of Religion’s instructional initiative fund will cover travel and expenses for one faculty member, plus provide audio/video/photography equipment (\$2200 plus in-kind contribution of equipment). The Ho Foundation Buddhist Studies Program at UTSC has offered a supplementary grant of \$8540 to cover travel and expenses for the second faculty member, a GPS unit and solar chargers, and honoraria for Namgyal Institute faculty to provide orientation lectures for the group; this grant includes a \$500 stipend for each participating student to cover room and board. A UTSC student will join the group with this support.		(\$10,740)
Other funds applied for - Garrett and Price have applied for a SSHRC Insight Grant focused on pilgrimage in Sikkim; if this funding comes through it will also augment resources for this student project.		
Total Amount Requested		\$10,800