

LECTURER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Event



LAC Office Hours

Time: March 7, 2025, 12-1pm

Zoom: <https://columbiauniversity.zoom.us/j/91759831842?pwd=iD9p67oP0EhFug4fqGoL3Wlt7Vfhk.1>

Thinking about running for a LAC seat? Curious about what the LAC does? Have questions, concerns, or suggestions for the LAC? We want to hear from you! Join us to chat about the role, objectives, and functions of the LAC, how to get involved, and all things related to lecturers.

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Celebrations

The North American Society for Serbian Studies Book Prize

The [NASSS Book Prize](#) is awarded annually to distinguished authors of books published in English on aspects of Serbian social and cultural history. In 2024, the prize was awarded to the co-edited volume *Zenithism (1921-1927): A Yugoslav Avant-Garde Anthology* (Academic Studies Press, 2023). *Zenithism* was co-edited by literary translator Steven Teref, and **Columbia Senior Lecturer Aleksandar Bošković (Department of Slavic Languages)**.

2024 Office of the Provost Teaching & Learning Grants for Innovative Course Design

- Seth Cluett, Lecturer in the Discipline of Music

for Innovative Course Module Design (Start Small!)

- Zhongqi Shi, Senior Lecturer in Chinese in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALEKSANDAR, SETH AND ZHONGQI!

Featured Lecturer



**SONAM TSERING,
SENIOR LECTURER IN TIBETAN
DIRECTOR OF THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES & CULTURES**

At the recent A&S Strategic Vision meeting, Columbia's language programs were recognized as being world-class, with a special mention of Tibetan. Can you tell us about the program you helped develop?

The Tibetan Language Program at Columbia is rapidly evolving into a major center for Tibetan language instruction. Columbia is the only university in the West with two full-time lecturers dedicated to Tibetan language instruction, and our program is distinguished by the number of institutions we serve. Our language courses are offered at Cornell and Yale through the Shared Course Initiative at the Language Resource Center and at CUNY and NYU (among others) via the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium (IUDC). Our program has the highest student enrollment among Tibetan language programs in the West.

We also play a leading role in developing innovative instructional materials. Unlike many other programs in the West, we prioritize spoken Modern Tibetan, providing students with skills to engage with native speakers and conduct fieldwork research. Spoken Tibetan is the primary means of communication in Tibetan communities, and we ensure that our students are exposed to the diverse linguistic landscape they will encounter in real-world settings. We integrate materials such as literature, news reports, and video clips from Tibet and the diaspora and have developed a series of custom textbooks and workbooks at the third-year level.

Additionally, we have worked to make these materials available to those lacking Tibetan language resources. Since Fall 2024, we have collaborated with Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Wisconsin to create a multimedia, interactive online Tibetan textbook that will be hosted by MSU Libraries, funded in part by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Looking ahead, I plan to continue this collaboration to develop more advanced open-resource textbooks so that students and educators worldwide can access our structured resources for free. Through these efforts, Columbia's Tibetan Language Program is establishing itself as a leader in the field, and our impact continues to grow.

What advice would you give to new lecturers at Columbia?

I encourage incoming lecturers to actively engage with the broader community of language instructors—at Columbia, across the country, and worldwide. Connecting with colleagues has been invaluable for improving my teaching practices and has opened doors for collaborations, grants, and professional development.

Can you share a little about yourself?

I was born and raised in northeastern Tibet. My parents were teachers, and I spent my early years living with them on campus. In my early twenties, I moved to northern India and later studied in London. This is my eleventh year teaching Modern Tibetan at Columbia, where I offer three levels of language courses each term and direct the Tibetan language program. Teaching Tibetan—and learning how to teach it—is my passion.

What core principles guide your teaching?

I strive to create a classroom culture where everyone feels comfortable, supported, and engaged. I treat my class as a community and aim to make language learning natural, immersive, and authentic. In class, we work together as a team, learning from one another and helping each other achieve individual goals. This sense of community shapes both the classroom atmosphere and the curriculum. I create my own instructional materials, drawing from a variety of media resources to connect students with the real, living Tibetan-speaking community. This approach makes learning more dynamic and relevant.

This interview has been condensed and edited.