

Sanskrit for Philosophers

**An introduction to the philosophical, religious, and scientific use
of the Sanskrit language**

*Prof. Dr. Robert Zydenbos, Institut für Indologie und Tibetologie,
LMU Munich, Munich, Germany*

Format: 2 hours per week

Prerequisites: interest in the subject; general aptitude for learning languages

Language of instruction: English

Dates: October 17, 2022 to February 6, 2023

Time: Mondays 16:00 to 18:00 (4 to 6 PM) CET, online (through Zoom)

Optional: 3 ECTS credit points (LMU registration and exam required)

Contents:

- Description of the course
- Topics to be discussed
- Required materials
- ECTS credits
- Registration

Description of the course:

This course is intended for beginning learners who are not students of Indology but of, for instance, philosophy or religious studies and are not (yet) primarily interested in reading and translating entire Sanskrit texts but want to be able to judge whether an already existing translation of a philosophical, religious or otherwise non-belletristic text is reliable, or why a translator has translated a piece of Sanskrit in a particular manner.

The course teaches not the entire gamut of Sanskrit grammar and stylistics, but only what is necessary for reading average scholarly or technical Sanskrit. The basic idea behind this course is that the language of such texts is a mere subset of the Sanskrit language; just as one need not be a fully trained classicist in order to understand older European philosophical, theological and other scholarly texts in Latin, one need not have mastered Sanskrit in all its expressive potentiality in order to understand what the authors of such texts wish to convey to their readers.

At the end of this one-semester course, the participants will not yet be able to read entire texts with ease, but they will be able to understand, with the help of a good dictionary and some patience, the contents of short passages, or to check the correctness of short translated fragments of Sanskrit texts. Also, the knowledge that has been gained through this course can serve as a basis for a further, perhaps autodidactic, study of Sanskrit.

Possibly there will be a sequel to this course in the summer term 2023.

Topics to be discussed:

Sanskrit grammar (morphology, phonetics, syntax, sandhi); the use of dictionaries; the main categories of philosophical literature in Sanskrit; and the basic characteristics of the style of scholarly writing in Sanskrit, supported by the actual reading of samples of philosophical literature in class.

Required materials:

A good manual of Sanskrit grammar and a dictionary will be required, and although online sources exist, it is strongly recommended that the learner has a dictionary and a grammar of one's own on good old-fashioned paper. (Further reading materials will be supplied digitally in the form of PDF documents.)

Dictionaries:

M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (reprinted innumerable times by various publishers; the standard student's dictionary throughout the Western world; also <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2020/web/webtc/indexcaller.php> or <http://monierwilliams.com>)
Cologne Digital Sanskrit Dictionaries: <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de>

Grammars (recommended, but not the only good ones):

W.D. Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar* (contains more or less everything one could possibly want to know; [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Sanskrit_Grammar_\(Whitney\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Sanskrit_Grammar_(Whitney)))
J. Gonda, *Kurze Elementargrammatik der Sanskrit-Sprache / A Concise Elementary Grammar of the Sanskrit Language* (concise and handy)
M. Mayrhofer, *Sanskrit-Grammatik / A Sanskrit Grammar* (still briefer than Gonda)
A.F. Stenzler, *Elementarbuch der Sanskrit-Sprache* (notoriously old-fashioned, but still in widespread use in the German-speaking world)

ECTS credits:

Optionally, participants can acquire 3 ECTS points by successfully passing a written examination (Klausur) at the end of the course. There are no fees for students of the LMU; students from outside must register as external students with the relevant bureau of the LMU and pay the necessary fee. Students at partner universities in the European ERASMUS program should contact the relevant bureau at their home universities for enrolment and eligibility for examinations.

Registration:

Those who are interested must apply with the teacher (Prof. Zydenbos: email sfp@lrz.uni-muenchen.de) by September 25, 2022, with a few words of helpful information about yourself: why you want to join the course, and foreign languages you have already learnt (if any). In order to facilitate the active participation of all participants, the number of admissions will necessarily be limited. Those who wish to write the exam and earn ECTS credits must also register with the LMU, as mentioned above. There is no fee for students who do not wish to write an exam.

Caveat: All the above has been stated in the assumption that the technical and administrative possibilities and situation at the LMU will remain the same throughout the winter term as at the time of writing (which we may presume will be the case).