

Sanskrit 181

Introduction to Sanskrit

University of Hawaii at Manoa
Fall 2014

Timing: The Course will meet for a total of 200 minutes per week.

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Description: This course is an introduction to the classical languages of ancient and early medieval South Asia. It covers the entire basic grammar in addition to developing foundational skills in reading Sanskrit texts.

Required Texts:

1. Goldman and Sutherland-Goldman, *Devavāṇīpraveśikā: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language*.
2. Macdonnel A.A. *A Sanskrit Grammar for Students*.

Objectives:

Student Learning Objectives: By the end of this course students will have

1. a mastery over basic declensions and conjugations
2. basic skills in reading and analyzing texts
3. basic skills in speaking and understanding simple interpretive Sanskrit (it is a useful skill to be able to ask and answer basic grammatical questions about a text in Sanskrit, which in turn helps to internalize some of the interpretive styles of the traditional commentaries)

In this two-semester course, we cover the entire grammar of the classical language, we develop a working vocabulary, and we practice reading and translating progressively more authentic texts until gradually only reading real texts. When we finish the basic grammar some time during the second half of next semester, we will devote the rest of our time to reading Sanskrit texts, both applying and reviewing what we have learned. We will work simultaneously to hone our knowledge of the multiplicity of forms, as well as our feel for 'how the language works', its styles, idioms, etc. By the end of this course

you will be prepared to read Sanskrit texts such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, *Manusmṛti*, basic works of *śāstra*, etc. with the aid of a dictionary. You will also be able to understand and reply to simple interpretive questions in the language. In other words, you will know the language and have a modicum of speaking competence.

Sanskrit has a vast grammar and vocabulary that are inevitably overwhelming for the beginner. On the bright side, it is a ‘learner’s language’, a language that has only been known by academic instruction for well over two millennia; thus it is systematic and logical in a way that no more natural language is: it is tailored to learning.

Still there is no way to make Sanskrit easy. It is extremely challenging. The only way to do it is by investing a lot of time and patience. Anyone can do it, but it takes time, patience, and a lot of studying.

This course will require a considerable investment of time outside of class. Expect to study at least two hours a day alone or in a group. Working together in a study group is in fact a great way to share the challenge of first-year Sanskrit.

Schedule: We will be working primarily from the textbook *Devavāṇīpraveśikā*, at the rate of roughly one lesson per week. (Macdonnel’s more exhaustive but less readable grammar will be used as a supplement) Realistically it takes a bit longer to complete some lessons than others, so we will hopefully conclude the first semester somewhere around lesson 12. The exact schedule will evolve as we progress.

Evaluation:

Your grade is made up of the following three components 1.homework/attendance-participation (verse recitation) /quizzes: 50% 2.midterm 20% 3.final exam 30%.

After each lesson, you will be required to complete all the exercises in *Devavāṇīpraveśikā*. You will also be required to grade your own homework using an answer key, which I provide. You will receive full credit 100% for simply completing the homework by the deadline. Since our schedule is slightly flexible, I will announce when the homework is due in class. Do not fall behind on your homework.

There will be 2 or 3 short quizzes in addition to the midterm and final. These are intended to help consolidate your knowledge. Think of them more as a study-aid, than anything else, though they will also give you a chance to perform, to apply what you have learned. Again the dates will be announced in class. The midterm (**tentative date: October 22nd**) and final exam (**see online schedule**) will both be cumulative.

Tentative Schedule:

Week 1 (8/27; 8/29) Lesson 1 Sounds; Roman Orthography

Week 2 (9/3; 9/5) Lesson 2 Devanāgarī

Week 3 (9/10; 9/12) Lesson 3 *Sandhi*

Week 4 (9/16;9/19) Lesson 3 *Sandhi* (Continued)

Week 5 (9/23; 9/26) Lesson 4 Parts of Speech: Verbs, Nouns, Sentences

**Week 6 (9/30; 10/3) Lesson 5 More Nouns;
Demonstrative Pronouns**

**Week 7 (10/7; 10/10) Lesson 6 Clauses,
Interrogatives; More Nouns**

Week 8 (10/15; 10/17) Lesson 7 The ten classes (*gaṇa*) of verbs

**Week 9 (10/22; 10/24) Lesson 8 MIDTERM More nouns, the imperfect *laṅ*;
preverbs (*upasarga*)**

Week 10 (10/29; 10/31) Lesson 9 More nouns, passive constructions

Week 11 (11/5; 11/7) Lesson 10 Verbal adjectives, past passive participle (*ktā*)

**Week 12 (11/12; 11/14) Lesson 11 possessive suffixes, past active participle (*ktavatu*);
'absolute' (*tvānta/lyabanta*); the imperative**

Week 13 (11/19; 11/21) Lesson 11 continued

Week 14 (11/26; 11/28) Lesson 12 More nouns, Nominal compounding (*samāsa*)

Week 15 (12/3; 12/5) Lesson 12 continued

Week 16 (12/10; 12/12) Review; Practice

ATTENDANCE: You cannot afford to miss class. Barring a medical or other serious emergency (in which case I will try to help accommodate you) you should never plan to miss class.

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“The Sanskrit language is of a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either.”

--Sir William Jones, Third Address to the Asiatick Society of Bengal, 1786

“Sanskrit is a celestial language repeated by great sages.” –Daṇḍin 7th century

saṃskṛtaṃ nāma daivī vāg anvākhyātā maharṣibhiḥ /

