

Khmer 100A Syllabus

Intermediate Khmer (Khmer 100A) is one-half of a year-long 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. 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.

This class is also offered to students at UC-Irvine and UCLA, which are Quarter System schools. UC-Berkeley students taking this class will meet 4 times for speaking practice before the other schools join us, on the following days (from 4-5 pm):

Wednesday Aug. 24

Thursday Sept. 1

Monday Sept. 8

Thursday Sept. 15

On Thursday, Sept. 22, we will begin the regular class schedule of Monday through Thursday, 4-5:30 pm.

Course prerequisites:

This course is intended for students who, through completing courses such as Khmer 1A-B, self-study, or family experience, have attained a “survival” level of spoken Khmer proficiency. This will be determined in an informal interview with the instructor 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 also welcome in the course.

The first two Units of the course (a little over a month total) will provide an intensive review of the basics of the alphabet and sight words for those with prior experience, and an intensive introduction to the alphabet for those with no experience. It is 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 third Unit of the course, it is assumed that most students will be more or less equal in their literacy skills. Those who are far ahead of the curve will be given more difficult readings or held to a higher level of understanding of/interaction with texts that are being read by the rest of the class at the same time.

Course requirements:

Students will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Class Participation: 45%
- Quizzes: Four quizzes will be given on alphabet basics; the lowest score will be discarded, and rest averaged: 10%
- Homework, including a “dialog journal” (one written page in Khmer on any topic) handed in every two weeks, beginning in the second Unit, and online writing assignments toward the end of the semester: 20%
- Final Exam: 15%
- Mid-term Exam: 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 Unit, students will be able to...”) listed in this syllabus.

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 55% of your grade. If you do miss class, it is *your responsibility*--by checking with the instructor or fellow students--to find out what you missed and cover the necessary material in time for the next class. You may utilize office hours to make up for material missed because you didn't attend a class, but only within reason...in other words, you can't use office hours to make up for class time you choose to miss on a regular basis or to an excessive amount.

Also note that if you're having trouble with any of the material in the class, you are expected to come to office hours for help. If you consistently show low grades on quizzes and exams, inability to keep up with the rest of the class in activities, incomplete memorization of vocabulary, alphabet, etc., and I don't see you seeking help in office hours, then I can only assume that you don't care about doing well in the class, and I will grade you accordingly.

The instructor must always be addressed by the title you will learn to use with him on the first day of class. Please respect both your instructor and fellow students by coming to class on-time. No cellphone activity or non-class-related laptop activity will be permitted in class, including texting.

Office hours: Via Zoom, 3-4 Tuesday and Thursday, or by appointment. Zoom Meeting ID: 536 352 7405; password to be provided over e-mail before the class begins.

Textbook:

“Kamlang Phiasaa” by Frank Smith. Includes videos, audio tracks of vocabulary and structures and clickable alphabet chart. Available as a \$42 download from <https://studykhmer.com/textbooks/heritage.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 third unit of class (the instructor will provide the deadline for the current semester in class), and will have acquired basic Khmer typing skills by the end of the course.

Course Content:

Unit One: “Classroom Spoken Khmer” and the Basics of the Writing System (September 22-October 6)

We will use no phonetic transcription in this class; Khmer script only will be used from day one. In the first Unit 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. We will also review important vocabulary and structures which are typically learned in a Beginning Khmer course. 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 Unit 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

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

Unit Two: Khmer Buddhism (October 10 – October 24)

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. We will work with more folktales (spoken only) 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 Unit 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 Khmer vowels (first series) and how they are represented in the writing system
- know the sounds of all second series vowel sounds
- 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.

Unit Three: Traditional Village Culture (October 31 - November 10)

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 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, 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 will turn away from review of material covered at the Beginning level and move toward more advanced structures commonly used in everyday conversation.

At the end of this Unit, 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
- 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
- write all of the Khmer consonant subscripts
- 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

Unit Four: The Language of Public Information (November 14 - November 21)

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. Our study of advanced colloquial grammatical structures 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.

At the end of this Unit, 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
- 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 written exam for the course will involve practical application/synthesis of several articles read late in the semester.

Midterm Exam: October 27

Review: November 28 and 29

Final Written Exam: December 1