

Laura Harrington
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EMPLOYMENT:

Senior Lecturer Boston University, Department of Religion, Boston, MA	2021-present
Lecturer Boston University, Department of Religion, Boston, MA	2009-present
Visiting Assistant Professor Wesleyan University, Department of Religion, Middletown, CT	2007-2008
Visiting Assistant Professor Trinity College, Department of Religion, Hartford, Connecticut	2003 – 2006
Adjunct Instructor New School University, Eugene Lang College, New York, NY	1996-1999

EDUCATION:

Columbia University, New York, NY

Ph.D. in Religion, September 2002

M.Phil. in Religion, December 1997

M.A. in Religion, September 1995

Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

B.A. in Religion, May 1986

Area of Concentration: History of Religions – South Asian traditions

Awards: Phi Beta Kappa; Trench Prize for Excellence in Religious Studies

AWARDS:

BU Professional Development Award, Spring 2026

Hoover Institution Library & Archives Scholar Research grant, Spring 2024

Lane Cooper Foundation, Dissertation Writing Fellowship, 2000-2001

President's Fellowship, Columbia University, for research at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, India, 1997-1998

Department of Religion Advanced Research Grant, Columbia University, Summer 1997

Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) award, Columbia University, Summer 1994

President's Fellowship, Columbia University, 1993-1997

PUBLICATIONS:

Works in Progress

Cold War Karma: Buddhism, Development, and the Cultural Politics of Knowledge. Book manuscript is one-third completed.

Contributing Editor, with Robert Barnett. *New Perspectives on Tibetan Traditionality: Reading Tibetan Texts Against the Grain* (in progress)

Books:

Contributing Editor. *Tibetan Astro-Science.* Rome: Tibet Domani, 2000.

Contributing Editor. *Kalachakra.* Rome: Tibet Domani, 1999.

Articles and Book Chapters:

"The Greatest Movie Never Made." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 30, Issue 3 (2021).

"Believer, Religious Studies, and the Public." *Immanent Frame*. July 6, 2017.

"Mañjusri" In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

"Probing Beneath the Surface: On Prajñā." In *Vimalakīrti's Workshop: A Festschrift to Robert Thurman*. Columbia University Press, 2016.

"Exorcising the Mandala: Kālacakra and the Neo-Pentecostal Response." *Journal of Global Buddhism* 13 (2013): 147-171.

"Where Angels Fear to Tread: Neurophenomenology and the Matter of Belief." *Religion*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2012), 643-648.

"Anti-Catholicism and Protestant Reformism in the History of Western Imagery of the Buddhist Monk: Some Roots of the Modernist Monk." *Buddhist Studies Review*, 28.2 (2011), 203-232.

"Mañjusri" In *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Buddhism*. Ed. Richard Payne. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

"The Feeling of Buddhahood, or Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Body, Belief and the Practice of Chod." In *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

"Opening the Buddha's Jewel Casket: Gendun Gyatso's Kalachakra Commentary on the *Manjushri Nama Samgiti*." In *As Long as Space Endures: Honoring His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Transmission of Dharma to the West*, edited by Edward A. Arnold. Ithaca: Snow Lion Press, 2008.

"Crossing the Great Divide: 'Tradition' and 'Modernity' in Tibetan Modern Art." *Journal of Material Religion*, Volume 4, Number 1, March 2008, 88-90.

On Fire! A Catalogue of Tibetan Tantric Art. New York: Arnold H. Lieberman, 2007.

"Manjushri." In *Holy People of the World: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Phyllis Jestice. New York: ABC Clio, 2004.

"Bon: the Seed Foundations," "Chinese and Indian Contributions," "Kalachakra Tantra and Astronomy" and "Inter-Relationship of Medicine and Astro-Sciences." In *Tibetan Astro-Science*, edited by Laura Harrington, pp. 11-21 and 23-29. Rome: Tibet Domani, 2000.

"The Life of Shakyamuni Buddha," "An Overview of Buddhist Philosophy," "Introduction to Tantra," "Shambhala" and "The Kalachakra Tantra." In *Kalachakra*, edited by Laura Harrington, pp 13-26 and 37-46. Rome: Tibet Domani, 1999.

Select Reviews

"Review of *Spacious Minds: Trauma and Resilience in Tibetan Buddhism* by Sara E Lewis. *CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*. 2021, Vol. 58(5)

"Review of *Readings of Śāntideva's Guide to Bodhisattva Practice*" edited by Jonathan C Gold and Douglas S. Duckworth." *CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*. 2020, Vol. 57(8)

"Review of *Battling the Buddha of Love: a Cultural Biography of the Greatest Statue Never Built* by Jessica Falcone." *CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, 2019, Vol. 56(8)

"Review of *Guge—Ages of Gold: the West Tibetan Masterpieces*. *CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, 2017, Vol.54(11)

"Review of *Gathering of Intentions: a History of a Tibetan Tantra* by Jacob Dalton." *CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, 2016, Vol. 54(2)

"Faculty Picks: 5 Great Books on Buddhism." *Choice Reviews Online*, 02/01/2015, Vol.52 (06),

"Review of *Being Human in a Human World: an Intellectual History of Medicine in Early Modern Tibet* by Janet Gyatso." *CHOICE: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, 2015, Vol.53(1),

SELECT PRESENTATIONS:

"Shaken, Not Stirred: Richard Gard, the CIA, and the Invention of Cold War Buddhism." *Keynote Lecture, Buddhism and the Cold War* (Hybrid Conference), University of British Columbia, Vancouver & Online, June 27, 2025.

"The Greatest Movie Never Made: The Life of the Buddha as Cold War Politics." *Diverse Lives: Narratives of Śākyamuni Buddha in Text and Image*, International Conference of the Ghent Centre for Buddhist Studies (GCBS) and the Royal Museum of Mariemont, Mariemont, Belgium, October 18, 2024.

"Teaching Buddhism: American Incarnations." *Religious Worlds of New York* (NEH Summer Institute), Interfaith Center of New York, July 20, 2021.

"Buddha Fights the Cold War: The Greatest Movie Never Made." *AAS-in-Asia*, Online, September 3, 2020.

"Teaching Buddhism: American Incarnations." *Religious Worlds of New York* (NEH Summer Institute), Interfaith Center of New York, July 21, 2019.

"Making the Dharma Safe for Democracy." *Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, Denver, CO, November 18, 2018.

"The Asia Foundation and Cold War Culture: A Workshop on Sources, Methods, and Histories." Invited participant, Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, June 2017. Cosponsored by the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures.

"Cold War Karma: A Brief History of Buddhist Studies and the CIA, 1951–59." *Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, Boston, MA, November 18, 2017.

"Globalizing Tantra: Evangelical Christianity and the Kālacakra Tantra." *New England–Maritimes Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, Boston, MA, April 2014.

"Barbarians at the Gate: Transformations of the Tibetan Myth of Shambhala through the Age of Globalization." *Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, Baltimore, MD, November 24, 2013.

"Understanding Hinduism: Body, Belief, and the Role of Images in Hindu Thought and Practice." *Invited Lecture*, Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, April 2013.

"The Man Who Wrote Sūtras in the Sky: Gene Smith and Digital Dharma." *Digital Religion: Knowledge, Politics, and Practice Series*, New York University, New York, NY, February 14, 2013.

"Exorcising the Maṇḍala: Evangelical Christian 'Warriors' and the Kālacakra Tantra." *Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, San Francisco, CA, November 19, 2011.

"Alternate Pathways: Mediating the 'Modernity–Tradition' Divide." *International Association for Buddhist Studies*, Atlanta, GA, June 28, 2008.

"Literary Alliances and Technologies of Tantra: Gender and Other Concerns." *Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, San Diego, CA, November 22, 2007.

"Reforming the Priests of Manipe: A Genealogy of the Buddhist Monk-Scientist." *Smith College*, Northampton, MA, November 8, 2007.

"Re-imagining Tibetan Tantra: The Pitfalls and Promises of Visual Culture Studies for the Exploration of Tantric Ritual." *Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, Philadelphia, PA, November 21, 2005.

"Sand Maṇḍalas: The Architecture of Enlightenment." *Plenary Lecture*, Austin Arts Center, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, January 12, 2005.

"Maṇḍalas, Mahāsiddhas, and Magic: Tantra and Its Art in *The Himalayas: An Aesthetic Adventure*." *Invited Lecture*, Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, October 2003.

"On the Category of the Secular." *Invited Lecture*, Columbia University Workshop on Tibet: Sources of Modernity, Weatherhead East Asian Institute, New York, NY, April 12, 2003.

"Crossing Boundaries: The Changing Roles of the Cakrasaṃvara Tradition in India and Nepal." *Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies*, New York, NY, March 27, 2003.

"The Empire Strikes Back: British Buddhists, Brahmins, and Bhimrao Ambedkar." *School of International and Public Affairs*, Columbia University, New York, NY, April 18, 2000.

"Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī." *Invited Lecture*, Tibet House / The Open Center, New York, NY, March 1999.

SELECTION OF COURSES TAUGHT:

Buddhism: An Introduction

Exploration of primary Buddhist philosophical concepts, practices and movements in their historical and social contexts through formal analysis of primary texts and images.

Buddhist Art of Asia

A study of the history, philosophical underpinnings, use and social significance of Buddhist art in India, Indonesia, Tibet, China and Japan. Special attention given to the representation of key Buddhist concepts through visual narrative strategies.

Buddhism in America

Historical overview from the Chicago's World Parliament of Religions of 1893 through Japanese-American internment camps, Beat Generation and counter-culture movements, Engaged Buddhism and Reagan neoliberalism. Highlights select contemporary topics in American practice, including mindfulness and racial justice in Theravada, Zen and Tibetan Buddhist communities.

Buddhist Literature

Critical reading and analysis of selected works of Buddhist literature from India, Tibet, Japan and the contemporary United States.

Comparative Asian Medical Traditions

Upper-level seminar on the history, content and philosophical underpinnings of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Indian Ayurveda and Tibetan Medicine with guided analysis of core medical classics including the *Caraka-Samhita*, the Tibetan *rGyud-bzhi* and the *Huang-ti nei-ching*.

Culture, Society & Religion in South Asia

Interdisciplinary exploration of South Asian cultural region with special attention to the complex and shifting ways in which religious belief and practice help produce identity.

Death and Immortality

Undergraduate lecture course exploring the ways a range of religious and philosophical traditions, both Euro-American and Asian, have attempted to accept, deny, defeat, or transcend death. Emphasis on the intersection of thought with social practice, including contemporary issues such as school shootings, #BlackLivesMatter and Transhumanism.

Hinduism

Examination of the intersection of Hindu thought and practice in the lives of Hindu men and women of diverse backgrounds that emphasizes careful, critical reading of key primary texts, including the myths, philosophical discourses, and scholarly literature on current issues.

Introduction to Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

Introductory seminar that examines Buddhist thought and practice in historical, social and cultural context.

Religion and Film

Seminar on the religious imaginations of American films from Cold War to the present. Explores how religious practitioners negotiate secularism, globalization and radical technological change.

Religions of Asia

An analysis of practices and primary texts of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, complemented by exploration of relevant current issues.

Sacred Journeys

Introductory seminar on works of classic and contemporary writings that feature sacred journeys: quests or travels that wrestle with some fundamental question of human existence.

The Way: Antiquity and the Medieval World

Writing-intensive exploration of Aristotle, Confucius, Laozi, texts from India and the Middle East, Virgil, the Gospels and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Tibetan Buddhism

Upper-level seminar on the history, philosophy and practice of Tibetan Buddhism through an examination of key histories, myths, poems, images, biographies and religious discourses. Special emphasis placed on the intersection of Buddhism and politics in the context of present day Tibet.

ACADEMIC SERVICE:

Boston University

Doctoral Thesis Consultant
Guided Study Advisor
Teaching mentor

Wesleyan University

Senior Thesis Advisor
Faculty Advisor to a theme-based campus housing initiative entitled "Buddhism House."

Trinity College

Senior Thesis Advisor
Academic Advisor
Faculty Advisor for *Students for a Free Tibet*, a national educational and activist organization.
Faculty Advisor to a theme-based campus housing initiative entitled "Religious Exploration."

ACADEMIC CONSULTANCIES:

Zen Center North Shore, Beverly, MA. 2019-present

Executive Board member and guest lecturer to a non-profit Zen Buddhist community organization developing a racial-justice platform.

Smithsonian Institution: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC, 2017-2018

Private consultant to the Education Department on a selection of Tibetan art objects. Responsibilities include public lectures, the production of web site materials, and a written report on the identification and function of 66 *tsakali* folios.

Columbia University, Weatherhead East Asian Institute, New York, NY, 2006 – 2009

Project Coordinator overseeing the creation of a Reader on Tibetan culture entitled *New Perspectives on Tibetan Traditionality* for use in undergraduate and graduate courses in religion and world civilizations. Responsibilities include soliciting, reviewing and editing submissions in tandem with scholars from Harvard University and Columbia University.

Columbia University Press – Treasury of the Buddhist Sciences Series, 2001-present

Member of the Editorial Board which reviews and evaluates Tibetan and Sanskrit textual translations, including the *Kālacakratāntra*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, Nāgārjuna's *Yuktṣaṣṭikā* and *The Range of the Bodhisattva* (*byang chub sems dpa'i spyod yul*).

Five College Buddhist Studies Faculty Seminar, Northampton, MA, Spring 2006-present

Invited participant of bi-monthly Working Group that discusses and critiques the current projects of its members and sponsors presentations by selected guest scholars.

**The Center for Religion and Media at New York University, New York City, NY
Fall 2004-Fall 2005**

Invited member of the CRM's 2004-2005 Working Group on "Mediating Asian Religions," a scholarly think-tank organized to explore the impact of multiple medias on contemporary religious experience.

**The Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, Trinity College,
Hartford, CT Fall 2004-2006**

Invited participant of bi-weekly Study Group dedicated to exploring the influence of religion on politics, civic culture, gender roles, and other issues in the United States and internationally.

LANGUAGES:

Translation competence in Classical Tibetan, Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, French.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:

American Academy of Religion
Association of Asian Studies
American Studies Association
International Association of Buddhist Studies