

Susan Zakin
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Teaching and Research Interests

Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, South Asian Religious History, Critical Approaches to the Study of Religion, Ritual Studies, the Religious Imagination, Esoteric Buddhism, Gender and Religion

Education

University of Chicago, The Divinity School, September 1999 – present
Program of Study: History of Religions (current Ph.D. candidate)
Areas of Specialization: Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, Theory and Method in the Study of Religions

University of Washington, Comparative Religion Program, M.A. 1999, with Honors

Wesleyan University, Religious Studies, B.A. 1988 (junior year at University of Wisconsin College Year in Nepal, 1986-87)

Dissertation

“The Gift of Death: Acts of Imagination in the Ritual of gCod”

This dissertation explores the role of imagination in a Tibetan Buddhist ritual in which the practitioner visualizes sacrificing her body to gods, demons, and all beings, in order to realize the Buddhist Perfections of Generosity and Wisdom – the realization of no-self. I analyze the role of imagination and memory as disciplinary practices in the ethical formation of the practitioner, examine the ways in which thinking and acting are intertwined in Tibetan visualization practices, and interrogate how the ritual can be understood as a “spiritual exercise” in the sense used by Pierre Hadot.

Advisor: Matthew Kapstein

Readers: Bruce Lincoln and Christian Wedemeyer

Doctoral Examinations

History of Religions: Contemporary Theory (examiner: Bruce Lincoln)

History of Religions: Religions of Tibet (examiner: Matthew Kapstein)

History of Religions: Religions of India (examiner: Wendy Doniger)

Philosophy of Religions: 20th Century Continental Philosophy (examiner: Arnold Davidson)

Fellowships and Awards

Center on South Asian Studies (COSAS) Dissertation Writing grant, Summer 2009, Winter 2010, Fall 2010 – Spring 2011

Martin Marty Center Dissertation Fellowship, 2009-2010

University of Chicago Divinity School Perrin Fund Travel Grant, Summer 2006

Wabash Fellow, Wabash Forum on Pedagogy, University of Chicago, 2002-03

Foreign Language Area Study (FLAS) Fellowship, University of Chicago 2002-03

University of Chicago Divinity School Fellowship, 1999-2002

Foreign Language Area Study (FLAS) Fellowship, University of Washington, 1998-99

Graduate Webb Scholar, Comparative Religion Program, University of Washington, 1997-98

Chester William Fritz Scholarship in the Humanities, University of Washington, 1997

Outstanding Graduate Student Paper of 1996/97, Pacific Northwest Region of the American Academy of Religion

Presentations

"Visualizing Selflessness: The Habituation of Memory and Imagination," Theory and Practice in South Asia (TAPSA) Workshop, May, 2010

"The Gift of Death: Acts of Imagination in the Ritual of *gCod*," Buddhist Studies Workshop, June 2008

"Self and Self-Sacrifice in the Tibetan Ritual of *gCod*," graduate student forum at the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Bonn, Germany, August 2006

"Engendering the *gTerma* Tradition: How Two Buddhist Biographies Propagate Treasure Texts," Buddhist Studies Graduate Student Conference, University of Virginia, April 8, 2000

"Tibetan Sacred Biography and Sectarian Identity," South Asia Center Workshop, University of Washington, May 27, 1999

Teaching Experience

Adjunct Faculty, Loyola University Chicago

Theology 197: *Introduction to Buddhism*, Spring 2004, Spring 2011

Theology 196: *Introduction to Hinduism*, Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Fall 2010

Theology 170: *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, Fall 2010

Theology 199: *Religions of Asia*, Fall 2005, Spring 2006, Fall 2006, Fall 2007, Spring 2008

Theology 177: *Religions of India*, Spring 2005

Lecturer, University of Chicago

Second Year Tibetan (Classical Literature), Autumn 2009 and Spring 2007

Lecturer, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Religious Studies 600: *Religion in Critical Perspective*, Spring 2008

Adjunct Faculty, Dominican University

Theology 276: *Religions of Asia*, Fall 2006

Writing Intern, Humanities Common Core, College of the University of Chicago

Humanities 14000/14100/14200: *Reading Cultures*, 2008-09; 2009-10

Humanities 115/116/117: *Philosophical Perspectives*, 2002-03

Humanities 123/124/125: *Human Being and Citizen*, 2001-02

Teaching Assistant, University of Chicago

Divinity School 301: *Introduction to Religion and the Human Sciences*, Fall 2001

Teaching Assistant, University of Chicago

Psychology 274/374: *Psychology of Religion*, Spring 2001

Teaching Assistant, University of Washington

Religion 202: *Introduction to Eastern Religions*, Winter 1998 and Spring 1999

Editorial Experience

Editorial Assistant to the Director of Communications (Terren Wein), The University of Chicago

Divinity School, June 2009 – present

Research Assistant/Editorial Assistant to Matthew Kapstein, University of Chicago, Summer 2006

(*Buddhism between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein [Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009]).

Editorial Assistant, *History of Religions* journal, University of Chicago, July 2001-September 2005

Other Experience

Seattle City Attorney's Office

Harassment Victim's Advocate, January 1993 – September 1999

Languages

Tibetan, Sanskrit, French, German

References

Matthew Kapstein, Wendy Doniger, Christian Wedemeyer, Terren Wein