

Constance Kassar, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Lawrence University

Main Hall 411, Appleton, WI 54911

920-832-7177

constance.e.kassar@lawrence.edu

<http://constancekassar.net>

EDUCATION

Emory University, Ph.D. Religious Studies (West and South Asian Religions), 2014

Smith College, B.A. Philosophy and Buddhist Studies, 2005

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

2016-present Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

Lawrence University, Appleton WI

2013-2016 Visiting Lecturer of Religion, Philosophy, and Buddhist Studies

Smith College, Northampton, MA

2012-2015 Instructor and Course Developer for Online Learning Program

Rangjung Yeshe Institute, Centre for Buddhist Studies at Kathmandu University

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

2020-2021 **National Endowment for the Humanities Scholarly Editions and Scholarly Translations Grant**, for the translation of *The Synopsis of Madhyamaka* (\$99,972)

2020 **Mortar Board Honorary Award**, given to a faculty or administrator who best advances the spirit of scholarship, recognizes and encourages leadership, and provides service at Lawrence University.

2020-2021 **Sacred Writes Public Scholarship Fellowship**, for training in writing about religious studies for public audiences (\$1,000)

2019 **Maker Literacies Training Fellowship**, University of Texas at Arlington, for incorporating 3D printing projects into a course on Buddhist Studies (\$1,000)

2018 **Khyentse Foundation, Ashoka Grant**, for translation of *The Synopsis of Madhyamaka* (\$3,000)

2018 **Florence Tan Moesen Fellowship, Library of Congress**, for research related to the translation of *The Synopsis of Madhyamaka* (\$2,000)

2018 **National Endowment for the Humanities, Summer Stipend**, for translation of *The Synopsis of Madhyamaka* (\$6,000)

2017-2018 **National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar**, fellowship awarded to participate in a yearlong seminar examining issues surrounding "The Good Life," Lawrence University

- 2012 **Medieval Academy of America, Hope Emily Allen Dissertation Research Grant**, for dissertation research in Kathmandu, Nepal (\$2,000)
- 2012 **National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Research Institute**, fellowship awarded to participate in the summer seminar “Investigating Consciousness” at the College of Charleston
- 2012 **Laney Graduate School Research Grant** for dissertation research in Nepal
- 2011-2012 **Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship** to assist with the exhibit, *Mandala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism* at the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Art, Emory University
- 2010-2011 **Fulbright Institute of International Education Fellowship**, Kathmandu, Nepal
- 2009 **Laney Graduate School Research Grant** for dissertation research in Nepal
- 2007 **Laney Graduate School Training Grant** for Tibetan language study in Nepal

LANGUAGES

- Classical Tibetan (reading fluency)
- Modern Tibetan (conversational)
- Sanskrit (reading fluency)

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles and Book Chapters

- “Thompson Is Not a Buddhist, But What About the Rest of Us?” *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2021).
- “The Context(s) of ‘Correct Seeing’: Truth and Fiction in Tibetan Madhyamaka” *Philosophy East & West*, vol. 69, Issue 1 (2018).
- “Is Gorampa’s ‘Freedom From Conceptual Proliferations’ Dialetheist? A Response to Garfield, Priest, and Tillemans.” *Philosophy East & West*, Vol. 63, Issue 3 (2013).
- “Gorampa Sonam Senge on the Refutation of the Four Extremes,” in *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 22 (2011).
- “Buddhism in American Prisons.” *TransBuddhism: Transmission, Translation, Transformation*, Nalini Bhushan, Jay L. Garfield, and Abraham Zablocki, eds., Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press (2009).

Other Publications

- “Gorampa Sonam Senge.” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion*, Wiley (Forthcoming).
- “Review of Jan Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*.” *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy* (Forthcoming).
- “Buddhist Studies has a Whiteness Problem.” *Contending Modernities Blog*, <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/global-currents/buddhist-studies-whiteness/> (March 23, 2021)

Religious Lessons From Asia To the World: A Spiritual History With Real-Life Takeaways, an audiobook for The Great Courses and Audible (2020).

“Patience Isn’t Passive.” *Lion’s Roar*, <http://www.lionsroar.com/patience-isnt-passive/> (November 27, 2020)

“The Discomfort of Compassion.” *Tricycle Magazine: Trike Daily*, <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/discomfort-compassion/> (April 24, 2018)

“Review of *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*.” *BuddhaDharma: The Practitioner’s Quarterly* (2016).

“Remembering the Great Masters: Gorampa Sonam Senge.” *Melody of Dharma Magazine*, issue #6 (2011).

“Gorampa [go rams pa].” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011, updated 2020).

Works in Progress

Accounting for Awakened Awareness: The Madhyamaka Philosophy of Gorampa Sonam Senge (monograph, under review with Wisdom Publications).

The Synopsis of Madhyamaka, an English Translation of *dbu ma'i spyi don* by Go rams pa bSod nams Seng ge.

Tibet: History, Culture, and Religion, a 24-lecture video course for The Great Courses (under contract, scheduled to be released in 2022).

INVITED TALKS AND PUBLIC LECTURES

“Buddhist Studies at The Shala NYC,” a weekly series of lectures on Buddhist history, philosophy and social justice (March 3 – June 23, 2021)

“Organizing Time to Prioritize Research,” for the Ho Centre for Buddhist Studies at the University of Toronto’s *How Do You Do It?* Series (online, 2021).

“Anger and Sticks, Compassion and Fire-Pits: Buddhist Perspectives on How to Live a Good Life” Mortarboard Society Last Lecture Series, Appleton, WI (February 19, 2020).

“The Tricky Business of Innovation in Buddhist Philosophy” Rangjung Yeshe Institute, Kathmandu, Nepal (August 1, 2019).

“Put On Your Shoes!” Baccalaureate address to the class of 2019, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI (June 10, 2019).

“Two Wings of a Bird: Wisdom and Compassion” Paine Art Center and Gardens, Oshkosh, WI (March 22, 2019).

“No-self, Karma, and Rebirth” Paine Art Center and Gardens, Oshkosh, WI (March 20, 2019).

“How to Win Debates and Influence History: A Case Study From 15th-Century Tibet,” Smith College Alumnae South Asia Lecture Series, Northampton, MA (February 4, 2016).

“We Are What We Pretend To Be: Constructing Identity Through Argument in Tibetan Buddhism,” Emory University, Atlanta, GA (September 4, 2014).

- “Thinking the Unthinkable: Rational Analysis, Nonconceptuality, and the Philosophy of Gorampa Sonam Senge,” Rangjung Yeshe Institute, Kathmandu, Nepal (July 30, 2013).
- “The Two Truths: The Scaffolding of Madhyamaka,” International Buddhist Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal (November 12, 2012).
- “Madhyamaka in Tibet and Beyond: History, Development, Innovations,” International Buddhist Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal (November 11, 2012).
- “What Does it Mean if Emptiness is Really Empty?” International Buddhist Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal (April 3, 2011).
- “Why Study Gorampa? – On His Influence in Tibet, and Why He Should Be Influential in the West,” International Buddhist Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal (March 20, 2011).

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- “What are Buddhist Philosophers Doing When They ‘Do Philosophy?’” American Academy of Religion annual meeting (December 9, 2020).
- “Polemics! Who cares?” Congress of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Paris, France (July 13, 2019).
- “Automatic Ethical Action in Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy,” American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting, Denver, CO (February 21, 2019).
- Workshop organizer, THATCamp (The Humanities and Technology Camp), American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Denver, CO (November 15, 2018).
- “Making Sense of Space and Time with Digital Tools in the Classroom,” Emory Digital Humanities Symposium: DH for the study and teaching of South Asia, Atlanta, GA (April 6-7, 2018).
- Panelist, “Responses to *Muslim Superheroes: Comics, Islam, and Representation*,” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Boston, MA (November 18, 2017).
- “The Roots of Compassion: Leaning Into Our Own Discomfort,” Five College Conference for Compassionate Leadership, Amherst, MA (April 16, 2016).
- Panel organizer, “Women and Buddhist Philosophy,” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Atlanta, GA (November 21, 2015).
- “Rhetoric and Marginalization Through a Tibetan Buddhist Perspective,” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Atlanta, GA (November 21, 2015).
- “Tibetan Buddhists on Knowing How: Intellectualists, Anti-Intellectualists, Both, or Neither?” American Philosophical Association Central Division meeting, St. Louis, MO (February 18, 2015).
- “Accounting for Appearances in Go rams pa bSod nams Seng ge’s *dbu ma’i spyi don*,” 17th Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Vienna, Austria (August 22, 2014).
- “Nonimplicative Negation and Paraconsistency in Gorampa’s *spros pa dang bral ba*,” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Francisco, CA (November 18, 2011).
- “The Suppression and Resurgence of Gorampa’s Philosophy,” Fulbright South and Central Asia Conference, Goa, India (March 15, 2011).

- “Toward a Development of Western Madhyamaka: Who Does Nāgārjuna Want Us To Be?”
Madhyamaka and Methodology Symposium, Smith College, Northampton, MA (April 24, 2010).
- “How Do Buddhas Experience Emptiness, and What Does It Mean For the Rest of Us?”
International Seminar of Young Tibetologists, Paris, France (September 7, 2009).
- “Affirming and Negating Negation: Cataphatic and Apophatic Treatments of the *Catuskoṭi*,”
American Academy of Religion Buddhist Philosophy Group, Chicago, IL (November 19, 2008).
- “Gorampa, Negation, and the Tetralemma: A Critique of Tsongkhapa’s Approach to Emptiness,”
Stanford Graduate Religion Conference on Transcendence, Stanford, CA (April 20, 2008).

TEACHING

Lawrence University

Yoga: Theory and Practice; Meditation: Psychological and Buddhist Perspectives; Buddhism and Gender; Happiness: Meditation and Science; Buddhism in East Asia; Hinduism; Religion and Comics; Introduction to Religious Studies; Seminar in Buddhist Philosophy: What is real, and how do we know?; Buddhism in India and Tibet; Religion in South Asia; First-Year Studies.

Smith College

Tibetan Buddhism; Buddhism in America; Buddhist Thought; Gender, Religion, and Popular Culture in South Asia; Religion in the Himalayas: Coexistence, Conflict, and Change; The Study of Buddhism; Buddhist Philosophy: Madhyamaka and Yogācāra.

Amherst College

Religion in the Himalayas: Coexistence, Conflict, and Change

Hampshire College

Asian Religious Traditions in Text and Practice

Rangjung Yeshe Institute, Centre for Buddhist Studies at Kathmandu University

Advanced Classical Tibetan Reading Seminar; Buddhist Key Points; Introduction to Classical Tibetan (online); The Tibetan Alphabet (online).

Emory University

Early and Medieval Buddhism; Technology and Pedagogy, A short course for Emory University's Teaching Assistant Training and Teaching Opportunity Orientation.

Study-abroad programs directed

Field Experience in Religious Studies: Buddhism in Asia: A two-term course at Lawrence University focused on Buddhist philosophy and practice, involving two weeks of intensive study at various sites in South and Southeast Asia (2017-present)

Five College Tibetan Studies in India Program: A one-month intensive study-abroad program for fifteen college students at the Central University for Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, India

(2013-2016)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- 2020-Present Chair, Children Dharma Education Curriculum, Sachen Foundation
- 2019-Present Editorial Board Member, Religion and Comic Books Series, Claremont Press
- 2018-Present Subject Editor (Buddhist Philosophy), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- 2018-Present Network Editor, H-Buddhism
- 2017-Present Community Conversations Facilitator, Lawrence University
- 2017-Present Meditation instructor, Lawrence University
- 2017-2019 Podcast host, *New Books in Buddhist Studies*
- 2016-Present Steering Committee Member, Buddhist Philosophy Group, American Academy of Religion
- 2013-2016 Director, Buddhist Studies Concentration, Smith College
- 2013-2016 Co-coordinator, Buddhist Studies Faculty Seminar, Five Colleges, MA
- 2008 Conference organizing committee member, XVth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Atlanta, GA