

McMaster University, Ontario

James Benn

Buddhist Studies at McMaster University

Buddhist Studies is an integral component of the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster, which has maintained a longstanding and continuous commitment to the academic study of Buddhism since 1964. Internationally renowned scholars such as Jan Yün-hua, Robert Sharf, and Koichi Shinohara have taught at McMaster. Distinguished graduates of the program in Buddhist Studies include: Dr. Gregory Schopen (MA, 1974), Professor of Indian Buddhism, University of California, Los Angeles; Dr. Albert Welter (PhD, 1987), Professor of Chinese Buddhism, University of Winnipeg; Dr. Chen Jinhua (PhD, 1997), Canada Research Chair in Chinese Buddhism, University of British Columbia; Dr. Kevin Bond (PhD, 2009), Assistant Professor of Japanese Buddhism, University of Regina.

There are three faculty members in the department who actively supervise graduate students in Buddhism. All three obtained their PhDs within the last ten years. Dr. Benn, Dr. Clarke, and Dr. Rowe are all highly active in disseminating their research through publications and conferences. With their three areas of specialization (medieval Chinese Buddhism, monastic Buddhism in pre-modern India, Buddhism in modern and contemporary Japan), Buddhist Studies at McMaster offers students extensive geographical and historical coverage of the subject. Despite their range of interests, Drs. Benn, Clarke and Rowe work in collaboration with each other and emphasize an understanding of Buddhism in its multiple social and historical contexts in their research and graduate training.

- **James A. Benn** (PhD, University of California, Los Angeles; MA, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; MA, BA, University of Cambridge), Associate Professor, Chinese Buddhism. At McMaster since 2005, his recent publications include: *Burning for the Buddha* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), and *Buddhist Monasticism in East Asia* (Routledge, 2009).

Web site: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/bennjam>

- **Shayne Clarke** (PhD, University of California, Los Angeles; MA, BA, University of Canterbury (NZ)), Assistant Professor, Indian Buddhism. At McMaster since 2006, his recent publications include: “Locating Humour in Indian Buddhist Monastic Law Codes: A Comparative Approach,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37/4 (2009), and “Monks Who Have Sex: Pārājika Penance in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37/1 (2009).
Web site: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/clarsha>

- **Mark Rowe** (PhD, Princeton University; MA, Princeton University; MA, Kyoto University; BA, McGill University), Assistant Professor, Japanese Buddhism. At McMaster since 2006, his recent publications include: “Death, Burial, and the Study of Contemporary Japanese Buddhism,” *Religious Compass*, 3/1 (2009), “Where the Action Is: Sites of Contemporary Sōtō Buddhism,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 31/2 (Fall 2004).
Web site: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/rowemar>

Over the past four years, the three core faculty members have completely revised the sequence of graduate seminars and comprehensive examinations so as to prepare MA and PhD students to become productive researchers and teachers of Buddhism. Students are required to take seminars with all three faculty members so that they receive training in Chinese, Indian, and Japanese traditions as well as theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of Buddhism.

We expect the students we train to be able to carry out original research in Buddhist Studies using primary sources in Asian languages. All of our PhD students are therefore required to master two canonical languages (e.g. Sanskrit, Pali, literary Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan) and to be able to employ modern languages relevant for research in Buddhist Studies. Under our guidance, students learn how to read and understand written texts, and develop interdisciplinary research skills as they employ historical, art-historical, and ethnographic materials.

There are currently six PhD students in Buddhist Studies (three in Chinese Buddhism, one each in Indian Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism, and Buddhism in North America), and two MA students (one in Indian Buddhism, one in Chinese). Our students come from China, Taiwan, Hong

Kong, and the United States, as well as Canada. In April 2010 five of our students gave papers at the North American Buddhist Studies Graduate Student Conference.

In 2009-10 we offered the following graduate seminars in Buddhist Studies.

RS 711 / Topics in Buddhist Thought and History: Indian Monasticism—Nuns

RS 715 / Readings in Indian Buddhist Texts

RS 718 / Topics in Buddhist Studies: Recent Scholarship

RS 719 / Topics in Modern and Contemporary Buddhism

McMaster University cooperates with University of Toronto in the Yehan Numata Buddhist Studies Program. In 2009-10 McMaster hosted the following events in that series:

Michael Como (Columbia University)

Lecture: Scandalous Monks and Healing Lineages in Ancient Japan.

Christian Luczanits (Universität Wien)

Reading Group: The Eight Great Siddhas in Early Tibetan Painting from c. 1200 to c. 1350.

Hiroko Kawanami (University of Lancaster)

Reading Group: Keepers of the Faith: The Buddhist Nuns of Sagaing Hills (documentary film) and “Can Women Be Celibate? Sexual Abstinence in Theravāda Buddhism.”

Will Tuladhar-Douglas (University of Aberdeen)

Reading Group: On Why It Is Good to Have Many Names: the Many Identities of a Nepalese God.

Alicia Turner (York University)

Intentionality, Performance and Identity: the Zediyingana Footwear Debates in Colonial Burma.

Nareshman Bajracharya (Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal)

Lecture: An Introduction to the Newar Buddhist Daśakarma Ritual.

Allan Grapard (UC Santa Barbara)

Lecture: What is a Three-Dimensional Mountain Mandala?

Reading Group: Mountain Mandalas. Friday, March 19, 2010, 4-6 pm

Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy (Université Laval)

Reading Group: Women in the Performing Arts: Portraits of Six Contemporary Singers.