

Manuel A. Lopez Zafra
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New College of Florida
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EDUCATION

Ph.D.	University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA	Religious Studies	August 2014
	Primary Religion: Buddhism; Secondary Religion: Chinese Religions		
M.A.	University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA	Religious Studies	May 2003
	Primary Religion: Buddhism; Secondary Religion: Chinese Religions		
B.A.	Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain	Humanities	June 1999
	Majors: Philosophy and Religion; Minor: Chinese History		

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Minzu University of China (Ch. 中央民族大学), Beijing, People's Republic of China.
Visiting Scholar at the *College for Tibetan Studies* at Minzu University.
January 2013 – August 2013.

Beijing Foreign Studies University (Ch. 北京外国语大学), Beijing, People's Republic of China.
Chinese Language Study, Intermediate level.
Summer 2002.

Tibet University (Ch. 西藏大学), Lhasa, T.A.R., People's Republic of China.
Studied Tibetan Language, Buddhism, Philosophy.
September 2000-July 2001.

Northwest Minorities University (Ch. 西北民族大学), Lanzhou, People's Republic of China.
Studied Tibetan Language & Culture and Chinese Language.
September 1999-June 2000.

PRESENT APPOINTMENT

- Assistant Professor at New College of Florida. Professor of Religion in the Humanities Department.
August 2016-Present.

PREVIOUS APPOINTMENTS

- Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire 2014-2016
- Instructor (Adjunct Faculty) at the University of Virginia (2011-2012)
- Teaching Assistant at the University of Virginia (2009-2012)
- Tutor for the Cavalier Athletic Support Program, *University of Virginia*. (2010-2012)

- Course Instructor and Curriculum Developer, [Universitat Oberta de Catalunya](#), Barcelona, Spain. 2005-2015

Instructor of a variety of classes related to East Asia in both Spanish and Catalan: *Pensamiento y Religión en Asia Oriental* (East Asian Religions), *Cultura Tibetana Contemporanea* (Contemporary Tibetan Culture), *Festes i Tradicions de la Xina* (Chinese Festivals and Traditions), and *Geografia Fisica i Humana de l'Asia Oriental* (Physical and Human Geography of East Asia). *Universitat Oberta de Catalunya is based in Barcelona, Spain and is an on-line university that offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, as well as continuing education.*
- Academic Director and Lecturer, [SIT Study Abroad's Tibetan & Himalayan Studies Semester Abroad Program](#) January 2003-June 2009. As director and lecturer for the program, I developed the various syllabi each semester and taught a variety of seminars like *Tibetan History*, *Tibetan Buddhism in Context*, *History of Buddhism*, *Ethnic and Religious Identity in Contemporary China*, *History of Bhutan*. I also taught a Field Research Methodology course and was an advisor for many of the students' month-long field research projects. During my tenure, the program developed close links with local communities, and a variety of reciprocity programs in which we funded specific institutions, like the [Amnye Machen Institute](#) in Dharamsala, India. In Bhutan, I developed an [exchange program between World Learning/ SIT and the Royal University of Bhutan](#) that is still ongoing.
- Spanish Instructor, *Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese at the University of Virginia*. (2002-2003)
- Philosophy Teacher, *High School IES Fort Pius, Barcelona, Spain*. (Spring 1999)
- Taught philosophy to high school students as part of the training to earn the Teacher's Diploma required in Spain to teach in public schools.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Book project *The Lamp of Contemplation* (currently under consideration at Yale University Press): I am currently working on a book project entitled *The Lamp of Contemplation: Meditation and the Construction of Tibetan Buddhism*. The book explores the process by which Tibetans developed their own contemplative systems after having imported meditative practices from India, China, and Central Asia during the early introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. My book also uses the Tibetan case to ask questions about the nature and practice of Buddhist meditation in general: What is meditation? What are its doctrinal foundations? And how do various Buddhist traditions justify the emergence of new and innovative meditative practices, different in their methods, and even in their goals, from those found in the earlier tradition?

The Lamp of Contemplation: Meditation and the Construction of Tibetan Buddhism explores these questions in the context of the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet around the turn of the first millennium through the life and works of the Tibetan scholar, Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé (10th century). Nupchen travelled tirelessly across the continent (Nepal, India, Gilgit) in search of Buddhist teachings and was exposed to the most relevant Buddhist contemplative systems of the period: the scholastic gradual approach popular in the great monasteries of India, the subtle but challenging techniques of the Chinese Chan (Zen) tradition, and the complex and antinomian ritual systems of the Indian Tantric tradition. Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé's main treatise, *The Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*, which will be the main work discussed in the book, is a direct reflection of his insatiable quest for knowledge, and offers a window into the rich Buddhist doctrinal debates during his time that took place across Asia about the nature and the goals of meditation.

Book Project - *From Suffering to Happiness: Buddhism and its Transformations in the West*

In his *The World as Will and Representation*, published in 1818, the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer discusses the Buddhist world view of life as suffering, enshrined in the Buddha's First Noble Truth, as a precedent to his own negative views of human nature, in particular, and existence, in general. Schopenhauer's emphasis on the Buddhist notion of suffering, which was mostly a misrepresentation of the original Pali term, *Dukkha*, was emblematic of early Western interpretations of Buddhism that presented the tradition as a pessimistic religion. This negative assessment of Buddhism has largely changed in contemporary Western presentations of the tradition. Most introductory textbooks still translate the term *Dukkha* as suffering, but their authors also take pains to contextualize this idea and offer a more complex interpretation of the original Pali term.

Parallel to the attempts by Western scholars to offer a more sophisticated and complex understanding of a Buddhist worldview, there have been very successful efforts over the last two decades by some important Buddhist figures to present Buddhism not as a religion rooted in suffering, but as one focused on the achievement of happiness. The Dalai Lama's 1998 book, *The Art of Happiness*, played an important early role in changing negative perceptions of the Buddhist tradition and its emphasis on "suffering." More recent books, such as Thich Nhat Hanh's *Happiness: Essential Mindfulness Practices*, published in 2009, have made this idea all the more prevalent by introducing it as one of the core principles behind the successful Mindfulness movement.

The goal of my book is to explore this evolution (from suffering to happiness) and the consequences that this has had on our understanding of the Buddhist tradition. Has Buddhism changed? Or is the West reinterpreting the Buddhist tradition to suit a different existential outlook on human nature? What are the roles of certain Buddhist figures in this transformation (including some Western teachers)? Are figures like the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh simply applying the old Buddhist practice of Skillful Means (Skt. *upāya*) in their explanation of Buddhism to a Western audience, or are they dramatically changing the nature of the Buddhist doctrine as its introduction to the West is evolving?

Early Dzokchen Literature Project (2008-2010). Graduate Assistant to the [Early Dzokchen Literature Project](#), directed by Prof. David Germano and Prof. Kurtis Schaeffer. Our goal is to create a searchable database outlining the complex history of the earliest Tibetan contemplative Buddhist tradition, the Great Perfection.

Asian Scriptural Reasoning Project (2012-2013). I was part of a collaborative project between the University of Virginia and the Chinese institutions of Minzu University and Renmin University (Ch. 中国人民大学), both in Beijing. The project, directed by UVa professor Peter Ochs, together with Minzu University professor You Bin and Renmin University scholar Yang Huilen, implements methods of [Scriptural Reasoning taught at UVa](#) onto East Asian textual traditions like Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, with the belief that the lessons learned in the inter-religious dialogues among Abrahamic traditions can be applied to the contemporary conversation between various religious traditions in China. We started preliminary work on the project the fall of 2012, and I helped with the project during my stay at Minzu University during the Spring of 2013. The Asian Scriptural Reasoning Project had its first big meeting at Minzu University in May 2013 in Beijing.

PAPERS and CONFERENCES

- Upcoming 2017 ASIANetwork Conference. Participant in the Panel “Global Cities, Local Memories in Japan,”** Chicago April 7-9.
- 2015 Invited to present the talk “From Suffering to Happiness: Buddhism and its Transformations in the West,”** at the South Asia's Fall Lecture Series at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on **October 8th**
- 2015 Invited to participate in the Wabash Workshop "Teaching Theology and Religion in the Twenty-First Century" at the University of Virginia, June 27-28.**
- 2015 Invited to present at the Harvard Buddhist Studies Forum, April 6, 2015, Cambridge, Massachusetts.** A Light in the Darkness: Meditation and the Construction of Tibetan Buddhism in 10th Century Tibet
- 2014 Buddhist Studies Graduate Conference at the University of Virginia, Feb. 28 - Mar. 02 Charlottesville, VA.** “Different Paths, Different Destinations: Contemplative Practices in 10th Century Tibet.”
- 2013 IATS (International Association of Tibetan Studies) in Mongolia, July 21-27 Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia** “The Great Perfection Tradition: A Tibetan Response to Indian Tantric Theory and Practice.”
- Graduate Student Conference in Buddhist Studies, University of Virginia Sept. 14-16, 2012.** Moderator of the panel *“Teaching Buddhism Today: Contemplative Techniques for the Classroom.”*
- American Academy of Religion 2011 Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California, November 19-22.** Presented the paper *Bringing New Light to Tibet’s Dark Age: The Lamp for the Eye in Meditation and the Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism.*
- Buddhist Studies Group at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, November 11, 2011.** Presented the paper *Re-examining the Textual World of Nupchen Sangye Yeshe’s The Lamp for the Eye in Meditation.*
- 2010 IATS (International Association of Tibetan Studies) in Vancouver, British Columbia, August 15-22, 2010.** Chair of the Panel *Society and Community.*
- SIT Study Abroad’s Annual International Workshop, Accra, Ghana, August 2008.** Delivered the talk: *Study Abroad and the Ethics of Reciprocity.*
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PUBLICATIONS

- “In Search of the Lost Manuscript: The Obscure Recension History of the Tenth Century Text *The Lamp for the Eye in Meditation.*” In Natasha Mikles and Benjamin Nourse, eds., *Reading Relics of Speech: Material Approaches to Tibetan Texts.* Leiden: Brill, forthcoming
- Review of *The Buddha Party: How the People’s Republic of China Works to Define and Control Tibetan Buddhism* by John Powers. Accepted for publication in *Nova Religio.*
- Review of *New World Dharma*, by Trevor Carolan. Accepted for publication in *Nova Religio.*
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HONORS and AWARDS

Invited to participate in the **ASIA Network Mellon Faculty Enhancement Program: Deepening Asian Studies in the Liberal Arts**, “Global Cities, Local Memories in Japan,” that will take place in Japan June 9-26, 2016.

UWEC Small Research Grant award to support my book project *The Lamp of Contemplation: Meditation and the Construction of Tibetan Buddhism*, Spring 2014.

Departmental nominee at the University of Virginia for the **Jefferson Scholars Foundation Dissertation Year Fellowship** 2013.

Summer Foreign Language Fellowship of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (University of Virginia). Dissertation Research Fellowship for Summer of 2013.

Arts Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Summer Research Fellowship (University of Virginia). Dissertation Research Fellowship for Summer of 2013.

Weedon/Penn Travel Grant (University of Virginia). Dissertation Research Fellowship for Summer of 2013.

Buckner W. Clay awards in the Humanities. Awarded in order to conduct research in China in the Summer of 2013.

Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (Title VI FLAS) August 2012 – 2013. Funds to conduct preliminary dissertation research at the University of Virginia (Fall 2012) and to carry out four months of field research in Beijing, China (Spring 2013).

Ellen Bayard Weedon Travel Grant. Awarded travel funds for Summer 2012 research.

GSAS Huskey Award, November 2011. Travel funds from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Virginia for the American Academy of Religion 2011 Meeting in San Francisco, California.

Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (Title VI FLAS) August 2010 - 2011. Awarded for the study of Tibetan and Chinese.

Research Sabbatical, SIT Study Abroad. Awarded for research on Tibetan diaspora communities (Spring 2009).

Ellen Bayard Weedon Travel Grant. Awarded travel funds and tuition for Chinese language study in Beijing, China (Summer 2002).

SERVICE and LEADERSHIP

Founder and President of the [Buddhist Studies Group at the University of Virginia](#).

Organizer of the [North American Graduate Student Conference in Buddhist Studies](#) which took place at the University of Virginia on September 14-16, 2012.

Professional memberships: **AAR** (America Academy of Religion), **IABS** (International Association of Buddhist Studies), **IATS** (International Association of Tibetan Studies)

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Spanish	Native Proficiency
Catalan	Native Proficiency
English	Highly Proficient in speaking, writing, and reading
Tibetan	Proficient in speaking, writing, and reading
Chinese	Proficient in speaking, writing, and reading
