

JOY C. BRENNAN
Kenyon College
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Appointments

Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Kenyon College	2022–Present
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Kenyon College	2015–2022
Visiting Instructor of Religious Studies, Kenyon College	2014–2015

Education

Ph.D., Philosophy of Religion, University of Chicago Divinity School	2015
M.A., Religious Studies, Indiana University	2007
B.A., Philosophy, <i>summa cum laude</i> with honors, Fordham University	2002

Fellowships and Awards

ACLS/Robert H.N. Ho Research Fellowship in Buddhist Studies (Fellowship taken during the 2022-2023 academic year)	2021
Mellon Humanities Dissertation Fellowship, University of Chicago	2013–2014
Martin Marty Junior Fellowship, University of Chicago	2012–2013
Committee on Southern Asia Studies dissertation write-up fellowship, University of Chicago	2011–2012
Karen Dinal Memorial Award for excellence teaching writing, U. Chicago	2012
University of Chicago Divinity School Fellowship	2009–2012
Jacob K. Javits Fellowship for Religious Studies, U.S. Dept. of Education	2005–2009
Blakemore Fellowship for Advanced Asian Language Study, Inter-University Program for Chinese language study, Beijing, China	2003–2004
Phi Beta Kappa	2002
Semifinalist scholarship (four-year full-tuition scholarship for National Merit Scholar Semifinalists), Fordham University	1998–2002

Publications

Works in Progress

Mind Only on the Path: Centering Liberation in Yogācāra Buddhist Thought. Monograph under contract with Columbia University Press. Manuscript submission in 2026.

Conversations in Buddhist Philosophy, co-edited with Karin Meyers. Edited volume to be published by Mangalam Press. Manuscript submission in 2026.

Works Edited

Journal of Buddhist Philosophy, vol. 7 (2025), special issue entitled “Society, Karma, Truth.” With articles by Jingjing Li (Leiden University), Timothy Loftus (Georgetown University Qatar), Sara McClintock (Emory University), Jessica Zu (University of Southern California), and myself.

Articles and Essays

“Karma, Intersubjectivity, and Collectivity in Buddhist Thought.” *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy*, vol. 7 (2025).

“We Make Our Worlds: A Buddhist Challenge to the Worldview of Economics.” *Journal of Economics, Management and Religion* (October 2025).

“Whiteness is a Sankhara: Racial Justice as Buddhist Practice”, co-authored with Ann Gleig. *Yin-Cheng Journal of Contemporary Buddhism* 1:1 (January 2023): 30-57. Open access availability at: <https://journal.yincheng.org/en/index>

“Out of the Abyss: On Pedagogical Relationality and Time in *Confessions* and the *Lotus Sutra*.” In *Augustine and Time*, edited by John Doody, Sean Hannan, and Kim Paffenroth; Rowman and Littlefield (2021).

“Who Practices the Path? Persons and Dharmas in Mind Only Thought.” In *Reason and Lives in Buddhist Traditions*, edited by Dan Arnold, Cécile Ducher, and Pierre-Julien Harter; Wisdom Publications (2019).

“A Buddhist Phenomenology of the White Mind.” In *Buddhism and Whiteness: Critical Reflections*, edited by George Yancy and Emily McRae; Rowman and Littlefield (2019).

“The Three Natures and the Path to Liberation in Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda Thought.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 46:4 (September 2018): 621-648.

Reviews

Review of Zu, Jessica X, *Just Awakening: Yogācāra Social Philosophy in Modern China*. H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews. April, 2026.

Review essay of *A Yogācāra Buddhist Theory of Metaphor*, by Roy Tzohar. *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 27 (January 2020). Open access availability at:
https://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/files/2020/01/Brennan_Review_of_Tzohar_A_Yogacara_Buddhist_Theory_of_Metaphor.pdf

Public-facing Essays

“The Karma of this Place”, a contribution to the Karmic Historiography Series, edited by Jonathan Gold for *The Immanent Frame*, August 2025.

“Deconstructing Whiteness” in *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner’s Guide*, Summer 2021. Also published in *Lion’s Roar* online.

“Karma is Both Individual and Collective” in *Tricycle Magazine*, Summer 2021.

“On Disciplines and Non-Knowing: A Reply to Agnes Callard” in *The Immanent Frame*, April 19, 2019.

“The Work of Education is the Loosening of Identity-Formations” in *The Craft of Teaching in the Academic Study of Religion: The official blog of the University of Chicago’s Craft of Teaching Program*, February 2016.

“The Impossible is Possible: On Teaching the Introductory Course” in *The Craft of Teaching in the Academic Study of Religion: The official blog of the University of Chicago’s Craft of Teaching Program*, October 2015.

“Your Moment of Zen” in *Sightings: Religion in Public Life*, December 2012.

Languages

Classical Chinese (reading for research)

Sanskrit (reading for research)

Modern Chinese (good reading ability; moderate-to-good listening and speaking abilities)

French (good reading ability for research)

Professional Associations

American Academy of Religion

American Philosophical Association, Central Division

International Association of Buddhist Studies

Presentations (* = Invited)

* Critic at Author Meets Critics panel on Jessica Zu's *Just Awakening: Yogācāra Social Philosophy in Modern China*. American Philosophical Association Central Division Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. February 2026.

*Critic at Author Meets Critics panel on Jed Forman's *Out of Sight, Into Mind: The History and Philosophy of Yogic Perception*. American Philosophical Association Central Division Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. February 2026.

*"Book Chat" Event on Jessica Zu's *Just Awakening: Yogācāra Social Philosophy in Modern China*. Hosted by the Levan Institute for the Humanities at the University of Southern California. Virtual/Zoom. February 2026.

* "How to Interpret Karma with Early Yogācāra Thought", presented at "Race, Caste, and the Challenge of Karma: Black Buddhist Perspectives", a two-day workshop organized by the Initiative for Black Buddhist Studies (IBBS) and the Black Buddhism Faculty Project of the Center for Culture, Society, and Religion (CCSR) at Princeton University. April 2025.

"A Yogācāra Buddhist Critical Phenomenology". American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Diego, CA. November 2024.

Panel respondent, "Creating Social Consensus: Karmic Storytelling, Karmic Reasoning and Merit Transfer". American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Diego, CA. November 2024.

* "Karma, Collectivity, and Intersubjectivity", Kenyon Philosophy Colloquium, Kenyon College. October 2024.

* Presenter at Nasr Book Symposium on Anthony Annett's *Cathonomics: How Catholic Tradition Can Create a More Just Economy*. Hosted by the Ansari Institute For Global Engagement with Religion at the University of Notre Dame. February 2024.

Organizer and roundtable discussant on Jingjing Li's book *Comparing Husserl's Phenomenology and Chinese Yogācāra in a Multicultural World*. American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Antonio, TX. November 2023.

Roundtable discussant on the concept of collective karma. American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Denver, CO. November 2022.

* "Whiteness as a Sankhara," given with Ann Gleig at the Oxford University Faculty Of Oriental Studies. Response given by Jessica Zu of USC Dornsife. (Delivered remotely.) January 2022.

* Presentation on ordination among American Buddhist women, Smith College's Spring

2021 class, Ordaining Women in America. (Delivered remotely.) April 2021.

* “Collective Liberation: Theory and Practice.” Given with Ann Gleig of the University of Central Florida. Zen Mountain Monastery, Mount Tremper, NY. (Delivered remotely.) March 2021.

Organizer and roundtable discussant on Roy Tzohar’s *A Yogācāra Buddhist Theory of Metaphor*. American Academy of Religion annual meeting (held remotely). November 2020.

“Mind Only as Diagnosis.” American Academy of Religion annual meeting (held remotely). November 2020.

* “Mind Only as Diagnosis.” Columbia Society for Comparative Philosophy, Columbia University. (Delivered remotely.) October 2020.

“The Whole Path in Each Dharma: The Concept of a Dharma According to Yogācāra and Huayan Thought.” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Diego, CA. November 2019.

* Teaching Religion in Public series, sponsored by the Center for Religion and the Human, Indiana University Bloomington. Topic: My TIF essay in response to Agnes Callard. September 2019.

* “Mind Only as Diagnosis.” Indiana University Bloomington, Religious Studies Department. September 2019.

* Faculty presenter at week-long Summer Institute in Buddhism, Bodhi Manda Zen Center, Jemez Springs, NM. June 2019.

* “The Path as a Philosophical Concept in Buddhist Thought: A Case Study.” Kenyon Philosophy Colloquium, Kenyon College. September 2016.

* “The Three Natures Path Theory and Its Soteriological Significance.” Rangjung Yeshe Institute, Kathmandu, Nepal. (Delivered remotely.) April 2016.

“Gender and Karma, Then and Now.” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Atlanta, GA. November 2015.

“Inversion, Clinging, and the Three Natures.” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Atlanta, GA. November 2015.

* “Buddhist and Secular Meditative Traditions: Points of Convergence and Departure.” Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, John Carroll University, Cleveland, OH. March 2015.

“The Abandonment of Arising in Yogācāra Thought.” American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Chicago, IL. November 2012

“Knowing Reality and Being Reality in Mind-only Buddhist Thought.” Harvard Divinity School Graduate Student Conference on Religion, Cambridge, MA. October 2012.

“Mind-only Thought in its Abhidharma Context.” The conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Dharma Drum Mountain, Taiwan. June 2011.

Professional Service

Member of Editorial Board of the Journal for Buddhist Ethics	2024-present
Book manuscript reviewer for: Columbia University Press; SUNY Press.	Ongoing
Journal article reviewer for: <i>Sophia</i> ; <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> ; <i>Journal of Buddhist Ethics</i> ; <i>Journal of Korean Religions</i> ; <i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i> ; <i>Philosophy East and West</i> ; <i>Buddhist Studies Review</i> ; <i>Journal of Indian Philosophy</i> .	Ongoing
Steering committee member, seminar on Collective Karma and Karmic Collectives, American Academy of Religion	2023-2027
Co-chair, Yogācāra Studies Unit, American Academy of Religion	2018–2023
Steering committee member, Yogācāra Studies Unit, American Academy of Religion	2014–2017
Outside M.A. thesis reader, Rangjung Yeshe Institute, Kathmandu, Nepal	2017

Institutional Service at Kenyon College

Faculty Affairs Committee member	2026-2028
Mentoring committee for Alex Rocklin	2024-2026
Fulbright application reader/mock-interviewer	2025
Search committee member, VAP of Judaic Traditions	Spring 2025
Search committee chair, VAP of Buddhism and East Asian religions	2021-2022
Chair, Religious Studies Department	Jan 2020-June 2022
Search committee outside member, VAP of Chinese Language	2019
Search committee outside member, VAP of Chemistry	2018
Curricular Policy Committee member	2016-2018
Search committee member, Assistant Professor of Judaic Traditions	2017-2018
Search committee member, Assistant Professor of Christian Traditions	2016-2017
Search committee member, VAP of Islamic Studies	2015-2016
Search committee outside member, VAP of Classics	2016
Member, Kenyon Interfaith Partnership	2015-present
Search committee, Marilyn Yarbrough Dissertation Fellowship	2015-2016
Member of Asian and Middle East Studies Faculty	2014-2021

Events Organized at Kenyon College

Organized the on-campus visit of Soto Zen teacher and author Ben Connelly, sponsored by Kenyon Interfaith Partnership and the Department of Religious Studies. Fall 2025

Organized the visit via Zoom of Dr. Janice Willis, Professor Emerita of Religious Studies, Wesleyan University, to Buddhist Thought and Practice class. Fall 2024

Organized the visit of the Venerable Ani Choyang, a Tibetan nun from Jangchub Choeling Buddhist Nunnery in Mundgod, India, sponsored by the Kenyon Interfaith Partnership. Fall 2024

Co-organized the visit of Justin Richland (Kenyon Class of 1992) of University of California Irvine to speak on his work on the Hopi Appellate Court. Fall 2022

Organized AMES visit (via Zoom) of Chenxing Han, author of *Be the Refuge: Raising the Voices of Asian-American Buddhists*. Co-sponsored by the Religious Studies Department and the Kenyon Interfaith Partnership. April 2021

Organized Climate Teach-In, September 20-21, 2019 and Faculty Climate Working Group. Fall 2019

Organized visit of author and Zen Buddhist priest and teacher Rev. angel Kyodo williams, sponsored by the Kenyon Interfaith Partnership. Spring 2019

Organizer, Whiteness Studies Reading Group. 2018-2019

Co-organizer, "Care" series sponsored by Kenyon Interfaith Partnership. Invited Eric Shutt, Chicago based Soto Zen priest and teacher, to give a public talk, lead a period of meditation for Care series event, and to visit my Religious Communities seminar to discuss his time living at Zen monasteries. 2016

Founder and organizer, New Faculty Picnic at Ariel Foundation Park (2016 co-organizer with Jackie McAllister). 2015 & 2016

Public Presentations and Community Outreach

The Kokosing Zen Center that I founded and lead has weekly, monthly, and yearly events that I organize. I am not going to list them here, but anyone can visit our website to see what we do.

Presenter & storyteller on Buddhist traditions at Peace Village, Mount Vernon, OH, organized by Mount Vernon United Church of Christ for area schoolchildren. August 2019, August 2018, August 2015.

Member of clergy panel at the 2nd Annual Knox County Interfaith Martin Luther King Jr.

Service. January 2018.

Speaker at anti-Racism class organized by an interfaith group of Knox County clergy, Mount Vernon United Church of Christ. October 2017.

Two-time presenter on Buddhist traditions for the Adult Education Forum at Mount Vernon United Church of Christ. 2015 & 2016.

Three-time presenter on Buddhist traditions and environmental concerns at KAM/Isaiah Israel's summer camp for teens on sustainability and food justice, Chicago, IL. July & August 2011, July 2012.

Representative for Buddhist traditions on a panel on the "Future of Creation" for the Zygon Center for Religion and Science and the Lutheran School of Theology, at KAM/Isaiah Israel, Chicago, IL. April 2012.

"The Three Natures and the Path to Liberation." Udumbara Zen Center, Evanston, IL. September 2009.

Religious Formation and Professional Religious Work

Founder and head teacher at Kokosing Zen Center, Gambier, OH	1/2025-present
Founder and head teacher, Mount Vernon Zen Sangha, Mount Vernon, OH	4/2015-1/2025
Received dharma transmission from Rev. Sojun Diane Martin	7/2022
Received priest ordination from Rev. Sojun Diane Martin	7/2017
Shogaku Priest Ongoing Training (SPOT) summer program, with Rev. Myoan Grace Schireson Empty Nest Zendo, North Fork, CA	Summer 2015
Continuing student of Rev. Sojun Diane Martin, Indian Creek Zen Hermitage, Ottawa, IL	7/2014-8/2022
Residential 3-month practice period participant, San Francisco Zen Center	Fall 2011
Received lay ordination (<i>jukai</i>) from Rev. Sojun Diane Martin	12/2009
Zen student at Udumbara Zen Center, Evanston, IL	1/2008-7/2014

Non-degree Courses of Academic Study

The Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies (清华 IUP 中文中心), Tsinghua University, Beijing, China	8/2003-5/2004
Colorado Summer Seminar in Philosophy, University of Colorado Boulder (Topic: Philosophy of Mind)	Summer 2001
The Beijing Center (北京中国学中心), Beijing, China	8/2000-5/2001

Pre-Kenyon Academic Employment

Instructor, Humanities Core, University of Chicago	2013-2014
Instructor, Writing Program, University of Chicago	2010-2013
Adjunct Instructor of Religious Studies, Elmhurst College	Fall 2012
Teaching Assistant for Steven Collins' Introduction to Buddhism, UChicago	Fall 2009

Non-academic Employment

Girard Gibbs, LLP, Paralegal, San Francisco, CA.	3/2005-8/2005
Asian-Americans for Equality Community Development Fund, Researcher and grant writer, New York, NY.	8/2004-3/2005
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Researcher and grant writer, Brooklyn, NY.	8/2002-8/2003