

William A. McGrath

Visiting Assistant Professor at Manhattan College
Department of Religious Studies

Education

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
Ph.D. in the History of Religions, May 2017
M.A. in the History of Religions, May 2015
B.Sc. in Biochemistry, May 2007

Addresses

4513 Manhattan College Parkway
Riverdale, NY 10471 (Memorial 424)
wmcgrath01@manhattan.edu
www.wmcgrath.com

Specializations: Tibetan and Chinese languages, religions, medicines, and histories

Employment

Manhattan College: Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies (2018–2021)
Coe College: Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion (2017–2018)

Peer-reviewed Articles and Book Chapters

- “The Princess and the Plague: Explaining Epidemics in Imperial Tibet, Khotan, and Central Asia.” Under review.
- “On the Very Idea of Buddhist Medicine in Tibet.” Under review.
- “The Surgical Instruments of Medieval Tibet: Animal-headed Forceps, Piercing Lancets, and Searing Cauteries.” In *A Cultural History of Technology: The Medieval Period (600–1450)*, edited by Roberta J. Magnusson. New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2021. Forthcoming.
- “Tantric Divination and Empirical Diagnosis: A Genealogy of Channel *Prasenā* Rituals in the Tibetan Medical Tradition.” In *Knowledge and Context in Tibetan Medicine*, edited by William A. McGrath, 261–308. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Published Forums

- with Judith Farquhar, Volker Scheid, Nathan Sivin, Joseph S. Alter, et al. “ASME Forum: Why Study Asian Medicine?” *Asian Medicine* 15, no. 1 (2020): Forthcoming.
- “Quarantine and Expulsion in Early Tibet: Reflections on the Padmasambhava Legend in the Age of the Coronavirus.” *Cultural Anthropology: Fieldsights*. June 23, 2020.
- with Amy Langenberg and Janet Gyatso. “Book Review Forum: Janet Gyatso, *Being Human in a Buddhist World* (2015).” *Asian Medicine* 13, nos. 1–2 (2018): 335–44.

Published Translations

- “Reconciling Scripture and Surgery in Tibet: Khyenrap Norbu, *Arranging the Tree Trunks of Healing* (1952).” In *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Sources*, edited by C. Pierce Salguero, 94–99. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2019.
- “Origin Narratives of the Tibetan Medical Tradition: History, Legend, and Myth.” *Asian Medicine* 12, nos. 1–2 (2017): 295–316.
- “Vessel Examination in the *Medicine of the Moon King*.” In *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Premodern Sources*, edited by C. Pierce Salguero, 501–13. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017.

Edited Volumes and Journal Issues

(sole editor): *Knowledge and Context in Tibetan Medicine*. Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, vol. 43. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

(with C. Pierce Salguero): *Asian Medicine: Journal of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine* 12, nos. 1–2 (2017). Special issue on Buddhism and medicine.

Book Reviews

“Reiko Shinno, *The Politics of Chinese Medicine under Mongol Rule* (2017).” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 93, no. 3 (2019): 455–56.

“Theresia Hofer, *Medicine and Memory in Tibet: Amchi Physicians in an Age of Reform* (2018).” *Asian Medicine* 14, no. 1 (2019): 202–204.

Dissertation

Buddhism and Medicine in Tibet: Origins, Ethics, and Tradition. Charlottesville, VA: Doctoral Dissertation at the University of Virginia, 2017.

Invited Lectures

“Tibetan Buddhism and Contagious Disease.” Penn State University’s Abington College. April 8, 2020. Invited by C. Pierce Salguero (delivered online due to the coronavirus).

“Dangling Threads to Examine the Channels: Tales of Pulse Diagnosis in Tibetan and Chinese Literature.” Inner Asian and Altaic Studies Lecture Series. Harvard University. November 6, 2019. Invited by Leonard van der Kuijp.

“The Birth of the Sakya Medical House: Buddhism and Medicine in Tibet.” University of Pennsylvania. February 1, 2019. Invited by the Philadelphia Area Buddhist Studies Group.

“The Black Pox in Tibet: From Fear to Faith.” Penn State University’s Abington College. September 28, 2018. Invited by C. Pierce Salguero.

Select Conference Presentations

“Recovering a Lost Medical Tradition: The Zhang School and the Tibetan Assimilation of Indian Medicine.” Joint Atlantic Seminar for the History of East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine. Johns Hopkins University (postponed to 2021).

“Empowering Tibetan Medical Texts: The Early Schools and Scriptures of Tibetan Medicine.” Materiality, Agency and Power Workshop. University of Vienna (postponed to 2021).

“Tibetan Medicine under the Mongols: From Familial Lineages to Monastic Institutions.” Association for Asian Studies. Boston, MA, March 19, 2020 (canceled).

“Surgical Instruments and External Therapies: Technology and Instruction in the Tibetan Medical Tradition.” International Association of Tibetan Studies XIV. Paris, July 7–13, 2019.

“Pulsating Across the Boundaries of Eurasia.” Summer Institute for Chinese Studies: Seminar on Science, Technology, and Medicine. University of Pittsburgh, May 30, 2019.

“Buddhist Medicine in Tibet: Reconciling Religion and Nation at the Sakya Medical House.” American Academy of Religion. Denver, CO, November 19, 2018.

“Explaining Epidemics in a Degenerate Age: Contagious Disease in *The Vase of Deathless Ambrosia*.” Association for Asian Studies. Washington, DC, March 23, 2018.

Select Conference Presentations (cont.)

- “The *Creases on an Old Man’s Fingers*: Tradition and Transformation in the Writings of Khyenrap Norbu (1882–1962).” International Congress on Traditional Asian Medicines IX. Kiel, August 11, 2017.
- “*Prasenā* and the Channels: Divination and Diagnosis in Tibetan Tantric Medicine.” Society for Tantric Studies. Flagstaff, AZ, September 25, 2016.
- “Diagnosis and Divination in the Instructional Literature of Tibetan Medicine.” International Association of Tibetan Studies XIV. Bergen, June 20, 2016.
- “Early Developments in Tibetan Sphygmology.” International Association of Tibetan Studies XIII. Ulaanbaatar, July 22, 2013.

Chaired Panels

- “Cosmopolitan Medicine under the Mongols: The Medical Materials, Theories, and Institutions of the Yuan Dynasty.” Panel accepted by the Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference. Boston, 2020 (canceled).
- “Knowledge and Context in the History of Tibetan Medicine.” Convened at the XIVth Seminar for the International Association of Tibetan Studies. Bergen, June 20, 2016.

Languages

Classical: Chinese (proficient) and Tibetan (fluent)

Modern: Mandarin Chinese (fluent), Lhasa Tibetan (fluent), and Amdo Tibetan (fluent)

Reading: Japanese (proficient) and French (proficient)

Fellowships and Grants

Manhattan College Student Engagement Diversity Fund, 2020 (\$1,250)

Robert H. N. Ho Program in Buddhist Studies Dissertation Fellowship, 2016–2017 (\$30,000)

Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (FHDDRA) Award, 2015–2016 (\$26,300)

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) for the Chinese Language, 2014–2015 (\$15,000)

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Summer Research Award, 2013 (\$5,000)

Blakemore Freeman Fellowship, 2012–2013 (\$41,000)

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) for the Tibetan Language, 2011–2012 (\$15,000)

Institute of International Education (IIE), Freeman-ASIA Award, 2005 (\$3,000)

Teaching Experience

Manhattan College: Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies (2018–2020)

Spring (4): The Nature and Experience of Religion (x2 sections) and Buddhism (x2)

Fall (3): The Nature and Experience of Religion (x1), and Religions of China & East Asia (x2)

Coe College: Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion (2017–2018)

Spring (3): Eastern Religions, Buddhism, and Religion and Medicine in Asia

Fall (2): Eastern Religions, and Hinduism

Teaching Assistant at the University of Virginia (2010–2015): Buddhism; Tibetan Buddhism (x3)

Academic Service

Steering Committee Member: The Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit of the American Academy of Religion (2019–2024).

Editor, Central Asia and Himalayan Region: *Asian Medicine: Journal of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine* (2019–present).

Assistant Editor: *Asian Medicine* (2017–2018).

Peer Review: *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines* (2018), *Religions* (2019), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Seminar of Young Tibetologists* (2019), *Sustainability* (2019).

Popular Publications

“Masks, Mantras, and the Black-9 Pill: Thubten Phuntsok and Tibetan Netizens on Coronavirus and Tibetan Medicine.” *High Peaks Pure Earth*. February 4, 2020. <<https://highpeakspureearth.com/2020/masks-mantras-and-the-black-9-pill-thubten-phuntsok-and-tibetan-netizens-on-coronavirus-and-tibetan-medicine/>>.

“Tibet’s Most Popular Song Is by a Hip-Hop Duo Whose Name Means ‘Youthism.’” *SupChina*. December 6, 2019. <<https://supchina.com/2019/12/06/tibets-most-popular-song-is-by-a-hip-hip-duo-whose-name-means-youthism/>>.

Fieldwork, Research, Workshops, and Language Programs

Summer Institute for Chinese Studies: Seminar on Science, Technology, and Medicine. University of Pittsburgh, May 26–June 1, 2019 (1 week)

Nationalities of Northern China Translation Institute, Dalian University for Nationalities: Consultant for the “Epics of Chinese Ethnic Groups” book series, 2017–2019 (3 months total)

Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad: Xining, 2015–2016 (6 months)

Semester at Sea (SAS): Teaching Assistant for the spring semester of 2014 (4 months)

Inter-University Program (IUP) for Chinese: Beijing, 2012–2013 (1 year)

Tibetan and Himalayan Library (THL): Researcher, content editor, and China project liaison, Chengdu and Beijing, 2008–2010 (2 years)

UVa-Columbia-Tibet University Summer Program: Lhasa, Summer 2005 (2 months)

Total time spent in China: approximately 5 years

Scholarly Memberships

The American Academy of Religion (current)

The Association for Asian Studies (current)

The International Association of Tibetan Studies (current)

The International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine (current)