

EMILY McRAE

Dept. of Philosophy
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AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Ethical Theory, Feminism, Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, Confucian philosophy,

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Ancient Philosophy, Applied Ethics, Social and Political philosophy

EDUCATION

Ph.D. 2011	Philosophy	University of Wisconsin
M.A. 2008	Philosophy	University of Wisconsin
B.S. 2003	Philosophy and Mathematics	Union College
(summa cum laude)		

DISSERTATION

Love, Equanimity and the Cultivation of Moral Emotions (Defense: 05/2011)

Claudia Card, Chair; Harry Brighthouse, Paula Gottlieb, Lester Hunt, Anne Hanson, committee members; John Makransky (Boston College), outside reader

UNIVERSITY POSITIONS

2011-present	Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Oklahoma
2011-present	Affiliate Faculty Member, College of International Studies, University of Oklahoma

PUBLICATIONS

“Emotion, Ethics and Choice: Lessons from Tsongkhapa,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 22 pp. Volume 19, 2012 (forthcoming)

“A Passionate Buddhist Life,” 28pp. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, March 2012

“The Cultivation of Moral Feelings and Mengzi’s Method of Extension,” 24 pp. *Philosophy East and West* 62:1, October 2011.

UNDER REVIEW

“Equanimity and the Elimination of Bias,” 28pp.

WORKS IN PROGRESS/DRAFTS

“Transforming Anger: Three Approaches to the Morality of Anger,” 15 pp

“Therapies of the Emotions and the Psychology of Moral Improvement,” 30 pp

“One’s Own Dear Kind Mother: Impartiality and the Mother as a Moral Ideal,” 10 pp.

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Comments on “Gratitude, Disappointment, and Normative Hope”
Rocky Mountain Ethics Conference, Boulder (August 2012)

“The Embodied Mind” Mind and Life Summer Research Institute, invited participant
Garrison, NY (June 2012)

“The Wisdom of Boundless Love”
Mind and Life Institute International Symposia for Contemplative Studies, Boulder (April 2012)

Comments on “Virtue and Skill: The Psychology of Expertise” (invited)
Pacific Division APA, Colloquium, Seattle (April 2012)

“Transforming Emotions and Living Morally: Some Tibetan Buddhist Perspectives” (invited)
APA Committee on Asians and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies Panel on
Comparative Moral Psychology, Central APA, Chicago (February 2012)

“Holocaust Testimony and Its Reception” Burdick-Vary Symposium (invited participant)
Center for Humanities, University of Wisconsin – Madison (2011)

“Deference and Oppression: Comments on Angle’s ‘Character, Oppression, and Moral Luck’” (invited)
Character East and West Conference, University of Connecticut (2011)

“Equanimity and Elimination of Bias”
Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, Asilomar, CA (2010)

“Emotions and Moral Self-Development in Tibetan Buddhism”
Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, APA, San Francisco (2010)

“Integrating Emotions and Morality: The Role of Equanimity in Moral Life”
Society of Asian and Comparative Philosophy, APA, Chicago (2010)

“Reasons for Love: The Role of Purifying Emotions in Cultivating Insight”
Society for Study of Indian and Buddhist Philosophy, APA, Chicago (2010)

“The Four Immeasurables, Emotional Integrity and the Passionate Life”
Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy Conference, Asilomar, CA (2009)

“Mengzi and the Cultivation of Moral Emotions”
Kaleidoscope Conference, University of Wisconsin, Madison (2008)

HONORS

NEH Summer Seminar “Investigating Consciousness: Contemporary and Buddhist Perspectives”
(invited participant) (Summer 2012)

University of Oklahoma Research Council Junior Faculty Summer Fellowship (2012)

Tempkin Prize, University of Wisconsin Philosophy Department (2010)
Annual award for the department’s best graduate student essay in value theory

American Association of University Women American Dissertation Fellowship (2010 – 2011)
One year fellowship awarded to women completing their doctoral degrees

Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy Graduate Student Essay Prize (2010)
Awarded for the best graduate student essay in Asian and comparative philosophy

University of Wisconsin Institute for Research in Humanities Dissertation Fellowship (2010)
One semester dissertation fellowship awarded by the IRH (by departmental nomination) to a Humanities doctoral student whose work has clear interdisciplinary significance, declined

University of Wisconsin Institute for Research in the Humanities, Honorary Fellow (2010-2011)
Awarded by the IRH (by department nomination) to participate in the activities of the Institute

Summer Dissertation Grant (McHugh Funds), UW Philosophy Department (2010)
Awarded by the department to fund summer dissertation work

University of Wisconsin Dissertation Fellowship, Philosophy Department Nominee (2010)
Nominated for a one-semester dissertation fellowship from the UW College of Letters and Sciences

University of Wisconsin Madison Honored Instructor Award (2009)
Awarded by the UW-Madison Division of University Housing Academic Initiatives (based on student nomination) to instructors who have a “profound and positive” effect on UW students

Philosophy Department Nominee for College of Letters and Sciences Teaching Award (2009)
Nominated by the department for excellence in teaching

Vilas Travel Grant (2009)
Awarded by UW Graduate Student Collaborative to present work related to dissertation at a professional conference

Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Fellowship, UW- Madison (2008)
For studying Tibetan language and Buddhist philosophy at Rangjung Yeshe Institute in the Ka-nying Shedrup Ling Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal

Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy’s Graduate Student Essay (2nd place) (2008)
Awarded for the best graduate student essays in Asian and comparative philosophy

Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, UW-Madison (2007-2008)
Awarded for one year for the study of Tibetan language, culture and religion

Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Fellowship (2007)
For intensive Tibetan language training at University of Wisconsin's South Asian Summer Language Institute

Phi Beta Kappa (2003)
Awarded by the Union College Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa

George H. Caitlin Prize (2003)
Awarded by Union College to the graduating senior in liberal arts with the highest scholastic record and deemed most promising for graduate study and for eventual service in the field of college teaching

President's Commission on the Status of Women Prize (2003)
Awarded by Union College to the student who has done the most to promote the cause of women at Union College

TEACHING – FULL RESPONSIBILITY

Feminist Philosophy

This upper-level course is an exploration of some of the major trends in historical and contemporary feminist philosophy. We will examine and analyze such concepts as patriarchy, masculine/feminine, oppression, sexism and feminism.

Comparative Philosophy

This course examines philosophical issues regarding how to live a good, happy life from Western and non-Western philosophical perspectives. In addition to reading some classic ethical Western texts, we also read some of the classics of Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese philosophical traditions.

History of Ethics

A small, upper-level course focused on the classic ethical philosophers of the Western tradition, including Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Smith, Kant, Mill, and Nietzsche.

Introduction to Philosophy

A large lecture-style “great books” course. Texts included *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Meno*, *Epictetus' Handbook*, *Descartes' Meditations*, *Zhuangzi*, *Mill's Utilitarianism* and *Subjection of Women*.

Introduction to Ethics (2x)

Ethical theory course focused on Mill, Kant, Aristotle, early Confucian philosophers (Confucius, Mengzi, Xunzi), Nietzsche, Noddings

Contemporary Moral Issues

Small class format, applied ethics course focused on environmental ethics; economic justice; protest and war; marriage, motherhood and sexual ethics

TEACHING – TEACHING ASSISTANT

Ethical Problems in Biomedical Technologies (Fost, Streiffer)

Analysis of issues in clinical ethics, health care and justice including abortion, cloning, genetic enhancement, reproductive technologies, disability, death and dying, and research with human subjects (e.g. Tuskegee)

Introduction to Ethics (Card)

Ethical theory course focused on major Western moral philosophers (Mill, Kant, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Ayer)

Introduction to Ethics (Shafer-Landau)

Ethics course divided into metaethics (e.g., objectivism vs. relativism), normative ethics (Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Contractarianism), applied ethics (abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment)

Introduction to Ethics (Koolage)

Ethics course focused mainly on normative ethics (especially Utilitarian and Kantian theories). Applied ethics (abortion and euthanasia) and metaethics (e.g. cultural relativism and moral realism) were also included

Introduction to Buddhism (Komarovski)

A general overview of Buddhist philosophy, ritual and culture in South and East Asia, covered Indian, Ch'an, Zen and Tibetan Buddhisms

Buddhist Thought (Komarovski)

An advanced course focused on main issues in Buddhist philosophy, such as no-self, impermanence and emptiness, extensive and in-depth analysis of Yogacara and Madhyamaka philosophies in Tibetan Buddhism

History of Ancient Philosophy (Gottlieb), taught twice

An intermediate level course focusing on metaphysical and epistemological issues in the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

Philosophy of Religion (Yandell)

Analysis of metaphysical and epistemological issues, mostly concerning personal identity and the nature of religious experience, in Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism

Environmental Ethics (Anderson)

Analysis of animal rights and interests, the rights and interests on non-sentient life and ecosystems, obligations to non-humans, holism

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Assisted Professor Harry Brighouse in his research on philosophy of education. My duties included reading and summarizing books and articles on school reform in the U.S.

SERVICE

Society for Women in Philosophy Annual Conference, Madison, WI (2010), co-planner

LANGUAGES

Tibetan (colloquial and reading knowledge)

REFERENCES

Claudia Card

Emma Goldman Professor of Philosophy
Department of Philosophy
University of Wisconsin-Madison
600 N. Park St.
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Paula Gottlieb

Professor of Philosophy,
Affiliate Professor of Classics
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Mark Csikszentmihalyi

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Charles Hallisey

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James Anderson

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Harry Brighthouse

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GRADUATE COURSEWORK

Ethics

Mill (Dan Hausman)
Aristotle's Ethics (Paula Gottlieb)
Ethical Theories (Rob Streiffer)
Nietzsche and Schopenhauer (Claudia Card)
Kant and Kantian Ethics (Claudia Card)

Asian Studies

Buddhism and Literature (Charles Hallisey)
Interdisciplinary Approaches to South Asia (Charles Hallisey)
History of Chinese Thought 2 (Mark Meulenbald)
History of Chinese Thought 1 (Mark Csikzentmihalyi)
Buddhist Thought (Yaroslav Komarovski)*

Social and Political Philosophy

Mill (Dan Hausman)
Equality (Harry Brighouse)
Health and Well Being (Dan Hausman)
Political Philosophy (Harry Brighouse)*
Real and Ideal Theory (Harry Brighouse)*

Ancient Philosophy

Aristotle's Ethics (Paula Gottlieb)
Aristotle's Metaphysics (Paula Gottlieb)
Aristotle's Philosophy of Mind (Paula Gottlieb)*
History of Ancient Philosophy (Terry Penner) *

Other Philosophy Courses

Descartes (Steve Nadler)
Symbolic Logic (Ellery Ells)
Consciousness (Martha Gibson)

* denotes audited class

Statement of Future Research

Emily McRae

My future research projects expand upon issues in emotional-ethical life on which my current research is based, particularly the resolution of tensions between detachment, impartiality and contemplative practice on the one hand and passion, partiality and friendship on the other. My immediate research plan is to develop and defend the ethical significance of the practice of “taking afflictions on the path” (*‘dod chags lam ‘khyer, zhe sdang lam ‘khyer*), which is a common “mind training” (*blo sbyong*) designed to transform the experience of destructive, afflictive emotions. In this paper, tentatively entitled “Taking Afflictions on the Path: The Wisdom of Destructive Emotions,” I defend the idea that there is profound wisdom in emotional experience by focusing on these mind training practices that seek to use negative emotional experience as part of one’s ethical and spiritual development. I compare this practice of “taking afflictions on the path” to other approaches to dealing with emotions, particularly those of Aristotle, Epictetus and Seneca, and argue that “taking afflictions on the path” can better effect lasting, moral self-transformation than either the Aristotelian or Stoic approaches.

I have two main, long-term research projects. The first explores the mutually supportive roles of friendship and contemplative practices (such as meditation) in emotional-ethical life. I plan to frame friendship and meditation as spiritual practices that promote wisdom through emotional re-attunement. Although these practices may appear at odds – friendship is dialogical and social, whereas contemplative practices are monological and solitary – I will argue that they are in fact mutually supportive moral practices. Good friendships support contemplative practice both by providing the emotional experiences (such as love) that many meditations seek to isolate, as well as the social, emotional and intellectual support needed to sustain extended reflection. In turn, contemplative practices enhance the emotional facility that is required to begin, sustain, nurture (and even sometimes end) friendships. To illustrate this mutually supportive relationship, I plan to explore the concept of “spiritual friendship,” which is a common concept among Tibetan Buddhist thinkers, as well as some Western conceptions of friendship, particularly Aristotle’s.

I am particularly interested in looking at the role of the mother-child relationship in Tibetan Buddhist contemplative practices that are designed to positive moral emotions. One astonishing aspect of these practices is that they utilize reflections on one’s mother not only to generate feelings of gratitude, love and compassion, but also to develop impartiality and equanimity. Amazingly, what we often consider to be the paradigm case of pure partiality, the mother/child relationship, is actually being used in an effort to uproot partiality. This suggests that the assumption that emotional attachments are necessarily at odds with impartial regard for all members of the moral community, which is common in Western philosophical ethics, may be mistaken.

My second research interest is comparative moral psychology. In my article, “The Cultivation of Moral Emotions and Mengzi’s Method of Extension,” I suggest that the ancient Confucian philosopher Mengzi’s approach to adult moral development - a process that he calls ‘extension’ (*tui*) – fulfills a need in modern Western ethical theory for a more thorough conception of emotional self-transformation. In my future research I would like to pursue this idea and compare Mengzi’s approach to the Tibetan Buddhist approaches to transforming emotions that I examine in my dissertation. I am interested in exploring these therapies of emotions through a comparison with similar ideas in Stoic philosophy. In particular, I plan to further analyze the Tibetan Buddhist concept of equanimity (*btang snyoms*) through an extensive comparison with the Stoic concepts of detachment (*ataraxia*) and freedom from emotion (*apatheia*).