Greetings!

I’m Professor Amanda Goodman, Assistant Professor in the Dept. for the Study of Religion and the Dept. of East Asian Languages and Cultures. I’m thrilled to be teaching RLG373 Buddhist Ritual this winter term and would like to invite you to join us!

A bit about me: I’m a specialist of medieval Chinese Buddhism with a focus on two of the esoteric traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Chan (J. Zen) and Tantric traditions. I spend most of my time reading medieval ritual manuscripts—meditation manuals, mudrā handbooks, mandala diagrams—that were discovered about a hundred years ago in a hidden library cave at the Dunhuang Buddhist cave site along the old silk roads. Check out this website: Dunhuang.

In RLG373 we will certainly do some thinking about Dunhuang and its medieval Buddhist practice communities. More broadly, though, we will consider the structure, scope, and significance of Buddhist rituals – monastic and lay ordinations, initiations and life-cycle rituals, meditation practice, pilgrimage, healing rites – across Buddhist communities, past and present. Relying on written sources, ethnographic accounts, audio-visual sources, and material artifacts, we will consider ritual as both text and event, and draw on theoretically informed scholarship to critically explore the utility of “ritual” as a cross-cultural category.

I look forward to seeing you in January!