Project Description:
This course will examine Tibetan Buddhist theories and meditative practices concerning sleeping and dreaming, and their relation to dying, the intermediate state, and rebirth. For this independent study course I will explore the role of dreams and dreaming in Buddhism, focusing primarily on Tibetan Buddhism, but also drawing upon Chan/Zen Buddhism for comparative purposes. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, I will examine the relationship between dreaming and the liminal post-death realm of the bardo (the “in between state”). How is dream yoga in the Tibetan tradition linked to the bardo state? How do Tibetan Buddhists conceptualize and explain the relationship between dreams and the Bardo in terms of karma and the theory of reincarnation? What is the ontological status and soteriological significance of dreams in Tibetan (and Chan) Buddhism? This last question will enable me to explore the relationship between the “reality” of dreams and the everyday “reality” of mundane life, and how Buddhists develop practices and rituals, including “shamanistic” practices, for connecting these two realms in an effort to achieve enlightenment.

I will meet with Professor Bjerken once a week (Thursdays) for two hours to discuss the reading material listed in the bibliography below. I will write two ten-page papers on the topics that I will explore over the course of the semester.

Bibliography


