

IRA HELDERMAN, PHD, LPC-MHSP

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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Visiting Assistant Professor, Vanderbilt University, Department of Religious Studies,
September 2021–

Adjunct Professor of Religion, Psychology, and Culture, Vanderbilt University, Divinity
School, September 2021–

Adjunct Instructor/Adjunct Assistant Professor, Vanderbilt University, Human
Development Counseling, 2015- present

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Religion, Psychology and Culture, Vanderbilt University, 2016
Dissertation: *“Religion” and “Secular” in U. S. Psychotherapists’ Approaches to
Buddhist Traditions* (Advisor: Prof. Volney Gay)
Minor Areas: Asian Studies (“Daoist/Buddhist Encounter in Medieval China”
Advisor: Prof. Robert Ford Campany); History and Critical Theories of
Religions (“Freud’s Last Word’: Unnamable Jewishness and *Moses and
Monotheism*” Advisor: Prof. Jay Geller)

M.A. Religion, Psychology and Culture, Vanderbilt University, 2014

M.A. Counseling, Trevecca Nazarene University, 2005

B.F.A. Dramatic Writing, New York University, 1998

RESEARCH/TEACHING INTERESTS

Religion and Psychotherapy/Medicine/Science

Contemporary U.S. Religion

History of Category “Religion”

Buddhist Studies

Asian Religious Traditions in the U.S.

Secularity Studies

PUBLICATIONS: MONOGRAPH

Prescribing the Dharma: Psychotherapists, Buddhist Traditions, and Defining Religion
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.

Reviews: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 87.4 (2019): 1234–1237;
Religious Studies Review 46.3 (2020): 359-366; *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 27 (2020);
Nova Religio 23.4 (2020): 121-122; *H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews* October 2020.
(<https://networks.h-net.org/node/6060/reviews/6514081/segall-helderman-prescribing-dharma-psychotherapists-buddhist>); *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* Fall 2019 (<https://tricycle.org/magazine/mindfulness-health>)

PUBLICATIONS: JOURNAL ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

“Consciousness Raising, False Consciousness and Freud: Buddhist Traditions in Contemporary Mental Health Economies in the United States,” *Buddhism Under Capitalism: Historical Background and Contemporary Manifestations*, eds. Fabio Rambelli and Richard Payne. Bloomsbury 2022.

“Psychological Interpreters of Buddhism,” commissioned article for *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Scott Mitchell. April 2020.

“Descriptive Disenchantment and Prescriptive Disillusionment: Myths, ‘Mysticism,’ and Psychotherapeutic Interpretation,” *Mysticism and Depth Psychology*, eds. Thomas Cattoi and David Odorisio, 81-103. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

“Drawing the Boundaries between ‘Religion’ and ‘Secular’ in U.S. Psychotherapists’ Approaches to Buddhist Traditions,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84.4 (2016): 937-972.

“‘The Conversion of the Barbarians’: Comparison and Psychotherapists’ Approaches to Buddhist Traditions in the United States,” *Buddhist Studies Review Special Issue: Buddhism and Healing* 32.1 (2015): 63–97.

PUBLICATIONS: BOOK REVIEWS/NOTES

“Review of *American JewBu: Jews, Buddhists, and Religious Change* by Emily Sigalow.” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 15.2 (2022): 257-260.

“Review of *Mindful Elite: Mobilizing from the Inside Out* by Jaime Kucinkas.” *AAR Reading Religion* (2019) <https://readingreligion.org/9780190881818/>

“Review of *Mind Beyond Brain: Buddhism, Science, and the Paranormal*, ed. by David E. Presti.” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 34.3 (2019): 578-579.

“Review of *Meditation, Buddhism, and Science*, ed. by David L. McMahan and Erik Braun.” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 19 (2018): 133-141.

“Review of *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture*, by Jeff Wilson.” *Religious Studies Review* 42.1 (2016): 60.

“Review of *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China*, by C. Pierce Salguero.” *Buddhist Studies Review Special Issue: Buddhism and Healing* 32.1 (2015): 161-164.

PUBLICATIONS: IN PROGRESS

“From Self-Absorption to Non-Self to the Interrelated Self: Psychotherapy and Buddhist Traditions in the United States,” *The Oxford Handbook of American Buddhism* (under contract with Oxford University Press with expected publication of 2023).

“Old News: Framing the Adverse Effects of Meditation in Popular Media in the United States,” *Buddhism & Healing in the Contemporary World*, eds. C. Pierce Salguero, Kin Cheung, and Susannah Deane (under contract with University of Hawai'i Press with expected publication 2023).

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

Religion Dispatches

“Meditation Sickness: Everyone Is Talking About How Nobody Is Talking About the Risks of Meditation,” July 2022.

<https://religiondispatches.org/meditation-sickness-everyone-is-talking-about-how-nobody-is-talking-about-the-risks-of-meditation/>

Tricycle: The Buddhist Review

“Causalities of the McMindfulness Wars: Second-Generation Mindfulness Practices and ‘The McMindfulness Critique,’” Summer 2021.

<https://tricycle.org/magazine/mcmindfulness-debate/>

“Heeding Erich Fromm’s Warning: Decades Before the Mindfulness Boom, the Influential Psychoanalyst Foresaw the Potential Benefits and Misuses of Buddhist Practice,” Winter 2020. <https://tricycle.org/magazine/erich-fromm/>

“Not Just Mindfulness: Psychotherapists Have Engaged With Buddhist Traditions For Over a Century. Mindfulness is One Small Part,” June 2020.

<https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/mindfulness-in-psychotherapy/>

Psychology Today, Therapy and Buddhist Traditions Blog Column

“A Duty to Warn About Meditation Sickness?,” June 2022

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/therapy-and-buddhist-traditions/202206/duty-warn-about-meditation-sickness>

“Meditation Sickness: How Religious Studies Scholars Can Help,” May 2022

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/therapy-and-buddhist-traditions/202205/meditation-sickness-how-religious-studies-scholars-can>

“Mindfulness' "Religious Effects" and Clinical Ethics,” February 2020

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/therapy-and-buddhist-traditions/202002/mindfulness-religious-effects-and-clinical-ethics>

“The Origins of Mindfulness and Informed Consent,” January 2020

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/therapy-and-buddhist-traditions/202001/the-origins-mindfulness-and-informed-consent>

“Mindfulness and The Crusade to Make America Christian Again,” September 2019

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/therapy-and-buddhist-traditions/201909/the-crusade-against-mindfulness>

“Reinventing the (Dharma) Wheel,” July 2019

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/therapy-and-buddhist-traditions/201907/reinventing-the-dharma-wheel>

“Therapists' Curiosity About Buddhism Is Not a New Fad,” June 2019

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/therapy-and-buddhist-traditions/201906/therapists-curiosity-about-buddhism-is-not-new-fad>

INVITED PANEL RESPONDENT

“Buddhist Healing Beyond the Modern: Circulation, Authenticity, and the Contested Territories of the Body-Mind,” Association of Asian Studies, Honolulu, March 2022

“Authors Meet Critics Book Panel on Ira Helderman’s *Prescribing the Dharma* and Wakoh Shannon Hickey’s *Mind Cure - Meditation, Buddhism, and Mental Health: State of the Field*,” Joint Session of the Religions, Medicines, and Healing and Psychology, Culture, and Religion Groups, American Academy of Religion, San Diego, November 2019.

INVITED LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

- “The Spread of the Dharma?: Secularization and Buddhist Transmission in U.S. Psychotherapists’ Approaches to Buddhist traditions,” Heidelberg University (Heidelberg, Germany), Originally scheduled for May 2020 to be rescheduled.
- “‘Not So Secular’ Caregiving: Between Buddhist Psychotherapy and Buddhist Chaplaincy,” Graduate Theological Union, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Originally scheduled for May 2020 to be rescheduled.
- “From Mindfulness Boom to Backlash and Back Again: Psychotherapeutic Mindfulness Practices and Buddhist Transmission,” Duke University, April 2020.
- “Mindfulness Boom and Backlash: Psychotherapeutic Mindfulness Practices and Buddhist Traditions,” Franklin & Marshall College, November 2019.
- “Mindfulness Under (Re)Construction: Contemporary Mindfulness Practices, Buddhist Transmission, and ‘Not So Secular’ Psychotherapy,” Princeton University, September 2019.
- “Mindfulness Under (Re)Construction: Contemporary Mindfulness Practices, Buddhist Transmission, and ‘Not So Secular’ Psychotherapy,” University of Alabama, March 2017.
- “Mapping U.S. Psychotherapists’ Approaches to Buddhist Meditation: Implications for Clinical Practice,” “Dialogues on Meditation and Healing” Conference, Wonkwang University (Iksan, South Korea), May 2015.
- Uprooting Mindfulness: Location and Dislocation of Contemplative Practices Workshop, Invited Panel Participant, Columbia University, March 2014.
- “Mindfulness under (Re)Construction: Mindfulness-Based Treatment Modalities and ‘Not So Secular’ Psychotherapy,” “Dialogues on Meditation and Healing in Asian Traditions” Workshop, John Hopkins University, October 2014.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- “‘Therapeutic Spirituality’ and Therapists’ Spirituality: The Role of Psychotherapists in the Construction of Spirituality in the United States,” Religions, Medicines and Healing Group, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, November 2016.
- “Insider Trading and Outside Observers: The (Re)Construction of Contemporary Mindfulness Practices in U.S. Mental Health Economies,” Economics and Capitalism in the Study of Buddhism Seminar, American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, November 2015.

“Religion’ and ‘Secular’ in U.S. Psychotherapists’ Approaches to Buddhist Traditions,” Joint Session of the North American Religions Section; Psychology, Culture, and Religion Group; Religions, Medicines, and Healing Group; and Secularism and Secularity Group, American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, November 2015.

“Mindfulness, Contemplation, and the Clinic,” Round Table Panel, Psychology, Culture and Religion Group, American Academy of Religion, San Diego, November 2014.

“The Conversion of the Barbarians: The Buddhist/Psychotherapist Relationship and Historical Comparison,” United Kingdom Association of Buddhist Studies Annual Meeting (Topic: Buddhism and Healing), Leeds, England, July 2014.

“Prescribing the Dharma: The Buddhist/Psychotherapist Relationship in Historical Context,” American Academy of Religion National Conference, Religions, Medicines and Healing Group, Baltimore, November 2013.

“If a Christmas Tree Falls in the Forest. . . The Mindfulness Movement in the Buddhist/Psychotherapist Relationship,” American Academy of Religion National Conference, Psychology, Culture and Religion Group, Baltimore, November 2013.

“Prescribing the Dharma: The Buddhist/Psychotherapist Relationship as Inter-Religious Encounter,” Understanding Religious Pluralism Conference, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 2012.

MEDIA APPEARANCES

New Books in Religion/Buddhist Studies podcast, March 26, 2019

The Classical Ideas podcast, August, 10, 2019

New Books in Spiritual Practice and Mindfulness podcast, October 24, 2019

The Secular Buddhist podcast, September 6, 2019

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

External Reviewer for *Journal of Contemporary Religion*

External Reviewer for *Journal of Global Buddhism*

External Reviewer for *Asian Medicine: Tradition & Modernity*

External Reviewer for *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Vanderbilt University, Arts & Sciences, Department of Religious Studies
Post-Freudian Theories of Religion: Fall 2022

Mindfulness, Religion, and Healing: Spring 2022, Spring 2023

“Spirituality” and Alternative Medicine: Fall 2021

Vanderbilt University, Divinity School, Doctor of Ministry Integrative Chaplaincy Program
Research Project Seminar II Fall 2022

Mindfulness, Religion, and Healing Module Fall 2021

Vanderbilt University, Peabody College, Human Development Counseling
Internship I Spring 2020

Counseling Diverse Populations Fall 2019, Spring 2017, Fall 2015

Internship II Spring 2019

Addictions and the Human Service Professional Fall 2018, Fall 2017, Spring 2016

Vanderbilt University, Guest Lecturer

“Is Mindfulness Zen?,” Spring 2019, Zen Buddhism, Instructor: Bryan Lowe

“Jung on Myth,” Fall 2017, Japanese Mythology, Instructor: Bryan Lowe

“Psychology of Religion and Psychotherapists’ Approaches to Buddhist Traditions,” Spring 2016 Religious Studies Senior Seminar, Instructor: Volney Gay

“Mindfulness and Meditation in Context”, Fall 2013, Honors Seminar in History and Culture of the United States – History of Alternative Medicine, Instructor: Ruth Rogaski

“Responding to Addictions,” Fall 2013, Pastoral Care and Counseling, Instructor: Bonnie Miller-McLemore

Cultural Trauma and Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*, Fall 2010, Women’s and Gender Studies Senior Seminar, Instructor: Charlotte Pierce-Baker

“Responding to Suicidal Patients,” Annually 2007-2018, Practicum, Instructor: Nancy Nolan

Vanderbilt University, Teaching Fellow 2012-2014

Zen Buddhism, Spring 2014, Instructor: Bryan Lowe

Buddhist Traditions, Fall 2013, Instructor: Nancy Lin

Pastoral Care and Counseling, Spring 2013, Instructor: Barbara McClure

Eastern Conceptions of Wisdom, Liberation and Enlightenment, Fall 2012,
Instructor: Susan Schoenbohm

Vanderbilt University Commons

InnerSpace: Explorations of Meditation Practice for Self and Society, Spring 2010

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Psychological Association Psychoanalytic Division
American Academy of Religion

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Licensure

- Licensed Professional Counselor with Mental Health Service Provider Designation
Tennessee License #2190

Work History

- Counselor in Private Practice, Nashville, 2007-Present
- Staff Therapist, Vanderbilt University Psychological and Counseling Center, Nashville,
2005-2011
- Counselor, Psychiatric Hospital at Vanderbilt, Nashville 2003-2006.
- Associate Counselor, Cumberland Heights Treatment Center, Nashville, 2002 - 2003

Service

Board Member, Nashville Jewish Family Service, 2016-Present

Select Presentations

- On Practices and In Theory: Mapping Psychoanalysts' Approaches to Buddhist Traditions
in the United States, Nashville Psychoanalytic Study Group, 2017
- The Use of Mindfulness with Clients from Western Faith Traditions, Pastoral Counseling
Centers of Tennessee 2008
- New Approaches to Suicide Prevention/Intervention, Middle Tennessee Mental Health
Counseling Association 2007