

Michael E. Naparstek

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Relevant Employment

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN Senior Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies	2020-present
University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI Senior Lecturer, Religious Studies Program	2019–2020
University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI Lecturer, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures	2015–2017
Ohio University, Athens, OH Lecturer, Department of Religion	2013–2015
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies	2006–2008

Education

University of Wisconsin–Madison Ph.D. Chinese Literature and Culture Transdisciplinary Study of Visual Cultures, minor	2018
University of Wisconsin–Madison M.A. Chinese	2012
National Taiwan University International Chinese Language Program	2009
University of Hawai'i–Mānoa M.A. Religion (Asian)	2005
Trinity College (Hartford, CT) B.A. Religious Studies; Philosophy; International Studies (Asian)	2002
Samtenling Tibetan Monastery (Boudhanath, Nepal) Trinity College, Global Learning Site	2000

Dissertation

“Figuring on Salvation: The Demonic Savior Wang Lingguan and the Power of Presence in Daoist Ritual and Image at the Ming Court”

Committee: Mark Meulenbeld (advisor), Rania Huntington, William H. Nienhauser, Jr., Yuhang Li, Paul Copp (University of Chicago), Vincent Goossaert (Université de Paris)

Publications, Reviews and Works Under Review

Co-editor, “On Whose Terms?: The Study of Judaism and Daoism in Response to “Religion”	<i>accepted</i> 2025
Special Issue, <i>Method and Theory in the Study of Religion</i>	
“The Whiteness of Whales: “Religion” in the study of Daoism and China,”	<i>accepted</i> 2025
<i>Method and Theory in the Study of Religion</i>	
“What’s the Matter with You, Rock?!: What the Study of Daoism Can Say about Religious Images,”	<i>accepted</i> 2025
<i>Method and Theory in the Study of Religion</i>	
“The Iron Bottle” (entry)	<i>accepted</i> 2025
<i>Chinese Religious Culture in 100 Objects</i> , Oxford University Press	
“Engendering Thunder: Imperial Consorts, Thunder Ritual, and the Power of Daoist Material Culture at the Ming Court,”	2024
<i>Studies in Chinese Religions</i> , Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	
“What Taoism teaches about the body and being healthy”	2024
<i>The Conversation</i>	
“How sacred images in many Asian cultures incorporate divine presence and make them come ‘alive’”	2023
<i>The Conversation</i>	
Review for <i>Chinese Literature Essays Articles and Review</i>	<i>forthcoming</i>
of <i>Religion and Poetry in Medieval China: the Way and the Words</i>	
Review for <i>Journal of Chinese Religions</i>	<i>forthcoming</i>
of David J. Mozina, <i>Knotting the Banne: Ritual and Relationship in Daoist Practice</i>	
Review for <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>	2023
of Richard G. Wang, <i>Lineages Embedded in Temple Networks: Daoism and Local Society in Ming Culture</i>	
Review for <i>Chinese Literature Essays Articles and Review</i>	2023
of Richard John Lynn, <i>Zhuangzi: A New Translation of the Sayings of Master Zhuang as Interpreted by Guo Xiang</i>	
Co-author and Co-editor, <i>Biographical Dictionary of Tang Literati</i>	2022
with William H. Nienhauser, Jr., Indiana University Press	
Review for <i>Journal of Chinese History</i>	2019
of Meir Shahaar, <i>Oedipal God: The Chinese Nezha and His Indian Origins</i>	
Book Chapter, “Auntie’s an Exorcist: Translation and Context of ‘Xue Yi’”	2016
<i>Tang Dynasty Tales: A Guided Reader</i> , vol. 2 (World Scientific)	

Awards, Fellowships, Grants

F. Stanley Lusby and John O. Hodges Excellence in Teaching Award	2021
Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee–Knoxville	
T’ang Studies Society Scholarly Production Grant	2021
Funds Awarded for <i>Biographical Dictionary of Tang Literati</i> (published 2022)	

Fellow , Curriculum Development, Religious Studies Program University of Wisconsin–Madison	2019
Visiting Scholar , Institut für Sinologie Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich	2016
Vilas Research Travel Grant University of Wisconsin–Madison	2015
Teaching Fellow Award , One of fifteen recognized College of Letters and Sciences, University of Wisconsin–Madison	2014
FLAS Award , Japanese Language Center for East Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison	2011–2012
University Fellow University of Wisconsin–Madison	2010 and 2015
Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society University of Wisconsin–Madison	2010
Kroepsch-Maurice Award for Teaching Excellence , nominee University of Vermont	2007
Carpenter Foundation Grant for Daoist Iconography Project University of Hawai'i in collaboration with the Honolulu Academy of Art	2005
Francis C. Powers M.A. Thesis Award for M.A. thesis: "Why do Bad Gods Look so Good: the Iconography of Daoism's Four Great <i>Yuanshuai</i> ," University of Hawai'i–Mānoa	2005
Dai Ho Chun Graduate Research Fellowship , Daoist art in US Collections University of Hawai'i–Mānoa	2004

Courses Taught

Lecturer, University of Tennessee–Knoxville

Religion and Gameworlds: Real Agents, Virtual Worlds (Spring 2025)

Religions in Global Perspective: Social Life of Religious Images

Religion and Nonprofit Leadership

Chinese Religions

Senior Honor Thesis

Religions of Asia

Religions of the World

Comparison of World Religions

Lecturer, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Daoism through Religious Practice and Visual Cultures

Religion in Critical Perspective (Theory and Method), Blended Course

Religious Studies for Leadership in Practice, Online Course

Genres of Asian Religious Writing: Buddhist Writings Across Asia

Introduction to Daoism

Lecturer, Ohio University, Athens, OH

Daoism as Print-Based Course

Lecturer, University of Vermont, Religious Studies
 Asian Religious Iconography and Ritual
 Daoism Seminar
 Introduction to the Study of Religion: Comparative Religions
 Introduction to the Study of Religion: Asian Religious Traditions

Service and Outreach

Knox County Resources for Teaching About Religion	2023-present
Knoxville Area school systems, Knoxville, TN	
Editor, Database of Religious History	2021-present
Daoism Unit, Templeton Funded, University of British Columbia	
Steering Committee, American Academy of Religion	2021-present
Daoist Studies Unit	
Co-Founder and Steering Committee, Global Daoist Studies Forum	2021-present
University of Hawai'i–Mānoa	
Invited Talk, "Social Life and Personhood of Religious Images"	2021
Appalachian State University, Boone, NC	
Co-founder, Judaism/Daoism Critical Workshop and Conference	2020-present
University of Wisconsin–Madison	
Blended and Online Curriculum Development Program	2019–2020
Religious Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison	
Welcoming Delegation for Nanjing University Dignitaries	2018
University of Wisconsin–Madison	
Invited Talk, "Daoism, Body and Gender"	2018
OutReach LGBTQ Seniors Study Group, Madison, WI	
Organizing Committee, Trans-Asia Graduate Student Conference	2013–2016
University of Wisconsin–Madison	
Instructor, Teaching Workshop for College of Letters and Sciences	2014
UW-Madison, training incoming Teaching Assistants in Humanities	
Invited Talks on Daoism, First Unitarian Society of Madison, WI	2013–2014
Founding Member, Daoist Iconography Project	2004
University of Hawai'i–Mānoa	
Editorial Assistant, Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life	2001–2002
Contributor to periodical <i>Religion in the News</i> , Trinity College, Hartford, CT	

Conference Participation, Public Talks, and Workshops

Knox County Schools Teaching About Religion in the Public Classroom	2024
Public Talk, Knox County Schools Social Studies Curricula Orientation	

“Religion and Gameworlds: Multi-lives in Virtual Worlds”	2024
Invited Talk, Appalachian State University	
Daoism in the Ming: Lineage, Locale, and the Critical Place of Daoism in Shaping Ming Culture	2023
Organizer of Session, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX	
“Thought in Reality” – Film Session	2023
Respondent, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX	
Database of Religious History	2023
Liaison, Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Boston, MA	
On Whose Terms?: The Study of Judaism and Daoism in Response to “Religion”	2022
Roundtable, American Academy of Religion Annual Conference, Denver, CO	
On Whose Terms?: The Study of Judaism and Daoism in Response to “Religion”	2022
Co-Organizer of International Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison	
“The Whiteness of Whales: ‘Religion’ in the Study of Daoism and China”	2022
Paper, On Whose Terms? Conference, University of Wisconsin–Madison	
Materializing Martial Gods: Thunder Ritual, Material Culture, and the Story of Daoism in Ming China	2022
Co-Organizer of Session, Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, HI	
“Thunder in the Bedroom: Imperial Consorts, Ritual Scrolls, and Daoist Demonifuges at Jiajing’s Court”	2022
Paper, Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Honolulu, HI	
“The Social Lives of Religious Images”	2021
Invited Talk, Appalachian State University	
(Re-)Presenting Efficacy and Agency in Chinese Religions	2021
Organizer of Session, Annual Conference of the AAR, San Antonio, TX	
“An Ecology of Efficacy: ‘Ling’ and Power of ‘Presence’ in Daoist Ritual”	2021
Paper, Annual Conference of the AAR, San Antonio, TX	
Bodies Divine: Art, Agency, and Body in Daoist and Buddhist Images	2020
Organizer of Session, Annual Conference of the AAR, Boston, MA	
“About Face: The Body Multiple and Icon Agency in Zhou Jichang’s 周季常 <i>Louhan Manifesting Himself as Eleven-Headed Guanyin</i>”	2020
Paper, Annual Conference of the AAR, Boston, MA	
Performing Images: Ritual, Art, and Agency in Chinese Religions	2019
Co-Organizer of Session, Annual Conference of the AAR, San Diego, CA	
“From this Becomes Real: Emergence of the True Form in Daoist Ritual and Image”	2019
Paper, Annual Conference of the AAR, San Diego, CA	
“Ling 靈” for Critical Terms for Chinese Religious Studies	2019
Paper, International Conference, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, HK	

Organizing Committee, LOKA Conference and Symposium on Global Religious Leadership and Environmental Activism University of Wisconsin-Madison	2019
“Awakening toward the Center: Hongwu’s <i>Subjugating the Demons, Buddhism, and the Power of Visuality at the Margins of the Qianlong Era</i>” Paper, Annual Conference of the American Oriental Society, Chicago, IL	2019
“Symbiosis of Art and Ritual at the Ming Court” 神像與雷法在明世宗的宮廷 Paper, International Workshop, UW-Madison	2018
From Another World: A Conversation between Daoism and Ritual Theory Co-Organizer of Session, Annual Meeting of the AAR, Boston, MA	2017
“Consummate Bodies: A Daoist Ritual Theory of the Senses” Paper, Annual Meeting of the AAR, Boston, MA	2017
“Daoist Scrolls and Demon Souls” Paper, International Conference on Daoism, Nanterre University, Paris, FR	2017
“Figuring on Salvation: A Daoist Scroll for Saving Souls in Jiajing’s Court” Paper, Annual Conference for the Association for Asian Studies, Toronto, CN	2017
Contributor, International <i>Shiji</i> Workshop Center for Advanced Studies, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, GER	2016
“Daoist Scrolls, Saving Souls, and the Demonic Savior Wang Lingguan” Center for East Asian Studies Lecture Series, University of Wisconsin	2016
Principal Organizer, “Images in/as Ritual” Workshop Mellon Funded Conference, University of Wisconsin–Madison	2016
Invited Moderator, “Living Through Verse Trans-Asian Graduate Student Conference, University of Wisconsin–Madison	2015
“Iconized Bodies: Engendering the Real Object in Daoist Ritual” Paper, Trans-Asian Graduate Student Conference, UW-Madison	2014
“Re-placed Bodies: Principle of <i>tishen</i> at work in Daoist <i>kaiguang</i> ritual” Paper, International Conference on Daoism, Boston University, Boston, MA	2014
“Tang Literary Consumption of Daoist Exorcism” Paper, Center for East Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison	2011
“Auntie’s an Exorcist: Daoist Exorcism in the <i>Guangyi ji</i> 廣異記” Paper, Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, Macalester College, St. Paul	2011

Professional Trainings

Teaching and Learning Innovation, UTK Design, facilitation and management techniques for online pedagogy	2023
SafeZone at UT Training, UTK Pride Center Tier 1, Tier 2 Training for LGBTQ+ Safezone	2022-23
TeachOnline@UW, University of Wisconsin–Madison Design, facilitation, and management techniques for teaching online	2019
Blend@UW, University of Wisconsin–Madison Techniques for blending student-centered technology into course design	2018