

ERIK W. DAVIS

SELECTED CURRICULUM VITAE

Professor, Department of Religious Studies

Macalester College • Saint Paul, Minnesota

[Macalester faculty profile and contact information](#) • Updated August 2026

Academic Appointments

- 2021–present** Professor of Religious Studies, Macalester College.
2015–2021 Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Macalester College.
2009–2015 Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Macalester College.
2007–2009 Visiting Instructor of Religious Studies, Macalester College.

Editorial and Research Appointments

- 2025–present** Inaugural Series Editor, Cambodian Cultural Heritage Series, Bridwell Press.
2023–2025 Pro tem Inaugural Series Editor, Cambodian Cultural Heritage Series, Bridwell Press.
2005–2007 Folklore Project Director and Advisor, Buddhist Institute of Cambodia.
2004–2005 Advisor, Master’s Research Program, Buddhist Institute of Cambodia.

Education

- 2009** Ph.D., History of Religion, University of Chicago Divinity School. Dissertation: “Treasures of the Buddha: Imagining Death and Life in Contemporary Cambodian Religion.” Advisor: Steven Collins.
2000 M.A., Religious Studies, University of Washington, Seattle.

Books

Authored Books

- Davis, Erik W. *Each Other’s Destiny: Rebirth and Relationship in Cambodian Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, forthcoming September 2026.
Davis, Erik W. *Deathpower: Buddhism’s Ritual Imagination in Cambodia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Edited Books

- Carbine, Jason A., and Erik W. Davis, eds. *Śīmās: Foundations of Buddhist Religion*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2022.
Davis, Erik W., Sor Sokny, Tan Bunly, Chor Chanthya, Hel Rithy, Sok Ra, Phat Chantamonyratha, Hun Chantasoeata, and Som Vanna, eds. *New Khmer Folktales*, vols. 1–4: *Judgment, Place, Tricksters, and Gender*. Phnom Penh: Buddhist Institute, 2005–2006.

Peer-Reviewed Articles and Chapters

- Davis, Erik W. “Folklore: A Cycle of Alev Stories.” *Mānoa* 33, no. 2 and 34, no. 1 (2022): 65–68.
Carbine, Jason A., and Erik W. Davis. “Editors’ Introduction.” In *Śīmās: Foundations of Buddhist Religion*, 1–24. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2022.
Davis, Erik W. “Śīmās as Assemblages of Territorial Imagination in Cambodia.” In *Śīmās: Foundations of Buddhist Religion*, edited by Jason A. Carbine and Erik W. Davis, 278–316. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2022.

- Davis, Erik W. "Kinship beyond Death: Ambiguous Relations and Autonomous Children in Cambodian Buddhism." *Contemporary Buddhism* 16, no. 1 (2015).
- Davis, Erik W. "The (Buddhist) Ascetic Who Remembers Past Lives [lok tapos cham chiet]." In *Figures of Modernity in Southeast Asia*, edited by Erik Harms, Johan Lindquist, and Joshua Barker. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012.
- Davis, Erik W. "Khmer Spirits, Chinese Bodies: Chinese Spirit Mediums and Spirit Possession Rituals in Contemporary Cambodia." In *Faith in the Future: Understanding the Revitalization of Religions and Cultural Traditions in Asia*, edited by Thomas Reuter and Alexander Horstmann, 177–196. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Davis, Erik W. "Weaving Life out of Death: The Craft of the Rag Robe in Cambodian Funerary Ritual." In *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China*, edited by Paul Williams and Patrice Ladwig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Davis, Erik W. "Imagined Parasites: Flows of Monies and Spirits in Cambodia." In *Cambodia's Economic Transformation*, edited by Caroline Hughes and Kheang Un. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2011.
- Davis, Erik W. "Between Forests and Families: Death, Desire, and Order in Cambodia." In *People of Virtue: Reconfiguring Religion, Power, and Moral Order in Today's Cambodia*, edited by Alexandra Kent and David P. Chandler. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.
- Davis, Erik W. "Imaginary Conversations with Mothers about Death." In *At the Edge of the Forest: Essays in Honor of David Chandler*, edited by Anne Hansen and Judy Ledgerwood. Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Press, 2008.
- Davis, Erik W., trans. "Monumental Architecture and Habitable Homes," by Hok Sokol. In *Khmer Wooden Heritage*, edited by François Tainturier. Siem Reap: Center for Khmer Studies, 2006.

Current Research

- "Nuon Chea's New Buddhism." Under contract with Bridwell Press; anticipated publication in 2027.
- Cambodia and hauntology. Research project in progress.
- "The Perfect Funeral of Norodom Sihanouk." Article manuscript.

Teaching Areas

Buddhist studies; Cambodian and Southeast Asian religions; ritual, death, and material religion; religion and politics; theory and method in the study of religion; critical theory.

Selected Presentations

Keynote and Featured Lectures

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| 2026 | "Rebirth and Relationship in Contemporary Buddhist Cambodia." Khyentse Foundation Buddhist Studies Lecture Series, Northwestern University. |
| 2024 | "Deathpower: Death, Care, and Consequences." Keynote lecture for the <i>Deathpower</i> exhibition, Law Warschaw Gallery, Macalester College. |
| 2015 | "Past Lives Present, Tense: Rebirth Memory in Contemporary Cambodia." Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley. |
| 2012 | "Nuon Chea's New Buddhism: Continuing Notes from Interviews and Court Transcripts." <i>Imagining Cambodia</i> conference, Northern Illinois University. |
| 2011 | "Khmer Spirits, Chinese Bodies: Spirit Possession in Contemporary Sino-Khmer Communities in Cambodia." Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison. |
| 2009 | "Buddhism Makes Brahmanism: Entities and Erotics in Southeast Asia." Southeast Asian Summer Studies Institute, University of Wisconsin–Madison. |
| 2007 | "Foodgetting, Ritual, and Value in Contemporary Cambodia." Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan. |

Selected Invited and Conference Presentations

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| 2026 | "The Crimes of Maitreya in Cambodia." Buddhism and Law Conference, University of Toronto. |
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- 2025** “‘It’s Mostly Women’: Past-Life Memories in Cambodian Women and Girls.” International Association of Buddhist Studies, Leipzig, Germany.
- 2024** “The Appeals and Dangers of ‘Friendship’ in Cambodia.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Seattle.
- 2023** “In Dubious Matter: Narratives and Hauntings in New Methods.” Association for Asian Studies in Asia Conference, Daegu, South Korea.
- 2023** “Sīmās: Foundations of Buddhist Religion,” with Jason A. Carbine. Theravada Civilizations Project Conference, University of Pennsylvania.
- 2019** “Deathpower.” Invited lecture, University of Chicago Divinity School.
- 2019** “Ritual Assemblages of Territorial Imagination in Cambodia.” Invited lecture, Saint Mary’s University, Halifax.
- 2019** “Re-narrating the Past to Change the Future: King Ang Duong, Brother Number Two, and Buddhist Revivals.” *The Multiplicity of Asian Buddhist Modernities*, University of California, Berkeley.
- 2018** “The Perfect Funeral of King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia.” Comparative Anthropology of Buddhism seminar, CNRS and Centre d’Études Himalayennes, Paris.
- 2018** “Past Lives Present, Tense.” Centre d’Études Interdisciplinaires sur le Bouddhisme, Paris.
- 2018** “Sīmās: Histories, Practices, and Politics.” Roundtable, Theravāda Buddhist Civilizations Conference.
- 2018** “The Perfect Funeral of King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference.
- 2016** “Past Lives Present, Tense.” Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.
- 2016** “Past Lives Present, Tense.” Department of Anthropology, University of Washington.
- 2014** “The Perfect Funeral of King-Father Norodom Sihanouk: Ritual Imagination in Contemporary Cambodian Spectacle.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Philadelphia.
- 2014** “Buddhist Murals as Imaginal Spaces: Status, Geographical, Moral, and Ethnic Hierarchies.” *Enacting Buddhism* workshop, University of California, Berkeley.
- 2012** “Sīmās, Sacrifice, and (Intercalated) Sovereignty.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Toronto.
- 2011** “Adoption, Fertility, Magic: Imagining Something Other than Religious Syncretism in Southeast Asia.” Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs.
- 2010** “Weaving Life out of Death: The Pamsukūla Rag-Robe Shroud in Cambodian Funerary Ritual.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Philadelphia.

Selected Public Scholarship and Media

- 2024** Public lecture and scholarly presentation for the *Deathpower* exhibition, Law Warschaw Gallery, Macalester College.
- 2017** *Deathpower: Buddhism’s Ritual Imagination in Cambodia*. Interview, New Books Network.
- 2013** “Beginning a Sketch of Accumulation by Dispossession in Contemporary Cambodia.” Fieldsights, Cultural Anthropology Online.

Selected Grants, Fellowships, and Honors

2026	Khyentse Foundation Academic Development Grant.
2025	Wallace Scholarly Activities Grant supporting the index for <i>Each Other's Destiny</i> .
2019	Wallace Scholarly Activities Grant supporting the index for <i>Simās</i> .
2016	Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Fellowship in Buddhist Studies Research Grant.
2015	Center for Khmer Studies Senior Researcher Fellowship.
2014	Association for Asian Studies First Book Subvention Grant.
2011–2013	Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty in Colleges and Universities Fellowship, Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.
2007–2008	Senior Dissertation Fellowship, Martin Marty Center, Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion.
2006	Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship.
2006	Senior Research Fellowship, Center for Khmer Studies.
2004–2005	Blakemore-Freeman Advanced Asian Language Scholarship.
2003–2004	Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship.

Selected Professional and Institutional Service

2024	Peer reviewer, Hua Lin Journal, Asian Ethnology, Global Buddhism, and Medical Anthropology.
2023	Member, Advisory Board, Pew Research Center survey of religion in South and Southeast Asia.
2014–2018	Member, Religions in Southeast Asia Steering Committee, American Academy of Religion.
2012–2019	Member, Advisory Committee, Center for Khmer Studies.
2011–2014	Chair, Thai/Laos/Cambodia Studies Group.
2006–2011	Board Member, Thai/Laos/Cambodia Studies Group.
2016–2019	Member, Educational Policy and Governance Committee, Macalester College.
2013–present	Member, Critical Theory Steering Committee, Macalester College.
2008–present	Member, Asian Studies Steering Committee, Macalester College.