

THE 7TH ANNUAL SHENG YEN LECTURE

Dr. Robert Campany
Professor of Asian Studies
and Religious Studies,
Vanderbilt University

Friday, January 24th, 2020
Dodd Hall Auditorium, DHA103
4:30pm



The Dreams of Self Cultivators: Comparing a Daoist and a Buddhist Text for Practitioners

What roles did dreams play in disciplines of self-cultivation in early medieval China? In this talk, Dr. Campany seeks to answer this question by mapping the “dreamscape” of late classical and early medieval China, focusing on two texts located in two zones of this dreamscape. *Records of Master Zhou’s Communications with the Unseen World*, the fascinating dream records left behind by a Daoist practitioner named Zhou Ziliang, recovered, compiled, and annotated by his teacher, the famous Tao Hongjing, is part of what Campany calls the spillover paradigm, in which the dreamer is a self-cultivator of some sort and his or her dreams are a direct continuation of daytime cultivational pursuits. Conversely, the *Buddhist Sutra on the Explication of Dreams for Bodhisattvas*, which presents an extensive system for dream-based karmic self-diagnosis by practitioners on the bodhisattva path toward Buddhahood, falls within the diagnostic paradigm, in which dreams are interpreted as comprising symbols indicating the dreamer’s progress on the path toward the goal of cultivation.



Dr. Robert Campany is Professor of Asian Studies and Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University. He is a winner of the American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion and the author of six books to date, including *Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China* and *The Chinese Dreamscape, 300BCE-800CE*, to appear in print next year from Harvard University Asia Center Publications.