

Curriculum Vitae of Justin W. Henry

EMPLOYMENT

- 2023-present Assistant Professor (Bhagwan Padma Prabhu Endowed Professorship),
Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida.
- 2021-2023 Lecturer, Georgia College and State University.
- 2019-2021 Visiting Lecturer, Georgia College and State University.
- 2018 Lecturer, The University of Chicago.
- 2016-2018 Instructor, Loyola University Chicago, Department of Theology.
- 2015-2016 Instructor, Elmhurst College.

EDUCATION

- 2017 Ph.D. The University of Chicago Divinity School, History of Religions.
- 2009 M.A. Cornell University, Asian Studies.
- 2005 B.A. Colgate University, Honors in Philosophy, *magna cum laude*.

COURSES TAUGHT

Buddhist Philosophy and Literature | Buddhist Traditions in Asia | Intermediate Sanskrit |
Introduction to Hinduism | Religions of India | Religion, Sects and Cults | Religion and
Wealth | Sex, Yoga and Dieting in Indian Religions | The God Debate | The Life Worth
Living | Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion | World Religions

MONOGRAPHS

- 2023 *Ravana's Kingdom: The Ramayana and Sri Lankan History from Below*. Oxford
University Press USA.
- Shortlisted for the American Academy of Religion's Best New Book in the
History of Religions 2023 prize.
 - Reviews in *Journal of Global Buddhism*, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*,
Reading Religion.
 - American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies subvention grant for publication of a
licensed reprint with Tambapanni Academic Publishers (forthcoming, 2025).

JOURNAL ISSUE

- 2019 Guest editor and introduction co-author for *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42.4 (July 2019). Special issue: “Lankapura: The Legacy of the *Ramayana* in Sri Lanka.” DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2019.1626127.

JOURNAL ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

- [forthcoming] “Modern Buddhist Sanskrit in Sri Lanka: A Study of Davuldena Gñānissara’s *Yatidūtam*.” *The Life of Contemporary Sanskrit: Dialogues between Tradition and Modernity*. Ed. Laurie Patton, Finnian Gerety and Charles Preston. Routledge *Dialogues in South Asian Traditions* series.
- 2025 [in press] “Tamil Literature and Historical Imagination in Sinhala Translation.” *For the Love of Tamil: Essays in Honor of Elayaperumal Annamalai*. Ed. Margherita Trento, N. Govindarajan, Constantine V. Nakassis, and Sascha Ebeling. Naples, Italy: UniOR Press.
- 2024 “Literary and Cultural Exchange between India and Sri Lanka.” *Handbook of Indian History*. Ed. Lavanya Vemsani. Springer Publishing.
- “Hinduism and the New Spirit of Capitalism: Vocational Theology in 21st Century Spiritualist Self-Improvement Literature.” *Selling the Sacred: Religion and Marketing in the Digital Age*. Ed. Mara Einstein and Sarah McFarland Taylor (Routledge): pp.271-84.
- “Sex and the Self: Foucault and Early Buddhism.” *Journal of Contemporary Thought* 47.
- 2023 “Chronicling History: The *Mahāvamsa* and Historical Methodology.” *Sāhityaya Literary Volume 2023* [Annual Publication of the Sri Lankan State Literary Advisory Council/Department of Cultural Affairs]. Ed. Krishantha Fedricks and Kaushalya Perera: pp.51-72.
- 2021 “South Indian Influence, Religious Cosmopolitanism, and Multilingualism in Sinhala *sandēśa* Poetry.” *Linguistic and Textual Aspects of Multilingualism in South India and Sri Lanka [Collection Indologie 147, NETamil Series 8]*. Ed. Giovanni Ciotti and Erin McCann. École Française d’Extrême-Orient/Institut Français de Pondichéry: pp.753-82.
- 2020 “Sri Lanka’s Place in the History of South Asian Buddhism.” *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Religions*. Ed. Knut Jacobson. London: Routledge: pp.124-38.

- 2019 “Explorations in the Transmission of the *Ramayana* in Sri Lanka.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42.4: pp.732-46. DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2019.1631739.
- [with S. Pathmanesan and Krishantha Fedricks] “Reclaiming Ravana in Sri Lanka: Ravana’s Sinhala Buddhist Apotheosis and Tamil responses.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42.4: pp.796-812. DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2019.1631900.
- 2017 [with Alastair Gornall] “Beautifully Moral: Cosmopolitan Issues in Medieval Pāli Literary Theory.” *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History*. Ed. Zoltán Biedermann and Alan Strathern. University College London Press: pp.77-93.
- 2012 “The Polysemic Nature of *paritta*: One Buddhist Ritual and its Interpretations.” *Mudita: Deśabandhu Sirisumana Goḍaḡe Abhinandana Śāstrīya Saṅgrahaya [Mr. D. S. Godage Felicitation Volume]*. Ed. Ven. Induragare Dhammaratana, et al. Godage International Publishers: pp.702–709.

BOOK REVIEWS

- 2025 [forthcoming] Review of Neena Mahadev, “Karma and Grace: Religious Difference in Millennial Sri Lanka” (Columbia University Press, 2023). *Political Theology* 26.1.
- 2022 Review of Alastair Gornall, “Rewriting Buddhism: Pali literature and monastic reform in Sri Lanka, 1157–1270” (University College London Press, 2020). *Religion* 52.3. DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2022.2065188.
- Review of John S. Strong, “The Buddha’s Tooth: Western Tales of a Sri Lankan Relic” (University of Chicago Press, 2021). *Material Religion* 18.2. DOI: 10.1080/17432200.2022.2047531.
- Review of Frank Korom and Leah Lowthorp (ed.), “South Asian Folklore in Transition: Crafting New Horizons” (Routledge, 2019). *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 26.2. DOI: 10.1007/s11407-022-09320-3.
- 2019 Review of Thomas Patton, “The Buddha’s Wizards: Magic, Protection, and Healing in Burmese Buddhism” (Columbia University Press, 2018). *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 48.3-4: DOI:10.1558/bsor.38314.
- 2018 Review of Gil Fronsdaal, “The Buddha Before Buddhism: Wisdom from the Early Teachings” (Shambala, 2016). *JAAR/Reading Religion*.
- 2014 Review of Stephen C. Berkwitz, “Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism: Alagiavanna and the Portuguese in Sri Lanka” (Oxford University Press, 2013). *Symposia* 6: pp.110-13.

SELECTED AWARDS

- 2025 University of South Florida “New Researcher Grant.” For digital mapping and analysis of the “Sigiri Graffiti.”
- 2024 “Life Worth Living” Faculty Course Development Fellowship. To develop a graduate course on “Christian and Buddhist Ethics in the 21st Century,” underwritten by the John Templeton Foundation in conjunction with the Yale Center for Faith & Culture
- 2019 American Institute of Indian Studies Short-term Senior Research Fellow. For archival research undertaken in summer 2022 at the École Française d’Extrême-Orient, Pondichéry.
- 2017-2018 Council of American Overseas Research Centers Senior Research Fellowship (National Endowment for the Humanities). For fieldwork in Sri Lanka undertaken in spring 2019.
- 2016-2017 Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Dissertation Fellowship in Buddhist Studies (American Council of Learned Societies).
- 2012 American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies Dissertation Planning Grant.
- 2006-2008 Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships: Cornell University (Sinhala); University of Wisconsin-Madison (Tamil).
- 2005 M. Holmes Hartshorne Award for Excellence in Philosophy, Colgate University.

PUBLIC TALKS AND INVITED LECTURES

- 2025 Panelist on contributions to *For the Love of Tamil: Essays in Honor of Elayaperumal Annamalai*. University of Naples “L’Orientale.” May 10.
- Ghent Centre for South Asian Studies, Ghent University. March 13.
- Jain Society of Tampa Bay, Tampa, FL. March 2.
- Princeton University’s “Hindu Studies Lecture Series.” February 27.
- 2024 Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, The University of Kelaniya. December 13.
- Department of Social Studies, The Open University of Sri Lanka. December 6.
- Department of Geography & Anthropology, Louisiana State University. September 13.

- College of Arts & Sciences, University of South Florida. March 19.
- 2023 Faculty of Humanities, University of Jaffna. December 8.
- Faculty of Humanities, University of Kelaniya. December 5.
Center for Research and Publication in the Humanities and Social Sciences,
University of Ruhuna. July 19.
- American Ceylon Mission, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. July 15.
- University of Colombo, Department of History. July 13.
- Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Center for Tamil Studies Special
Lecture Series. June 20.
- American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies “New Books Series” [online].
March 29.
- 2022 University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. December 8.
- Pali and Buddhist University, Homagama, Sri Lanka. December 5.
- Council of American Overseas Research Centers, Fellowship Alumni Panel
[webinar]. September 14.
- École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pondicherry, India. August 8.
- Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, India. July 29.
- 2019 Georgia College & State University. October 2.
- 2017 Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, Colombo. July 31.
- The Open University of Sri Lanka, Colombo. July 25.
- 2015 The University of Chicago, paper given at the *Theory and Practice in South Asia*
weekly seminar. February 5.
- 2010 Colombo University, Department of Sinhala. Lecture in the university’s Sinhala
Studies Seminar series. July 20.
- 2007 Colgate University, Hamilton, NY. April 5.

INTERVIEWS AND POPULAR MEDIA

On-camera interviews and role as guide to the religious history of Sri Lanka for *Finding Ram*, documentary series on the multiform sociology and literary history of the *Ramayana* in South and Southeast Asia. Produced by Pawns Don't Like Chess Media in association with Applause Entertainment.

Interview with Deepak Singh for “American Chutney” (YouTube channel) [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpxb6iWMWVU&t=376s>]. October 2023.

Interview with Raj Balkaran for the “New Books in Indian Religions Podcast” (*New Books Network*). February 2023.

Interview with Rev. Dr. Chandima Gangodawila for “Patisota” (YouTube channel) [<https://youtu.be/jir1k7EsEfg>]. January 2023.

“Puskola pot kiyavana aṭa bhāṣā katā karana amerikan mahācārya!” [“American professor who reads palm leaf manuscripts and speaks eight languages!” Sandaresee Sudusinghe interview with Justin Henry. In Sinhala.] *Silumina*, p.36. October 6, 2019.

“Ravana’s Mechanical Flying Peacock.” *Council of American Overseas Research Centers ‘Field Notes’*. June 10, 2019 [www.caorc.org/single-post/2019/06/10/Ravanas-Mechanical-Flying-Peacock]. Over 16,000 unique views as of September 2022 according to Google Analytics.

“The ‘Great Chronicle’—Enduring time” [Walther Wuthmann interview with Justin Henry]. *Daily News*. July 31, 2017.

Reviews in *The Island*, June and October 2009.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2025 “‘Humility’ in Buddhist Translation: Theravada Buddhist Principles in Theory and Modern Business Leadership Practice.” *Leadership and the Good Life*. West Chester University. June 6.

“The Ramayana in Film and Television.” *Ramayanas Across Asia: Transnation, Translation, and Transformation*. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. May 9.

“Echoes of Sri Lanka’s Lion Rock: Buddhist Monastic Poetry from the Sigiriya Graffiti.” *Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies*. St. Anne’s College, Oxford University. March 19.

- 2024 “Historical Realism in Ramayana Literature.” *Dharma Academy of North America (DANAM)/American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. San Diego, CA. November 22.
- “The History of Religions and Neena Mahadev’s *Karma and Grace*.” *The 52nd Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. November 1st.
- “Historical Realism in Ramayana Literature.” *The 52nd Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 31.
- “Moral Naturalism in Jain Literature and Pali Buddhism.” *Constructing the Self: Jain Perspectives on Emotional Concepts*. Florida International University, June 1.
- “Digital Media and Political Prophecy in Sri Lankan Buddhist Nationalism.” *Biennial Conference of the International Society for Media, Religion, and Culture*. Boulder, CO. January 11.
- 2023 “Crossing the Ram Sethu: Historiography, Literature, and the Ramayana Today.” Annual International Conference of Sabaragamuwa University. Colombo, Sri Lanka. December 7.
- Prophecy and Political Salvation in Sri Lanka: “Diyasena Kumara” and the Sinhala Ravana Movement.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. San Antonio, TX. November 21.
- “Capitalism as *Sanatana Dharma*: Productivity and Corporate Wellness in Spiritual Self-Improvement Literature.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. San Antonio, TX. November 20.
- “The Return of Diyasena: Translating the Eschaton in Early Modern South Asia.” *The 51st Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 21.
- “Buddhist Millennialism and Political Prophecy in Sri Lanka.” *Biannual Sri Lanka Roundtable*. Utrecht University, The Netherlands. June 13.
- 2022 Forum on Contemporary Theory Annual International Conference (plenary panel on “The State of Theory in the World Today”). Guwahati, India. December 22.
- “Hinduism and the New Spirit of Capitalism: Neoliberal online discourse in India and North America.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. Denver, CO. November 20.
- “The *Ravana Katava* and the Sinhala *Ramayana* Tradition.” *The 50th Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 22.

- “Sinhala Buddhist Identity in the 21st Century Ravana Movement.” *Buddhist Identities in 21st Century Asia*. Cambridge University. April 9.
- “Research as a CAORC-NEH Fellow in Sri Lanka.” *Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference*. Honolulu, Hawai’i. March 28.
- 2021 “Facebook as Laboratory of Myth: The ‘Sinhala Ravana’ phenomenon and the rewriting of ethnic history in 21st century Sri Lanka.” *Association of Global South Studies 38th Annual Conference*. Georgia Southern University [online participation]. December 15.
- “Terraforming the Past: Buddhist majoritarianism and the Sinhala Ravana movement.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. San Antonio, TX [online participation]. November 19.
- “Literary Patronage and Print Culture in Sri Lanka’s 19th century Sanskrit Renaissance.” *Changing patterns of patronage across South Asia in the early modern and colonial periods*. Jagiellonian University [online participation]. October 16.
- “The 19th century Sri Lankan Sanskrit Renaissance.” *The 26th Annual Conference of the European Association for South Asian Studies*. Vienna, Austria [online participation]. July 27.
- 2019 “Social Media and the Birth of Buddhist Ravana.” *The 48th Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 18.
- “Ravana’s Palace and Sita’s Prison: Stratigraphies of Hindu and Buddhist mythology and devotional space in central Sri Lanka.” *British Association for South Asian Studies Annual Conference*. Durham, UK. April 4.
- 2018 “A Bridge too Close: Ram diplomacy, Ravana sovereignty and the technological past in 21st century Sri Lanka.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. Denver, CO. November 19.
- “Of Kokilas and Jaguars: Modern Sanskrit revivalism in Sri Lanka.” *The 47th Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 13.
- “The *Mahavamsa* and Competing Visions of the National Past in Sri Lanka.” *The 9th Annual Theravada Studies Conference* (Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting). Washington, DC. March 22.
- 2017 “Alternative Media Coast to Coast: Conspiracy, apocalypticism and populism in maverick AM radio broadcasting.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. Boston, MA. November 20.

- 2016 “Balancing Mount Kailash: Ravana’s Sanskrit in the Dravidian and Sinhala Buddhist nationalist movements.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. San Antonio, TX. November 20.
- “Divided Skies: Religious identity, language and devotional landscapes in 15th century Sinhala messenger poetry.” *The 45th Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 21
- “Triangulating Religious Pluralism: Temple patronage and devotional landscapes in pre-colonial Sri Lanka.” *The 13th Annual South Asia Graduate Student Conference*, The University of Chicago. March 3.
- 2015 “Negotiating the Past: Vernacular historiography in Sri Lanka from the 14th century.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*. Atlanta, GA. November 22.
- “Ravana, King of Lanka.” *The 44th Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 23.
- 2014 “Crisis and Historical Imagination in Kandyan Era Sinhala Historiography.” *Revisiting Social Responsibility in Contexts of Crisis: Challenges and Possibilities in Sri Lanka* (Colombo University Faculty of Arts 2014 International Conference). November 17.
- “Reinscribing Lithic History: Tamil *kalveṭṭu* literature and the career of King Kulakkōṭṭaṇ.” *The 43rd Annual Conference on South Asia*. Madison, WI. October 18.
- 2012 “The Alluring Stylus: Monastic poets in medieval Buddhist Sri Lanka.” *Sri Lanka: Intersections* (graduate student conference). Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. November 9.
- 2010 “Tamil in the Court and on the Page in Medieval Sri Lanka.” *Sri Lanka: Future Horizons for Research* (graduate student conference). The New School, New York, NY. April 16.
- 2009 “Gratitude Great and Small: Comparative reflections on Sinhala devotional works and the writings of Shinran.” *The 14th Biennial Conference of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies*. Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan. June 14.
- 2007 “Poet Kings and the Kings of Poetry: *rasa* and rulership in medieval Sinhala literature.” *American Academy of Religion Eastern International Regional Conference*. Waterloo, ON. May 5.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies

- Elected member of the Board of Directors, 2019-2023.
- Institutional sponsoring member of the Board of Directors (University of South Florida), 2023-present.

American Academy of Religion

SELECTED SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

College of Arts & Sciences Library Committee, University of South Florida. 2025-present.

Department of Religious Studies Undergraduate Committee, University of South Florida. Fall 2023-present.

Workshop on the *Sigiriya: Future Horizons for Research* organized for the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies. Colombo, Sri Lanka. July 2025.

College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Advisory Council, Georgia College and State University. 2021-2023 (chair, 2021-2022).

Workshop on the *Ramayana* in Sri Lanka organized for the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies. Colombo, Sri Lanka. July 2016.

CONSULTING

Consultant for the Council of American Overseas Research Centers on an application for 2022-23 award funding through the Fellowship Programs at Independent Research Institutions (FPIRI) program, administered by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Summer 2021. (Successfully awarded, April 2022, \$150,000.)

Consultant for a documentary series sponsored by Roar Media and produced by Sarah Kabir entitled 72, an educational film series on the cultural and political history of Sri Lanka. Spring 2021.

Consultant for GIZ (German International Development Council) on a "mobile museum" aimed at informing secondary school aged Sri Lankans about the island's social and political history. Summer 2019.

REFEREEING

Book manuscripts reviewed for Routledge and Palgrave McMillan.

Articles refereed for *History of Religions*, *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies*, *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies*, *Religion & Society*, *The South Asianist Journal* and *Undergraduate Research*.

Council of American Overseas Research Centers Senior Research Fellowship (FPIRI-NEH) grant application referee. Spring 2021.

Grant referee for the Endangered Archives Programme, The British Library. April 2017.

Submission abstract reviewer for the Peradeniya University International Research Session. March 2014.

LANGUAGES

Sinhala (classical and modern research proficiency, speaking proficiency)

Tamil (research proficiency, basic speaking proficiency)

Pali (research proficiency)

Sanskrit (research proficiency)

French (reading and basic speaking proficiency)