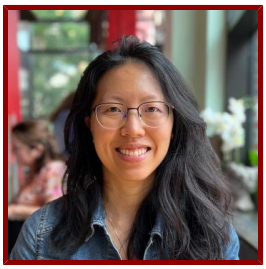
Stanford



# Elaine Lai

COLLEGE Lecturer, Civic, Liberal, and Global Education

## Bio

### BIO

Elaine Lai is a Lecturer for Civic, Liberal, and Global Education (COLLEGE) who has spent over a decade of her life working and studying in Nepal, Hong Kong, India, Taiwan, and China, where she made many lifelong friends.

Elaine is a scholar of Buddhism, trained in the languages of Tibetan, Chinese, and Sanskrit. She specializes in a tradition known as the Great Perfection in Tibet. Elaine's recent research explores the relationship between Buddhist literature and time, specifically, how form and content interplay to cultivate more compassionate temporal relationalities. Elaine is committed to making the study of Buddhism accessible to a wider audience through technology and the arts. As a part of her dissertation, she created an intertextual heatmap to trace the citational history of a scripture throughout an important corpus of Great Perfection literature. Elaine also created a virtual reality (VR) experience to present Great Perfection history in a novel way.

At Stanford, Elaine has co-taught different courses in Religious Studies and guest lectured in Asian American Studies. In 2022, Elaine is proud to have created and taught the course "Queering Buddhism: Gender, Sexuality, and Liberatory Praxis." This course sought to investigate the possibilities and constraints to "queering" or transforming any institution, and how the fields of queer studies and feminist studies might constructively and ethically be in conversation with Buddhist theories of liberation. In her pedagogy, Elaine emphasizes the importance of reciprocity, respect, and co-creation. Elaine is a firm believer that the process of how we engage in dialogue is as important, if not more important, than what the ultimate outcome of our conversations might be.

In Elaine's free time, she writes screenplays (film and TV), spanning the genres of comedy, sci-fi, animation, historical drama, and more.

### ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- COLLEGE Lecturer, Civic, Liberal, and Global Education

### HONORS AND AWARDS

- Gerald J. Lieberman Fellowship, Stanford University, Vice Provost of Graduate Education (VPGE) (2023-2024)
- PhD Scholarship, Khyentse Foundation (2022-2023)
- Stanford Asian American Graduate Student Leadership Award, Stanford University, Asian American Activities Center (2022)
- Stanford Community Impact Award, Stanford University (2021)

### PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- Ph.D, Stanford University , Religious Studies (2024)

- MA, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) , Buddhist Studies (with distinction) (2017)
- Bachelor of Arts, Wesleyan University , Film Studies and French Studies double major (with honors) (2008)

## Teaching

### COURSES

**2026-27**

- Being Human in an AI World: RELIGST 11Q (Aut)
- Utopia, Dystopia, and Technology in Science Fiction: COLLEGE 113 (Spr)
- Why College? Your Education and the Good Life: COLLEGE 101 (Aut)

**2025-26**

- Citizenship in the 21st Century: COLLEGE 102 (Win)
- Utopia, Dystopia, and Technology in Science Fiction: COLLEGE 113 (Spr)
- Why College? Your Education and the Good Life: COLLEGE 101 (Aut)

**2024-25**

- Citizenship in the 21st Century: COLLEGE 102 (Win)
- Utopia, Dystopia, and Technology in Science Fiction: COLLEGE 113 (Spr)
- Why College? Your Education and the Good Life: COLLEGE 101 (Aut)