



University of California, Berkeley  
Center for Buddhist Studies  
presents

# Jonathan Gold

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Vasubandhu is among the best known and most influential of Buddhist philosophers, but he is also extremely controversial and difficult to pin down. His scholarship is hounded on the one side by issues of dating and attribution, and on the other side by controversies over how to characterize his mature, Yogācāra philosophy. Yet even in the face of such complexities, it turns out to be fruitful to read works attributed to Vasubandhu for their conceptual continuity — in particular, their continuity on the nature of causality and the uses of scripture. This presentation paints a picture of how Vasubandhu's works employ scriptural citations within philosophical arguments, noting parallels among diverse texts. We see that these arguments reflect the interpretive principles found in the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra, which points us suggestively to a hermeneutical motive behind the elusive Yogācāra text, the Trisvabhāvanirdeśa. Vasubandhu was keenly aware of the paradox of articulating, in language, a view that the ultimate nature of reality is beyond words. His solution lays the ground for subsequent Indian Yogācāra, with its emphasis on the conventional utility of epistemology (pramāṇa) and the acceptance of "sliding scales" of truth.



Jonathan C. Gold (Ph.D. University of Chicago) is Assistant Professor and Julius Foundation University Preceptor in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. His research focuses on Indian and Tibetan intellectual traditions. He is the author of *The Dharma's Gatekeepers: Sakya Paṇḍita on Buddhist Scholarship in Tibet* (State University of New York Press, 2007). His current project is a study of the Indian Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu.

**Thursday, November 17, 2011, 5:00 pm**

IEAS Conference Room, 2223 Fulton Street, 6th Floor

## **Vasubandhu's Ultimate: How Scriptural Hermeneutics Lays the Foundation for a Yogācāra Mainstream**

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