

UCDAVIS
Religious Studies

Thursday, February 1
6:00pm – 7:00pm
Andrews Conference Room

The Mohini Jain Presidential Chair in Jain Studies Inaugural Lecture Series

THE JINA AS KING OR THE JINA AS RENOUNCER:

Seeing and Ornamenting Temple Images in Jainism

Professor John Cort
Denison University

Most discussions of sectarian differences between the Digambar and Shvetambar Jains focus on disagreements concerning the biographies of the 24th Jina Mahavira, disagreements about whether a true monk should be naked (*dig-ambara*) or can wear white robes (*shveta-ambara*), and disagreements about whether or not women can directly attain liberation. But the difference between the two that is most immediately evident to anyone who has ever visited any of the tens of thousands of Jain temples in India (and increasingly in North America) concerns whether or not the image of the Jina should be ornamented. The main image in a Shvetambar temple is ornamented daily, and the ornamentation is often quite ostentatious. Digambaras, however, reject this practice, and argue that a Jina image should never be ornamented. This disagreement concerning the material culture of Jina images reveals a deeper disagreement concerning the very nature of the Jina, and the ways that devout Jains should visualize the Jina in their devotional rituals. In this lecture, Cort discusses the different theologies of the Jina that underlie this disagreement, and shows how attention to material culture can play an important role in the academic understanding of Jainism.

John Cort is Professor of Asian and Comparative Religions at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, USA, where he also holds the Judy Gentili Chair in International Studies. He is the author of many articles on the Jains, as well as *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (2001) and *Framing the Jina: Narratives of Icons and Idols in Jain History* (2010). He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2017-18.

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