

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Edith Inta

## **\_x000B\_ HOME SHRINES: JAPANESE AMERICAN BUDDHIST SPIRITUALITY**

Asian American spirituality will be examined through the lens of Japanese American Buddhist home shrines at the next UCSB Spirituality & Culture talk. Jane Naomi Iwamura's presentation, "Recognizing the Spiritual Center: Contemplating the Buddhist Home Shrine (obutsudan)" will take place at 7 p.m., Feb. 8, at the University Club, 1332 Santa Barbara St.

"The temple is not the main site for religious devotion for Japanese Buddhists, the home often is, which emphasizes the importance of family," says Iwamura, who will illustrate her talk with slides of obutsudans. "There is a misconception that Asian American spiritual practice is eternal and unchanging. Home shrines are fluid, very much like Mexican altars."

Traditionally, the Buddhist home shrine provides sacred space where one can contemplate the Dharma, as well as pay homage to deceased loved ones, but according to Iwamura, there are two current trends among Japanese American Buddhists: maintaining traditions as a marker of ethnic identity and boldly shaping the practice to fit contemporary visions and needs. One man, for instance, feels more empowered since he included Malcolm X in his shrine and a woman has a shrine devoted to her cat. "Home shrines not only reflect the individual, but also say a lot about the Japanese American experience, such as the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, as well as generational differences," added Iwamura.

Iwamura is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Rhetoric at UC Berkeley. Her dissertation, "The Icon of the Oriental Monk in American Popular Cultures," explores the mass media romanticization of Asian religions in the United States. In fall 1999, she will teach a course at UCSB on Asian Pacific American religions.

The UCSB General Affiliates program is open to members and others interested in examining and interpreting---literally, metaphorically and mythically---the spiritual traditions and trends of many cultures. The UCSB Office of Community Relations in association with the Department of Religious Studies co-sponsors the event with the UCSB General Affiliates.

Tickets are \$5 for affiliates and Chancellor's Council members, and \$8 for non-members. Reservations are recommended. Call 893-4388 for additional information.

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.