This presentation focuses on contemporary Shin Buddhist women who are active in social causes such as discrimination against burakumin and leprosy patients. Professor Starling (Lewis & Clark College) uses the example of women’s social activism to explore the role of social networks, gendered spaces, and affective relationships in shaping Buddhist ethics from the ground up. Starling pays special attention to the confluence of religious and secular discourses around the concept of “inochi” (“life”).

Jessica Starling is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. She has published several articles on the role of temple wives in Japan and the centrality of family in contemporary temple Buddhism. Her monograph, Guardians of the Buddha’s Home: Domestic Religion in the Contemporary Jōdo Shinshū, is under contract with the University of Hawaii Press. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Virginia in 2012 and was a Shinjo Ito Postdoctoral Fellow in Japanese Buddhism at the Center for Japanese Studies at UC Berkeley from 2012-2013.