



Cluster of Excellence  
**ASIA AND EUROPE**  
IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT



**UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG**  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

Public Lecture

## Experimental Buddhism in Contemporary Japan



**PROFESSOR JOHN NELSON**

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**April 7, 2014, 4 pm to 6 pm**

Karl Jaspers Centre, Room 112  
Voßstraße 2, Building 4400, Heidelberg

This illustrated talk highlights the complex tensions and controversial interactions between long-established religious traditions and rapid social, cultural, and economic change. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, *Experimental Buddhism* surveys a number of progressive Buddhist priests who are trying to “reboot” their roles and traditions to gain greater significance in Japanese society. Frequently criticized by their fellow priests, they continue to promote initiatives such as suicide prevention, care for the elderly and homeless, anti-nuclear education, as well as glitzy fashion shows held in temples, or bars run by Buddhist priests. The stories and personalities in this presentation will help to expand understanding about the strategic and “experimental” application of religious resources intended to improve both the quality of human life and contemporary society.