

Over the last two years, Shu-chen Chen has been teaching elementary Chinese to both heritage and non-heritage learners of Chinese. Her students' rapid learning pace has been the most rewarding aspect of her teaching experience and it keeps her enthusiasm for this work alive. During the 2007-8 academic year, she will also teach Chinese 201 and 202. At this level she has also been impressed by how well her students absorb new vocabulary and new expressions as they continue on their way to becoming proficient students of Chinese.

Shu-chen Chen 's own field of research is Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhism. Her Ph.D. is in the field of Religious Studies. However, during the course of her Ph.D. program, she also learned Sanskrit, Tibetan and Japanese. While she uses Sanskrit and Tibetan as a formal research tools, she has also learned to use colloquial Tibetan and to speak elementary Japanese. Her experience learning new languages encouraged her to teach her native language, Chinese, and using her experience as both a language learner and an instructor, she has been able to create a more effective set of learning materials for her own classes.

She is interested in language pedagogy and tests different teaching methods found in written works as well those suggested by her three senior colleagues in the Chinese program: Dr. Liang, Dr. Tseng and Dr. Zhao. Her methodology emphasizes the engagement of her students in the classroom, by giving them interactive contexts. This allows them to constantly be communicating with each other, sharing information, and generally learning about each other, as they practice speaking on different topics in Chinese.

Shu-chen Chen sees common ground between her research on religions and spiritual life and her teaching of Chinese. On the first day of Chinese 101, in the Fall of 2007 she told her class: "Through learning Chinese, you get to know your own culture better, you become more understanding, more accepting and you learn that differences aren't so great after all. It's good for the harmony of the world."

Aside from teaching, she is also planning to publish her Doctoral Dissertation: Cultural change of Indian Pure Land Buddhist teaching in Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism. She considers the experience of editing her own work to be a reflective process within which she may learn to better understand herself. To her, getting to know oneself may be the primary task in life. Chan Buddhism encourages people to get to know oneself. That "self" is the self that existed before our parents gave us physical life. And to cite an American spiritual figure, Lester Levenson: "We came to this world to know that we are not the body." So she asks herself, "If I am not the body, what am I?" She hopes to uncover the answer someday.