

UNIVERSITY LECTURE SEASON 2024-2025



SAGINAW VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY

THE WILLIAM AND JULIA EDWARDS LECTURE IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION PRESENTS

The Vetala and AI: Re-imagining Fantastical Exchange in Translation

Guest speaker Christi A. Merrill, PhD.

The vetala of India, translated variously into English as “vampire,” “demon” or “the undead,” is the mischievous spirit of “The Twenty-five Tales of Vikram and the Vetala” who possesses corpses and tells clever, riddling stories to trick brave kings like Vikramaditya into letting him go free. Dr. Merrill will draw from a selection of versions in Bengali, English, Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu to suggest new ways of understanding our relationships to text and image across languages and cultures, as well as the premise of equivalence that AI is built on today.

Christi A. Merrill is the professor of South Asian literature and postcolonial theory and the associate professor of comparative literature at the University of Michigan. She holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature, as well as MFAs in nonfiction writing and translation, all from the University of Iowa. Her teaching and research combine the theory and practice of translation, and the focus of her work is primarily on contemporary Indian literature. Her translations of Rajasthani writer Vijaydan Detha’s “Chouboli and Other Stories” were supported by a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship and won the 2012 A.K. Ramanujan Award for translation from the Association of Asian Studies. She is the author of “Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and other Tales of Possession” (Fordham 2009). She is currently writing a book on Dalit literature, “Genres of Real Life: Mediating Stories of Injustice across Languages.”

The William and Julia Edwards Lectureship in Philosophy and Religion was established through the generosity of William and Julia Edwards to bring renowned scholars working at the intersection of faith and philosophy to SVSU to present public lectures and interact with students and faculty.

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**THUR. | MAR. 20
6:00 P.M.**

**RHEA MILLER
RECITAL HALL**

Entrance inside Curtiss Hall

**STAND OUT
SPEAKER**