

GUEST LECTURE

Donnerstag, 28. Mai 2026, 10:30–12:00 Uhr, Internationales Begegnungszentrum der Wissenschaft,
Amalienstraße 38

*Mapping a Buddha’s Mind: The Abhidharma Understanding of
Consciousness*

Prof. Dr. Rupert Gethin (University of Bristol)



Abstract

The early generations of the Buddha’s followers developed his teachings to present them in a form of systematic thought they termed *abhidharma* — ‘the ultimate teaching’. This process of systematizing the Buddha’s teaching resulted in rival Indian schools of Abhidharma, three of which came to exercise particular influence on the subsequent history of Buddhist thought and practice beyond India: the Sarvāstivāda and Yogācāra schools in the north of India and the Theravāda school in the south and Sri Lanka. Although offering alternative perspectives on the Buddha’s teaching, these ancient schools of Buddhist thought shared a common concern to explore and map fully what they understood as the Buddha’s unique insights into the process of mind and body. The lecture will consider some of the common themes in the different Abhidharma maps of mind and body.

About the speaker

Rupert Gethin completed a PhD in 1987 at the University of Manchester. Between 1987 and 2022 he taught Indian religions at the University of Bristol, where he is now Professor Emeritus of Buddhist Studies. He has been President of the Pali Text Society since 2003. He is author of *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (1992), *The Foundations of Buddhism* (1998), as well as articles relating to Buddhist meditation theory, Abhidharma, and Pali canonical and commentarial literature. His monograph *Mapping a Buddha’s Mind: Indian Buddhist Thought in the Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Yogācāra Abhidharma* will be published by OUP in September 2026.

