

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
THE SOCIOLOGY OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION: IDENTITY AND BELIEF FORMATION

Rice University and the University of California, San Diego are pleased to announce a \$2.9 million re-granting initiative. The “Science and Religion: Identity and Belief Formation” project will specifically fund sociological research that empirically examines how identities and beliefs are related to science and religion. This project, which is one of three social science projects underway, has been designed to provide support for new scholarship in the *sociology of science and religion*. The project, led by Elaine Howard Ecklund (Rice University) and John H. Evans (University of California, San Diego), is funded through the Templeton Religion Trust and coordinated by The Issachar Fund.

Funding is available to support graduate student fellowships and a postdoctoral fellowship, as well as early-career, mid-career, and senior scholar research grants in the field of sociology. All awards will run two years in length. The early-career, mid-career, and senior scholar awards are eligible to begin as early as April 1, 2020; all projects must be completed by June 30, 2022. The graduate student and post-doctoral fellowships will begin on July 1, 2020 and must be completed by June 30, 2022. All awards will be distributed by Rice University to the grantee’s institution.

Overview

What influences the way in which people respond to the deliverances of science and to the teachings of religions, and more specifically, what influences the way in which people think about the relationship between science and religion? Human belief formation is responsive to evidence, reason and logic; but in addition to such evidential factors, numerous psychological, social, and perhaps other contextual factors also affect the formation, maintenance, and transmission of beliefs and attitudes about science, religion, and the relationship between science and religion. The purpose of the research program of which this RFP (Request for Proposals) is a part is to advance understanding of the narratives (or positions) about the relationship between science and religion that are adopted in contemporary societies, and about the psychological, social or other contextual factors that shape these narratives and promote their adoption or persistence. What contextual factors, for example, lead to a rejection of science as an aid to thinking about moral and spiritual questions, or of theology as a source of insights or clues that can contribute to a better scientific understanding of human experience or the natural world? What contextual factors affect the acceptance or rejection of the idea that there is an inherent and inevitable conflict between science and religion? (These examples are given for the purposes of illustration and are not meant to be exhaustive).

Religion and science are perhaps the dominant ways of meaning making in the late modern world. While theologians and philosophers have built an impressive body of work on how science and religion should relate, and historians on how people have connected science and religion in the past, we know little about how *contemporary* people *actually* understand the science and religion interface. This project on the **sociology of science and religion**, with a focus on **beliefs and identities**, is running concurrently with, and interacting with, separate yet aligned proposals in cognitive science/psychology and evolutionary anthropology.

Existing research in this area has typically depended upon a tightly-focused definition of religion as either **identification** with established religious institutions or **belief** in a transcendent force or being. We want to expand religion to include not only institutional religion, but also meaning systems or worldviews – what sociologists of religion have classically labeled a functional definition of religion. Existing research has also depended upon a tightly-focused definition of science as a set of practices that generate fact claims about the natural world. Indeed, the vast majority of research in the relationship between religion and science has been about knowledge of the natural world. This has been a productive starting point, but we can now expand this as well.

We can imagine sociologists asking a number of questions within this broad framework. We offer just a few examples:

- How do aligned identities (such as race, class, and gender identities) intersect with religious identities to shape beliefs about science, and beliefs about the relationship between religion and science?
- How do people use religion and science to anchor their identities in the modern world? For example, are there people for whom science is an identity that operates in a manner similar to how religion operates as a source of identity? Do people use religion and science to establish other identities?
- Given that people experience religion and science at the same time in their lives, how do people combine these perspectives to form meaningful action?
- Do people with religious identities and beliefs perceive opposition to their values by either scientists or scientific beliefs?
- Does learning science impact religious identity? Does learning religion impact scientific identity? Do these impacts differ by age?

Application Instructions

Award Types:

There are five types of awards available:

- 1) **Sociology graduate student fellowships** (\$50,000 each for a total of two years of funding).
- 2) A two-year **postdoctoral fellowship** for a sociologist to be in residence at Rice University.
- 3) Research grants (\$100,000 each) for **early career sociologists**.
- 4) Research grants (\$200,000 each) for **mid-career sociologists**.
- 5) Research grants (\$200,000 each) for **senior sociologists**.

Eligibility:

Eligibility Information for All Award Types:

Investigators of any proposal must have a doctoral degree or equivalent (or be ABD in the case of graduate student fellowship applicants) in sociology from an accredited college or university. Applicants outside of the United States are welcome. Applicants may only have their name on one proposal for this competition.

Fellowships and research projects are limited to scholars in the discipline of sociology. Within sociology, we encourage applicants from a diverse array of subfields, including (but not limited) to sociology of culture; family; international migration; sociology of religion; science, knowledge, and technology; sociology of sex and gender; medical sociology and political sociology.

All fellowships and research projects must be accomplished within a two-year time span.

Grant-Type Specific Eligibility:

- 1) **Graduate Student Fellowship Applicants:** Graduate student fellowship applicants are eligible to apply *if currently enrolled as a student in a sociology department and finished with all coursework*, meaning their status is ABD. To note, graduate student grantees will receive periodic mentoring from the PIs by way of videoconference over the course of their fellowships.
- 2) **Postdoctoral Fellowship Applicants:** Postdoctoral applicants are eligible to apply *if within two years of earning their PhD in sociology*. To note, the postdoctoral fellow will receive direct mentoring from PI Ecklund and be housed in the Religion and Public Life Program and Department of Sociology at Rice University. The postdoctoral fellow will additionally receive periodic mentoring from Evans by way of videoconference over the course of the fellowship.
- 3) **Early Career Applicants:** Early career research grant applicants are eligible to apply *if within ten years of earning their PhD in sociology and if the applicant does not have tenure*. To note, early career grantees will receive periodic mentoring from the PIs by way of videoconference over the course of their projects.
- 4) **Mid-Career and Senior Scholar Applicants:** Mid-career and senior scholar research grant applicants are eligible to apply *if they earned their PhD more than ten years previously or have tenure*.

Allowable Uses of Funding:

For Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Fellowship Applicants:

These fellowships have been designed to support the scholarship and livelihoods of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the field of sociology.

- *For graduate student fellowships:* These awards will allow graduate students to be funded to do research and writing **related to their dissertation on religion and science**. Funding includes an annual stipend of \$23,000, plus \$2,000 per year for research expenses for up to two years (for a maximum total of \$50,000). The second year of funding is contingent on evidence of research, writing and publication progress in the first year.
- *For the postdoctoral fellowship:* Funding includes a two-year appointment with an annual stipend of \$55,000 (plus benefits) at Rice University, as well as \$2,000 per year for research expenses related to **independent projects on the study of science and religion**. The postdoctoral fellow will work on independent and collaborative projects related to religion and science with the Religion and Public Life Program at Rice University. The postdoctoral appointment and benefits will be governed by Rice University policies and by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) guidelines for postdoctoral appointments. We encourage applicants to visit the Rice websites for University Policies at http://postdoc.rice.edu/postdoc_fellow.htm for postdoctoral appointment guidelines. Fellowship funding may not be used for costs associated with relocation to Houston, Texas.

For Early-Career, Mid-Career, and Senior Scholar Research Grant Applicants:

Research grants will be administered by Rice University to the awardees as sub-awards.

Permitted uses of sub-award funding include:

- Research expenses, such as research participant compensation, transcription, survey costs, research assistants and recruiting expenses.
- Summer salary and/or teaching buyout.
- Support for a leave or sabbatical extension.
- Assistance for writing, editing, and publishing.
- Modest allowance for justifiable equipment, computers, publication charges, and other supplies.
- Modest travel allowance (no more than 10% of the total requested amount), including that to access resources unavailable at the investigators' home institutions and for interdisciplinary teams to meet together in person.
- Funding **CANNOT** support any institutional overhead or indirect costs.

For All Award Types:

To note, all award recipients will be asked to attend two grantee conferences (timing TBD; one estimated occur in Spring/early Summer 2020 and one in Spring/early summer 2022) as part of their participation in the broader project. Expenses related to those conferences will be supported by the broader project and do *not* need to be included as part of the applicant's proposal budget. Additionally, many of the projects will have a publicity component, such as the creation of short videos for internet distribution. This component will also be supported with funds from the larger project and do not need to

be included as part of the applicant's proposed budget. There may also be occasional videoconferences with the PIs.

Application Processes and Deadlines:

The processes and deadlines for applications differ depending on grant type. Please read instructions below carefully to ensure compliance with the appropriate grant type.

For Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Fellowship Applicants:

Letters of Intent (see below) are requested by **January 15, 2020**. Fellowships may run two years in length, starting on July 1, 2020 and ending on June 30, 2022. Proposals will be reviewed between January-March 2020. Awardees will be notified by March 2020.

For Early-Career, Mid-Career, and Senior Scholar Research Grant Applicants:

Applicants for these awards are asked to submit a **Letter of Intent** (LOI, described below) by **October 15, 2019**. By mid-November 2019, select applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Only *invited* full proposals will be considered. If invited to complete a full proposal, these proposals will be due **January 3, 2020** and awardees will be notified by early February 2020. Projects are eligible to begin as early as April 1, 2020; projects may begin later but all must be completed by June 30, 2022.

Instructions for Letter of Intent (LOI) Preparation:

The LOI should include:

- 1) a title for the proposed project;
- 2) a description of the research;
- 3) project dates and brief timeline of activities;
- 4) an explanation of how the proposed project fits within this initiative;
- 5) information on the project's methodology and significance;
- 6) the total budget required to complete the research and description of main budget categories;
- 7) proposed collaborators, if applicable.

The letter of intent should be no longer than **three pages** in length (single-spaced, Times Roman 12-point font, 1 inch margins, in English, and submitted as one single PDF). Only LOIs of this length and with a thorough description of the proposed research will be considered. Casual inquiries are not invited. The LOIs will be reviewed and evaluated by a Selection Committee that will select the most promising and appropriate of the proposed projects. An LOI is the only document requested for graduate student and postdoctoral fellowship applicants. For early-career, mid-career and senior scholar research applicants: select applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal after committee review of submitted LOIs.

Full Proposal Instructions:

For Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Fellowship Applicants: only LOIs are requested by **January 15, 2020**. Graduate student and postdoctoral fellow applicants should not submit full proposals.

For Early-Career, Mid-Career, and Senior Scholar Applicants: full proposals will be accepted **by invitation only** after competitive review of the LOI. For those invited to submit full proposals, the deadline is **January 3, 2020**.

The template for the full proposal can be found below. All proposals must be submitted in English, single-spaced, and typed with one-inch margins. Font size must be 12-point, and font type must be Times New Roman. Emphasis should also be placed on completeness and clarity of content. ***The completed full proposal and supporting documents should be submitted together as one single PDF submission with sections following the order listed below. The maximum length of the full proposal (inclusive of all sections and NOT including the supporting documents) is 10 pages.*** Proposals that do not follow the length, format, font or margin specifications will not be accepted.

The following is a description of the proposal template sections and supporting documents that are required for all full proposal submissions.

1. Title.
2. Total funding amount requested.
3. Project dates.
4. Executive Summary: brief statement of core research project elements and expected outcomes and outputs.
5. Project Description: Description of proposed research explaining the research questions and methodology.
6. Outputs: concrete products that, when completed, signal a successful project, such as articles, books, and presentations.
7. Outcomes: clarity on what deeper contribution scholar(s) hope to accomplish through these products that may extend beyond the life of the award.
8. Additional funding sources.
9. Training plan for junior investigators (if applicable).
10. Budget Narrative.
11. Supporting Documents:
 - a. Project Timeline: please contact Laura Achenbaum (contact information below) for a template.
 - b. Detailed Budget: please contact Laura Achenbaum (contact information below) for a template.
 - c. Curriculum Vitae for PI (and each member of the team, if applicable)

Evaluation of Proposals

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- 1) **Fit with the intent of the RFP.**
- 2) **Likelihood that the project will contribute answers to the purpose identified in the RFP.** Are the methods and procedures described sufficient to establish a high likelihood that the project will lead to significant progress on the core theme of the initiative?
- 3) **Innovativeness of the theoretical and empirical plans in the proposal.** Does the project employ cutting-edge and innovative ideas and methods?
- 4) **Plausibility and specificity of the research plans.** Are the plans for theoretical or empirical work described clearly and specifically? Is there a good case that significant progress can be made within a two-year period?

Contact Information. For more information about proposal procedures, topics of interest, eligibility, deadlines, available resources, contact information, you may reach us at:

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All LOIs and Full Proposals should be submitted electronically to Laura Achenbaum at lsa1@rice.edu by 5PCST US the indicated deadlines.