

**Alternative Spiritualities of Celebration, Resistance, and Accountability:  
Engaging Our Colonial and Decolonial Contexts**

Call for Papers

HDS Program for the Evolution of Spirituality, April 2024 Conference

Harvard Divinity School's Program for the Evolution of Spirituality is delighted to announce that our spring 2024 conference will be organized around the theme of "Alternative Spiritualities of Celebration, Resistance, and Accountability: Engaging Our Colonial and Decolonial Contexts." We invite practitioners and scholars who identify as Indigenous, Diasporic, Settler, and/or Immigrant to join in a dialogue that works toward spiritual traditions characterized by solidarity and mutual transformation rather than colonial violence.

Our conference will explore the many ways in which spiritual practices, especially those from beyond the religious mainstream, mirror and resist the imperial contexts in which they are rooted. Given the pervasiveness of imperial, extractive and settler colonialist systems, we assume that *all* spiritualities have colonial dimensions and, as such, have possibilities for anti-colonial or decolonial responses. We welcome proposals for papers, workshops, and performances that explore these dimensions, or other aspects of alternative and evolving spiritualities.

Some topics we hope to explore include:

- the contemporary revitalization of Indigenous spiritualities
- spiritualities rooted in diasporic and Indigenous freedom struggles
- intersections between decolonial spirituality and movements for Ecology, Feminism, Queer liberation, BIPOC freedom struggles, and many more
- spiritual strategies for moving from cultural appropriation to solidarity
- the capacity of spiritual movements to foster joy and celebration, even in the face of violence
- the long history of spiritual entanglement with empire
- the influence of colonialism on scholarship about alternative spiritualities
- the diverse meanings of such terms as "coloniality," "decoloniality," "appropriation," and "syncretism"
- spirituality and the arts in colonial and decolonial contexts

As is true for all of our programming, we welcome proposals from spiritual practitioners and leaders, from scholars working in many disciplines, from activists who seek to ameliorate harms associated with alternative spiritualities, and from artists whose work explores these topics. **We especially welcome proposals designed to foster open-hearted dialogue among these diverse groups of people.** We also expect that all presenters will attend other conference sessions, helping us build a mutually supportive community of scholars and practitioners.

Proposals may be for individual academic papers (20 minutes in length), interactive workshops (60 minutes in length), or artistic performances (60 minutes in length). Each proposal should

include an extended description of at least 500 words, a 100-word abstract (suitable for inclusion in the conference program), and a 50-word biography of the presenter. The extended description should give a clear sense of the way the presentation is rooted in spiritual practice and/or the academic study of alternative spiritualities; for workshops, it should also identify the specific ways the audience will be invited to participate and provide a brief outline for the workshop's component parts. Because the conference will be fully hybrid, we ask that presenters be mindful of both virtual and in-person audience members.

We also welcome pre-arranged panels from groups of presenters. In such cases, each presenter should submit a separate individual paper proposal, and the panel organizers should inform us by email ([pes@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:pes@hds.harvard.edu)) of their intention to present together.

The deadline for proposals is December 1, 2023. Proposals submitted by September 15, 2023, will receive a decision by October 15; proposals submitted by December 1 will receive a decision by January 15, 2024.

To ensure access to all who wish to participate, we will hold a fully hybrid conference with no registration fees. We also recognize that even a free conference can pose significant obstacles to participation for full-time students, people with low incomes, and practicing artists who are usually paid for their performances. To this end, we will offer a limited number of \$300 honoraria to especially strong presenters in these categories, or others who experience barriers to participation. These honoraria are *not* available to persons affiliated with Harvard University. To apply for an honorarium, please submit a regular proposal through the submission portal AND email a full text of your presentation (or a video of a sample artistic performance) to [pes@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:pes@hds.harvard.edu) by December 1.

This conference is tentatively scheduled for April 24-27, 2024.

Please use this link to submit your proposal:

[https://harvard.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3Csnq2WOY87WMC](https://harvard.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3Csnq2WOY87WMC)