Spirituality and the Arts

Call for Papers

HDS Program for the Evolution of Spirituality, April 2025 Conference

Harvard Divinity School's Program for the Evolution of Spirituality is delighted to announce that our spring 2025 conference will be organized around the theme of "Spirituality and the Arts." We welcome spiritual practitioners, scholars, artists, and performers to join us in exploring how emerging, alternative, and Indigenous spiritualities manifest in and through artistic practice. We welcome proposals related to all art forms, including visual, musical, performing, and literary arts. We will explore art works rooted in specific spiritual traditions as well as those that are spiritually eclectic. We also hope to consider forms of practice that blur the boundary between "art" and "spirituality." [try to offer specific examples here]

We will also welcome proposals related to any of our previous conference themes: ecological spiritualities; uses and abuses of power in alternative spirituality; and spirituality in colonial and decolonial contexts. We will give special priority to proposals that highlight artistic dimensions of these themes. We encourage all presenters to consider the ways that spiritual or artistic practices are shaped by coloniality, power dynamics, and the more-than-human world.

The Program for the Evolution of Spirituality seeks to build an ongoing community of practitioners and scholars committed to collaborative scholarship and spiritual dialogue. 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 creative work draws on spiritual roots. To facilitate community-building, we encourage participants in our monthly working groups to work together on conference proposals, and we welcome collaborative proposals from scholars engaged in diverse traditions. We also expect that all presenters will commit to two or three volunteer shifts during the conference, such as session chairing, staffing the welcome table, or helping with meals. (These opportunities will be available to both in-person and remote participants.)

Proposals may be for individual academic papers (20 minutes in length), interactive workshops (60 minutes in length), artistic performances (20 or 60 minutes in length), or displays of visual art. Each proposal should include a title, 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) of their intention to present together.

The deadline for proposals is January 1, 2025. Proposals submitted by October 1, 2024, will receive a decision by November 1; all other proposals will receive a decision by January 31.

To ensure access to all who wish to participate, we will hold a fully hybrid conference with no registration fees. We will offer three free meals for in-person participants (up to at least 100 registrants). We will also help presenters coordinate shared lodging. No presenters will receive payment for their presentations.

This conference is tentatively scheduled for April 23-26, 2025.

Please use this link to submit your proposal:
https://harvard.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6zDlgq5zgWg6mcm