

New Directions in the Study of Prayer *Journalism & Scholarship Initiative*

Request for Proposals

The Social Science Research Council, with the support of the John Templeton Foundation, invites proposals from journalists to participate in an initiative to enhance public knowledge of the social, cultural, psychological, and cognitive dimensions of prayer, and of its origins, variations, and correlations in human life.

A small number of grants, of up to \$50,000 each, and each with a maximum duration of two years, will be awarded to support journalists working on the topic. Grantees will actively participate in a multi-year research initiative, while crafting long-form articles or other stories for publication in nationally distributed outlets, and/or a manuscript for potential trade press publication, on the study of prayer and the significance of prayerful practices in contemporary culture and society. Candidates must be working journalists. Advanced degrees are not required, and collaborative projects are welcome. Writers and freelancers who regularly publish online, in print, or over the airwaves are eligible to apply.

The deadline for Letters of Intent is *December 1, 2011*.

Overview

Prayer and associated practices are widely shared aspects of human life. While much scholarly and popular attention has been given in the past to questions concerning the efficacy of prayer, much remains to be explored, including the relationships between the practice of prayer and virtue, human flourishing, altruism, and creativity, as well as cognitive aspects of prayer, the embeddedness of prayer in religious and nonreligious institutions, the social dimensions of prayer, and cultural variations in prayer across societies and religious traditions. The aim of the New Directions in the Study of Prayer (NDSP) initiative is to facilitate scholarship that brings innovative perspectives, methods, and approaches to previously under-investigated or poorly understood dimensions of prayer. A further aim of the initiative is to develop cross-disciplinary interaction, understanding, and collaboration, in order to shape better future research on prayer and associated practices.

The New Directions in the Study of Prayer Journalism & Scholarship Initiative is a component of this larger scholarly project. It offers working journalists an opportunity to pursue in-depth and/or multi-site reporting on topics directly related to the aspects of prayer that will be studied by NDSP, and to do so while observing and taking part in a series of intensive and interdisciplinary scholarly discussions. Grantees will have access to scholars pursuing original research that, it is hoped, will benefit their own projects, while also actively participating in and informing the work of the broader NDSP project.

Applicants should have a demonstrated background in writing about or reporting on religion (and/or related topics), and should propose projects that will be likely to benefit substantially from work carried out under the NDSP Research Initiative. Applicants are encouraged to consult the NDSP Research Initiative RFP for further details. It is anticipated that journalists supported by NDSP will interact and collaborate (directly and/or indirectly) with researchers supported by the NDSP Research Initiative, and the program encourages journalists to propose projects that would benefit from an engagement with prayer researchers and their work. Grantees will be neither obligated nor expected to report on the NDSP project itself. Proposals will be evaluated solely on the basis of the originality, intellectual merits, journalistic criteria, and potential for engaging a non-academic audience.

Given that prayer in many contexts is a central practice through which people interpret and come to understand theodicy, seek healing for themselves and for others, find renewal, recalibrate their senses, and engage with the divine, the study of prayer can anchor a diverse range of inquiries about how people strive for better lives and cultivate virtues and new capacities for social interaction, ingenuity, and creativity. With this in mind, applicants are encouraged to be creative in conceiving their projects but also encouraged to attend in some fashion to one or both of the following sets of questions, central to the project as a whole:

1. How does prayer influence the ways that people experience and understand their own lives and choices, including their capacity to act virtuously and to effect change? How are contemporary practices of prayer shaped by the efforts of both individuals and communities to navigate the complexities of living in technologically and scientifically sophisticated societies? In what ways do people who pray understand or experience their worlds differently from or similarly to those who do not?
2. Why has prayer been prevalent in so many times and places, and what are the principle factors determining differences in the ways prayer is practiced and understood across cultures? How do the understandings of prayer that emerge from the comparative study of

religions compare with understandings of prayer that emerge from natural scientific and psychological research? How does recent and emerging research on prayer help to illuminate contemporary understandings of virtue, flourishing, community, and social obligation?

Successful applicants should explain, specifically: the intended impact and importance of their proposed work; what they want to cover and why (including potential intersections with academic research on prayer); who they hope to interview (practitioners, academics, religious leaders, spiritual teachers, etc.); where they intend to report (domestically and/or internationally); and how they will tell the story (including details on proposed media platforms).

Print journalists who are awarded grants will be expected to produce three to five 5,000 word articles suitable for publication in major periodicals and/or a book-length manuscript (which need not be completed, but on which substantial progress must be demonstrated, by the completion of the grant period). Journalists working in other media will be expected to produce comparable results (i.e., a series of radio or video documentaries, or an online series of essays). In addition to the aforementioned requirements, all grantees will occasionally be asked to contribute short blog posts or essays related to the work of their projects, for publication on the NDSP website.

This initiative is sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation and administered by the Social Science Research Council, Brooklyn, NY.

Program Director

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Application Procedure

Journalists interested in being considered for funding should submit a three-page, single-spaced Letter of Intent (LOI) by December 1, 2011, at 5:00PM EST. The letter should describe the proposed project concretely and in detail, and it should indicate clearly why the project envisioned promises significant contributions to public knowledge of prayer. 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 the NDSP Advisory Committee, who will select the most promising and appropriate of the proposed projects. The corresponding applicants will be notified by January 15, 2012, and invited to submit full proposals. Full proposals in written form then must be submitted by May 15, 2012. The full proposals will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee, and awardees will be notified by July 1, 2012.

Letters of Intent

The Letter of Intent (LOI) should be *no longer than three (3) pages* and should include:

1. the title of the proposed project and a short description
2. an explanation of how the proposed project fits within this initiative;
3. specific information about the type of reporting to be conducted and media platforms to be used (e.g., interviews, documentary investigation, etc. print, video, photography, audio);
4. a summary statement of the anticipated significance of the project;
5. projected outlet/s and anticipated audience/s
6. the estimated total budget needed to complete the project;
7. a brief explanation of major budget items; and

The LOI must be delivered with:

1. a Letter of Intent cover sheet ([available online](#) and accessible at the NDSP website); and
2. a one-page biographical sketch, inclusive of all potential grantees and collaborators (*this does not count toward the three-page limit*).
3. a sample of prior work

The LOI, cover sheet, and biographical sketch must be received by 5:00PM EST, December 1, 2011. These materials should be sent as email attachments to the Social Science Research Council, at religion@ssrc.org. Confirmation of receipt will be sent in return.

Guidelines for Full Proposals

This section is only for applicants whose Letters of Inquiry have been reviewed and approved, and who have been invited to submit full proposals.

Full proposals must be received by May 15, 2012, and must follow the format and guidelines indicated here in order to be considered. Journalists invited to submit full proposals will be notified by January 15, 2012. Further details on the proposal submission process will be communicated at that time.

All proposals must be submitted in **English, single-spaced, and typed** with **one-inch margins**. Font size may be no smaller than **11-point and no larger than 12-point**, and font type must be **Times New Roman**. *Proposals that do not follow these font and margin specifications will not be accepted.* Emphasis should also be placed on completeness and clarity of content. **The full proposal must include all content that is outlined below.**

Full Proposal Content

The following is a description of documents that will be required for all full proposal submissions.

1. Cover Sheet (downloadable from website)
2. Table of Contents
3. Project Summary
4. Project Description
5. Project Timeline
6. Curriculum Vitae
7. Detailed Budget
8. Budget Narrative

1. Full Proposal Cover Sheet

Please complete the cover sheet and include it as the first page of the proposal. It can be downloaded at <http://www.ssrc.org/prayer>. The applicant must **ink sign** the cover sheet.

If applicable, the official of the applicant institution responsible for authorizing the proposed project and its budget must **ink sign** the cover sheet as well. As indicated on the cover sheet, be sure to identify as the financial contact the person who will handle all or most of the financial aspects of your project.

2. Table of Contents (1 page)

This one-page section of your full proposal is simply an outline of the proposal itself. Following the cover sheet, your table of contents should mirror the headings of each required section that is outlined in these guidelines, from 3. *Project Summary* through 8. *Budget Narrative*. You may

include subheadings under each major section heading to provide detail, but the table of contents should not exceed one page.

3. Project Summary (1 page)

The proposal must contain a one-page, single-spaced summary of the proposed activity. The project summary should include a statement of the project's objectives and methods to be employed. Within the project summary, the author must clearly address in separate statements: (1) the intellectual merit of the proposed activity and (2) the broader impacts expected to result from it.

4. Project Description (maximum of 10 pages, single spaced)

The central part of the proposal will be a narrative description of the project itself. Please limit the project description to no more than ten (10) pages (not including references/bibliography/appendices). It should include:

1. Guiding questions and concepts (within which it is important to clarify your use of the term "prayer," as well as related terms);
2. the objectives for the period of the proposed work;
3. the project's distinctive contribution to public knowledge of prayer;
4. a detailed explanation of the activities of the project, including how the project will specifically examine manifestations and particular aspects of prayer;
5. a thoughtful explanation of how the project will further understanding of at least one of the two sets of questions posed above;
6. methodologies and plans for collection and analysis of empirical information;
7. statistical, linguistic, ethnographic, cross-cultural, or other technical considerations (if applicable);
8. any demonstrable commitment to collaboration with scholars, including an explanation of the range and levels of involvement of scholars and researchers within multiple academic disciplines; and
9. statements elaborating on the expected significance of this work, with reference to the *Evaluation Criteria* of the New Directions in the Study of Prayer initiative.

NOTE: There is no page limit for the bibliography/references/appendices portion of the project description.

5. Project Timeline (1 page)

The project timeline should detail the major activities of the proposed project, ending no later than August 31, 2014. Briefly describe the major goals, tactics, and responsible parties throughout the course of the project.

6. *Curriculum Vitae*

Name(s) and full CV(s) or resume(s) of the principal applicants.

7. *Detailed Budget Summary*

Please submit a budget summary for each calendar year of the period (this will include all or part of the two consecutive years beginning September 1, 2012, and ending August 31, 2014) for which you are requesting funds. (Please refer to the instructions below for completing the budget summary.) We ask that you also include the "Total Projected Costs" within the budget.

8. *Budget Justification Narrative (no page limit)*

A budget justification narrative is required. Please explain the costs associated with each line item. (Please do not justify each twelve-month period separately.) Also, include some detail on other sources of funding, if applicable. There is no page limit, but you are encouraged to be succinct.

NOTE: All awards will formally be made on a cost-reimbursable basis. Awardees must invoice for costs that have actually been incurred during the invoice period. Invoicing against the budget (i.e., dividing the budget by the number of budget months) is not allowed. The invoice must be signed by a person who has responsibility for official financial data and can certify its validity. (If the grant will be delivered through an institution, the applicant is unlikely to be this person.) Payment will be provided within 30 days of invoice receipt. Invoices can be submitted monthly, quarterly, or annually for expenditures of \$1,000 or more.

Budget Guidelines

I. General

A. Each grant proposal must contain a budget summary in the **required format**. Budget amounts must be entered in whole dollar (US) amounts (e.g., \$2000 [correct]; \$2000.50 [incorrect]).

B. Identify the yearly request for each line item. If applicable, please include any known sources of additional funding per line item. If you have no other sources of funding, then all values entered in this final column should match all values entered in the "Total Projected Costs" column.

II. Budget Line Items

Careful budgeting is encouraged in order to maximize the impact of the project as a whole, with emphasis on return per dollar rather than per proposal. Modest expenses (less than 15% of the total grant) for computer equipment, travel, publication charges, and supplies are allowable, provided that these items are clearly explained and justified in the proposal. The following is a brief outline of budget documentation requirements by line item.

NOTE: All documentation and justification/explanation required on the line items below should be provided in the budget justification narrative (Part 8 of the full proposal).

A. **Salaries, Wages, and Fringe Benefits.** List individually all senior personnel (names and abbreviated titles) and the percentage of their respective efforts to be dedicated to the project for each year's budget. Grant funds may not be used to augment the total salary or rate of salary of grantees during the period covered or to reimburse grantees for consulting or other time in addition to a regular fulltime organization salary covering the same general period of employment. In most circumstances, particularly for institutions of higher education, salaries of administrative or clerical staff are included as part of the indirect costs. However, salaries of administrative or clerical staff may be requested as direct costs for a project requiring an extensive amount of administrative or clerical support, and where these costs can be readily and specifically identified with the project. For fringe benefits, please list the percentage of salary costs being applied to this grant as well as the normal institutional fringe benefits percentage in the budget justification narrative.

B. **Consultant or Subcontractor Services.** Consultant services should be justified and information furnished on each individual/firm's expertise, primary organizational affiliation, normal daily compensation rate, and number of days of expected service. Consultants' travel costs and per diem allowances should be listed in the budget justification narrative.

Payment for a consultant's services, exclusive of expenses, may not exceed the consultant's normal rate or the normal daily maximum rate established by the research organization, whichever is less. Indirect costs are not applied to consultant expenses or subcontracts.

C. Equipment. Items of required equipment should be listed individually by description and estimated cost, including tax, and adequately justified in the budget justification narrative. Purchase of general purpose equipment, such as a personal computer, is not eligible for support unless exclusively used in the actual conduct of this project. Indirect costs are not applied to equipment.

D. Travel. This line item refers to travel, if any, that is required for your project. Address the type and extent of travel and its relation to the project. The travel expenses for the required Project events are funded by the Social Science Research Council; therefore, the expenses for these events should **not** be reflected in your budget summary and budget justification narrative.

E. Other Direct Costs. Any costs charged to a grant must be reasonable and directly allocable to the supported activity. The budget should identify and itemize any anticipated direct costs not included under the headings above, including materials and supplies, publication costs, computer services, participant/subject costs, communications, and other direct expenses.

1. **Materials and Supplies:** Indicate types required and estimate costs.
2. **Publication Costs:** Costs associated with editing, reviewing, and printing.
3. **Computer Services:** Include justification based on estimated computer service rates at the applicant institution. Purchase of equipment should be included under line item C.
4. **Communications:** Possible communications costs include online services used for the direct work of this grant, shipping costs directly associated with the work of this grant, or separate telephone services needed to complete the work of this grant.
5. **Other:** Itemize and justify.

F. Total Direct Costs. Sum of line items A through E.

G. Indirect Costs. Indirect costs/overhead are not levied on equipment, consultants/subcontractors, or any function that is outsourced, such as computer services. If this function is to be performed by staff of the project's home institute, then indirect costs may be levied on it. **Indirect costs are limited to 15% of applicable line items.**

H. Total Costs. Sum of line items F and G.

III. Funding from Other Sources

Within this column of the detailed budget summary, be sure to identify, in whole dollar amounts, each pending and/or current grant that may overlap with your potential funding from the Social Science Research Council.

Evaluation Criteria

Significance

- Does the proposed project address an important problem or question in research and public discourse on prayer?
- Does it account for and build upon the most important findings of past research?
- If the project is successful, how will public knowledge of prayer be advanced?
- What will be the effect of this project on shared understandings of prayer in modern life?

Approach and Methods

- Are the activities of the proposed project rigorous and fitting for the specific questions and goals of the project?
- Does the project seek to understand previously obscure or misunderstood aspects of prayer, and does it promise to present them in non-reductive ways?
- Is the applicant aware of potential problems and challenges involved in his or her approach and has he or she considered alternatives?

Innovation

- Does the project employ fresh and creative concepts, approaches, or methods?
- Does it challenge or innovate existing assumptions?

Investigators

- Is the applicant well qualified to execute the project—i.e., does he or she demonstrate a genuine interest in the variety, manifestations, practices, and functioning of prayer?
- Does the applicant have the ability to communicate the significance of his or her research to a wide and diverse audience?

Financial Responsibility

- Do the detailed financial documents convey reasonable uses of funds and smart budgeting for the proposed scope of the project?
- Does the project employ effective collaborative arrangements or take advantage of special opportunities or available synergies in the research enterprise?

Potential Public Influence

- How publishable will the results of the project be?
- What networks or communities will the results engage and influence?
- In what ways might the project help to build greater interest in research on prayer?
- Will the proposed project intersect valuably with other projects funded through the initiative?

Institutional and Collateral Support

- Is there evidence of real institutional support for the project?
- Are resources available to leverage support for the long-term development of the project, if applicable?

Notice of Awards

A Notice of Awards will be posted on the Social Science Research Council website, at <http://www.ssrc.org/prayer>. Letters will also be sent by post to awardees informing them of the initiative's intent to enter into a contract. Approval will be contingent upon confirmation of eligibility criteria and upon possible adjustments to the proposal before the final award letter is sent out. The award letter will stipulate all terms and conditions of payment.

Award Obligations

The Principals of all funded projects will be brought together for four workshops over the course of the initiative to network with and share their research and findings with other scholars. Acceptance of project funding entails a commitment to prepare for, be present at, and participate in all workshops and a final capstone conference.

All awarded projects will need to comply with the following conditions:

1. Authority to Bind the Grantee into Contract

Each grantee must provide full name and address. The proposal cover sheet must be signed by the grantee and (if applicable) the authorized institutional signatory. Failure to sign the proposal may disqualify it.

2. Award Obligations

Please be aware that attendance and active participation by grantees in the initiative's events are required in order to enter this final level of competition. Furthermore, if grantees are awarded a grant as a result of this RFP, funds received are contingent upon attendance and active participation in four mandatory project meetings. **If a grantee is unable to attend one or more of these project events, notification will need to be sent immediately.**

3. Communications

All grantees will be required to work with the initiative's Communications Coordinator to help disseminate their research findings periodically throughout the course and upon completion of their projects. This will require working with the Communications Coordinator to develop updates on their project findings suitable for the project website, reports, and press releases.

4. Additional Information Requested

Please indicate if the grantee and/or affiliated institution has been cited and/or fined within the last five (5) years by any Federal, State, or Local regulatory agency. If so, grantees will need to provide the following information: date; identity of the agency issuing the citation or fine; description of the violation; and final rulings of the agency.

5. Right of Rejection

The project reserves the right to reject any proposal, to waive any informalities or irregularities in proposals, and/or to negotiate separately the terms and conditions of all or any parts of the proposals, as determined to be in the Social Science Research Council's best interests in its sole discretion.

6. Advice of Omission or Misstatement

In the event that it is evident to a grantee responding to this RFP that the Social Science Research Council has omitted or misstated a material requirement to this RFP and/or the services required by this RFP, the responding grantee shall advise the Program Director of such omission or misstatement.

7. Cost of Preparation

The Social Science Research Council **will not** pay any costs incurred in the preparation of the full proposal, printing, or submission process.

8. Notification of Withdrawal

Full proposals may be withdrawn prior to the deadline specified for submissions with a formal written notice by an authorized representative of the grantee. Proposals submitted will become the property of the Social Science Research Council after the submission deadline.

9. Rights to Pertinent Materials

All responses, inquires, and correspondence relating to this RFP and all reports, charts, displays, schedules, exhibits, and other documentation produced by the grantees and submitted as part of the RFP shall become the property of the Social Science Research Council after the RFP submission deadline.

Point of Contact

Social Science Research Council staff shall be the sole points of contact regarding this Request for Proposals. All questions concerning both the administrative and technical aspects of this RFP can be e-mailed to religion@ssrc.org.

Program Timeline

<i>December 1, 2011</i>	Deadline for Letters of Intent
<i>January 15, 2012</i>	Finalists notified of their selection and invited to submit full proposals
<i>May 15, 2012</i>	Deadline for full proposals (<i>by invitation only</i>)
<i>July 1, 2012</i>	Grant winners announced
<i>September 1, 2012</i>	Start date for all funded projects
<i>August 31, 2014</i>	End date for all funded projects
<i>Date TBD</i>	Capstone Conference