



# SACRED ARTS IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

A VST INTER-RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES CONFERENCE

MAY 21–23 | ONLINE & IN-PERSON  
VST.EDU/IR-CONFERENCE



## CALL FOR PAPERS

### CONFERENCE THEME

The creative visual, musical, literary, and performing arts help shape ideas and beliefs. Sometimes, art can communicate more quickly, powerfully, and universally than words can. Within spiritual traditions, arts express stories, attitudes, and emotions. Teachers use arts to introduce their traditions, express diversity, and create community. Politicians use the arts to communicate their relationship with religion. Religious critics and innovators use the arts to point traditions in new directions. At this conference, we will explore a broad understanding of religious and spiritual art. We aim to learn more about religious and spiritual experiences, the role of religion and spirituality in society, and the role of art in religious and spiritual life.

Conference papers can draw on multiple disciplines, including theology, religious studies, biblical studies, Indigenous studies, sociology, political science, legal studies, philosophy, literature, history, the arts. Papers can explore dynamics within one tradition or society, or common to multiple traditions or societies. They can be grounded in any spiritual or non-theistic tradition. Our aim is to create a helpful conversation. Presentations may be given in-person or through Zoom

### POSSIBLE PAPER TOPICS

Religious narratives in pop culture, film, and fiction. Political communication through religious art. Religious art and architecture in a pluralistic society. Relationships between text, image, and music. Embodying and re-imagining theology through the arts. Nature photography as spiritual practice. Role of women in ritual arts. Crossing gender boundaries in iconography. Creative arts in sacred spaces, worship, or preaching. Functions of art in traditional and new rituals. Use of the arts in individual and community healing. Role of arts in inter-religious dialogue. Promoting multiculturalism through the arts.

### PAPER PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Initial abstracts outlining the context and argument of the paper should be 150-200 words. Completed papers should be approximately 3,000 words. Papers should be clearly written, accessible to those outside the author's discipline and religious tradition. Conference sessions will be of varied formats, and oral presentations may be shorter than 25 minutes. A volume based on conference papers may be published in the Pickwick Publications series "Inter-Religious Discussion and Public Life."

### SUBMISSION & NOTIFICATION SCHEDULE

Proposals due February 28 to [nhayward@vst.edu](mailto:nhayward@vst.edu). Include paper title, 100-200 word abstract, 50-word bio, and phone/email/postal contact information. We will notify presenters of acceptance no later than March 15. Completed papers due May 15.

### GRADUATE STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

Accepted papers by graduate students will automatically be entered into an essay contest. If you are a graduate student, please note that on the cover page of your completed paper.

### QUESTIONS? CONTACT CONFERENCE DIRECTOR

DR. NICOLA HAYWARD, [NHAYWARD@VST.EDU](mailto:NHAYWARD@VST.EDU)

[WWW.VST.EDU/IR-CONFERENCE](http://WWW.VST.EDU/IR-CONFERENCE)