Public Theologies of Technology and Presence
Journalism and Research Initiative

Request for Proposals

The Institute of Buddhist Studies, with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, invites applications from journalists to participate in a journalism and research initiative that aims to shed new light on the impacts of technologies on human relationships.

Three journalists will receive grants of $10,000 each to support their publications on the subject of technologies' impacts on human relationships. The journalists will join a grantee cohort of scholars from across the academic disciplines who study many different religious traditions, and theologians from many different religious traditions, all undertaking research projects from their particular vantage points that explore new ways of understanding and speaking to the impacts of technologies on human relationships. Journalist applicants should be interested in exploring the academic study of religion and theology as resources in their journalistic work on technologies and human relationships. All grantees will gather yearly to engage in conversation, share and hone their projects, and take advantage of significant Silicon Valley and media resources.

Applicants must be working journalists, staff or freelance, who publish regularly in print, digital forms, or across the airwaves. Advanced degrees are not required.

The deadline for the submission of application materials is *May 7, 2018*.

Overview

The Public Theologies of Technology and Presence journalism and research initiative seeks to support journalists, scholars of religion, and theologians to powerfully address a central concern of contemporary life: The ways in which technologies reshape human relationships and alter how people are or are not "present" to each other.

Over the past several decades, technologies have radically reworked interpersonal presence. This is true across the full gambit of human interaction; wherever and however a person might come into contact with another person, new technologies are continually emerging that shape and host, that facilitate and block, these forms of contact. Whether

new smart phones, social media apps, virtual reality headsets, social gaming platforms, romance apps, social commerce platforms, onward and onward—these technologies are remaking what human relationships, and specifically what interpersonal presence, looks like in contemporary life. These shifts in presence have profound implications both for individuals and for the webs of relationships—local communities, broader publics—in which they participate.

Rarely have scholars of religion or theologians explored in deep and thoroughgoing ways the sea changes in styles of human relationship that technologies produce. New attention is needed, and so too new and innovative ideas and frameworks through which to understand and speak publicly to technologies' impacts on human relationships. The Public Theologies of Technology and Presence initiative supports journalists, scholars of religion, and theologians to do this work from a broad variety of fresh perspectives. It takes the position that scholars of religion and theologians, in their study and knowledge of diverse religious and spiritual traditions that deeply engage with human values, ethics, strivings for community and connection, and so forth, are well-positioned to bring new ideas and sources of insight to bear on these developments. Journalistic coverage and other popular reflections on technology and presence already tend to dip and weave through religious and spiritual territories, drawing upon concepts and vocabularies rooted in religious traditions, histories, and practices—the Buddhist notion of "mindfulness," say—but without making such rootedness clear or explicitly cultivating religious traditions as resources. This initiative provides journalists with the context and resources to more fully explore such connections.

Grants of $10,000 each awarded to three professional journalists will support their regular publishing in major journalistic outlets on the subject of technologies' impacts on interpersonal presence. Within this subject area, particular subtopics and angles are open to the journalists' discretion. The journalists will participate actively in all initiative meetings, becoming conversant with the scholarly and theological issues animating the initiative and with the scholar and theologian research projects. Applicants should be interested in engaging the scholar of religion and theologian grantees as colleagues and conversation partners, contributing equally their journalistic insight and perspectives, and in drawing on the frameworks and ideas emerging from the initiative to help inform their journalistic work. This may include utilizing the academic/theologian grantees and their research as sources. In terms of publication style and format, a broad range is acceptable—long- and medium-form articles, essays, criticism, and so forth. Journalists are responsible for pitching and developing their own publications (the several prominent journalists who sit on the initiative's Advisory Board may also help facilitate editor connections). The journalist grantees and their editors retain all editorial control. Any publication payments go to the journalists in addition to the grant support.

The journalist grantees, along with the thirteen scholar of religion and theologian grantees, will over the course of the initiative gather yearly at the Institute of Buddhist Studies for meetings and presentations about their ongoing work (meeting costs covered), with virtual meetings in addition.

In the second and third years of the initiative, the gatherings will include engagements with leading Silicon Valley technologists doing work relevant to grantee research and reporting. This will include meetings, technologist demonstrations of new technologies, and visits to technology company campuses. It will also include grantee presentations addressing the implications of their research and reporting for technological work and innovation, and commentary from the technologists in response. These engagements will be structured to allow grantees access to cutting-edge technologies relevant to their research and reporting and to the technical processes and company cultures through which these take shape; to facilitate the development of useful relationships between the grantees and the technologists, such as journalist-source relationships; and to support the impact of grantee ideas and publications within Silicon Valley work.

The initiative will be aided by an Advisory Board including leading media professionals from California and national outlets, scholars of religion, theologians, and technologists.

Applications are welcome from professional journalists working in all media forms, print and otherwise. Successful applicants will explain specifically: the nature of their interest in technologies' impacts on human relationships; the nature of their interest in engaging scholars of religion and theologians and their ideas (applicants do not need to have preexisting expertise on religion/spirituality but should have a strong interest in engaging in this area); and their agenda for publications they intend to produce, including possible subjects and possible publication venues (these details may of course shift over the course of the initiative).

Each journalist grantee will be expected to publish, in established journalistic venues, articles or essays totaling 7,500 words per year of the initiative as a combination of short-form and long-form pieces, for a total of 22,500 words each over the course of the initiative (or the equivalent in non-print mediums).

Program Director
Dr. Steven Barrie-Anthony
Institute of Buddhist Studies

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Eligibility and Requirements

Applications are welcome from professional journalists who are interested in covering, in profound and innovative ways, the impacts of technologies on human relationships; and who are interested in engaging on the subject with scholars of religion and theologian colleagues from diverse traditions. Applicants should be established journalists, staff or freelance, with strong publication records. Advanced degrees are not required.

Journalist grantees will be expected to: Publish, in established journalistic venues, articles or essays totaling 7,500 words per year of the imitative as a combination of short-form and long-form pieces, for a total of 22,500 words each over the course of the initiative (or the equivalent in non-print mediums); attend and actively participate in four in-person meetings at the Institute of Buddhist Studies (costs covered) and in yearly virtual meetings; and contribute occasionally to the program's digital forum.

Program Timeline

May 7, 2018	Deadline for applications
July 15, 2018	Grantees announced
September 5, 2018	Start date for funded projects
May 24, 2021	End date for funded projects

Application Instructions

Applicants should submit the following materials by May 7, 2018:

1. Cover letter (1 page max)
2. Application statement (5 pages max). Address: the nature of the your interest in technologies' impacts on human relationships; the nature of your interest in engaging religion scholars/theologian colleagues; and the subjects or angles you anticipate your initiative-funded publications would address over the course of the initiative. Be as specific as possible, including subjects, formats, and publication venues (of course these may change). Indicate any relevant relationships with publications and/or editors.
3. Publication timeline (1 page max). Indicate the publication timeline for your initiative-funded work. Do your best to *estimate*, with the understanding that the timeline may change over the course of the initiative.
4. Résumé or Curriculum Vitae
5. Three samples of published work (the full text of published articles, or links to non-text publications)

Length guidelines refer to 12-point font, single-spaced text.

Proposals should be combined into a single PDF document and sent by email attachment to: stevenba@shin-ibs.edu. Confirmation of receipt will be provided.

Please address any questions about the program or the application process to Program Director Dr. Steven Barrie-Anthony: stevenba@shin-ibs.edu, (510) 500-9722.

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The Institute of Buddhist Studies (www.shin-ibs.edu), established in 1949 and located in Berkeley, California, is one of the few Buddhist seminaries and graduate schools in North America. IBS offers graduate-level degree and certificate programs across the full breadth of the Buddhist tradition. Through its affiliation with the Graduate Theological Union and its relationship with UC Berkeley's Group in Buddhist Studies, IBS faculty and students undertake cross-disciplinary and intra-religious approaches to the study of religion. The Public Theologies of Technology and Presence program extends IBS's cornerstone interest in applying theological insight to innovative work in the contemporary world as well as its joint academic and theological foci and its dedication to collaboration across traditions.

The Graduate Theological Union (www.gtu.edu) is the largest and most diverse partnership of seminaries and graduate schools in the United States, pursuing interreligious collaboration in teaching, research, ministry, and service. The GTU is a pioneering educational environment: a consortium of eight independent theological seminaries and ten centers and affiliates. Since its founding in 1962, the GTU has produced thousands of alumni who teach at eminent universities and seminaries, minister to a broad range of congregations, and work in a variety of arenas—cultural, economic, religious, and political—to achieve the greatest good.

The Henry Luce Foundation (www.hluce.org), established in 1936 by Henry R. Luce, the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Time Inc., seeks to bring important ideas to the center of American life, strengthen international understanding, and foster innovation and leadership in academic, policy, religious and art communities. **The Luce Fund for Theological Education** supports the development of new models of teaching and learning, research and publication, leadership development and educational program design. The Fund places central emphasis on the challenges of public engagement, within and across multiple religious traditions, and in a variety of different contexts.