

The Consequences of Formal Education for Science and Religion

Request for Proposals: Large Grants and Graduate Student Fellowships

The University of Texas at Austin is pleased to announce a three-year research project examining *The Consequences of Formal Education for Science and Religion* (Project Director: Cristine H. Legare). Grand claims have been made about the impact of education on demographic and economic outcomes, but much less is known about how it impacts the kind of beliefs, values, and practices individuals and groups adopt. This project will systematically document the changes that take place in religion-and-science narratives when individuals, communities, and societies experience formal education. It will ask: **How does formal education change the scientific and religious beliefs, values, and behaviors of individuals and groups? In what ways do they change? And why?**

Approximately \$2 million will be made available to fund:

- Nine large grants awards with a maximum request of \$200,000 for empirical research
- Three graduate student fellowships of \$50,000

Project objective

The objective of this research project is to build an international network of social scientists to study the impact of formal education (religious and secular) on the development and diversity of scientific and religious narratives. Our intent is to systematically document the impact of both secular and religious formal education on science and religion beliefs, values, and behaviors at the individual- and population-level. We will study narratives in a number of ways, including the kind and content of scientific and religious discourse that students are exposed to in schools, the beliefs that individuals and communities adopt as a result, and the ways in which new beliefs about science and religion are integrated with existing beliefs. We will use a combination of research designs to examine the short- and long-term impact of formal educational content and experience on science and religion narratives, including correlational and causal studies.

We seek applicants who have experience conducting international, cross-cultural, comparative research on topics relevant to scientific and religious education. We are particularly interested in collaborators working in contexts in which there is variation in formal school access and experience in order to make causal claims about the impact of formal education on science and religion narratives. This project will entail collecting quantitative and qualitative social scientific data using a set of mixed-methodologies that are shared across field sites. Applicants are also encouraged to propose additional studies on topics that extend the goals of the project based on their individual interests and unique fieldsites.

Funding initiative overview

What influences the way in which people respond to the deliverances of science and to the teachings of religions, and more specifically, what influences the way in which people think about the relationship between science and religion? Human belief formation is responsive to evidence, reason and logic; but in addition to such evidential factors, numerous psychological, social, and perhaps other contextual factors also affect the formation, maintenance, and transmission of beliefs

and attitudes about science, religion, and the relationship between science and religion. The purpose of the research program of which this RFP (Request for Proposals) is a part is to advance understanding of the narratives (or positions) about the relationship between science and religion that are in fact adopted in contemporary societies, and about the psychological, social or other contextual factors that shape these narratives and promote their adoption or persistence. What contextual factors, for example, lead to a rejection of science as an aid to thinking about moral and spiritual questions, or of theology as a source of insights or clues that can contribute to a better scientific understanding of human experience or the natural world? What contextual factors affect the acceptance or rejection of the idea that there is an inherent and inevitable conflict between science and religion? (These examples are given for the purposes of illustration and are not meant to be exhaustive.)

Collaborative research network

We seek proposals from individuals or teams of scholars with backgrounds in education, psychology, anthropology, cognitive science, and religious studies who are interested in conducting collaborative research consistent with this research initiative. This project will examine the following research questions:

- How does both secular and religious formal education impact the acquisition and transmission of scientific and religious beliefs, values, and behaviors?
- What is the impact of formal education on scientific and religious cognition across the lifespan?
- How do individual psychological characteristics predict how people reason about science and religion?

These teams will form a research network working over 3 years to describe and explain the impact of formal education on science and religion beliefs, values, and behaviors. A broad and complementary set of field sites and research methods will be sought across the awardees. Collaborators will meet with the PI and advisory board annually for project planning and data synthesis across sites.

Large grants applicant eligibility criteria:

- Applicants can be employed by academic institutions, religious institutions, development organizations, private companies, governmental institutions, or non-profit organizations
- A PhD in psychology, education, anthropology, religious studies, or related discipline
- An established international fieldsite and familiarity with the local history of the educational system and religious institutions
- Experience conducting experimental, observational, and survey-based research

Graduate student fellowship applicant eligibility criteria:

- Currently enrolled in an accredited graduate program in psychology, education, anthropology, religious studies, or related discipline.
- Have experience conducting experimental, observational, and survey-based research

- Planning a dissertation that uses such research to study topics relevant to the relations between formal education and scientific and religious narratives

Selection criteria for large grants:

- Relevant content knowledge, methodological expertise, and professional record of the applicant
- Experience conducting long-term research at an established fieldsite
- Feasibility of collecting project data at the applicant's fieldsite
- The fit of the proposal with the objectives of the program of research
- The potential scientific impact of the proposal
- Experience conducting collaborative research with multiple research partners

Selection criteria for graduate student fellowships:

- Relevant content knowledge, educational background, and research experience
- Fit of student research interests with the objectives of the project
- The potential scientific impact of the dissertation research
- Support from established researchers

Large Grant Application Process

Applicants will be responsible for securing institution and country-specific IRB approval. Applicants should include funds in their budgets to travel to annual planning meetings and equipment for data collection, entry, and storage. Allowable expenses include salaries or stipends for researchers, participant recruitment costs, research assistant salary, statistical consulting, fieldwork costs (including travel and lodging), and equipment and research materials. Funding cannot support any institutional overhead or indirect costs.

Interested applicants must submit a letter of intent (LoI). The LoI should be 2-3 pages and include information about fit with project, a description of the fieldsite in which the research will be conducted and why it is uniquely informative for the study of the impact of formal education on science and religion narratives. CVs of project personnel and a short budget must also be included. Letters of Intent will be due by August 30, 2019. Invitations to submit a full proposal will be sent by September 15, 2019.

If selected to submit a full proposal, researchers should prepare a 10 page research proposal and demographic survey of the fieldsite. The full proposals will be required to include information about the research plan and the qualifications of the research team. A timeline and list of project deliverables should also be included. A budget, budget justification, and evidence of timeline for securing IRB approval should also be included. Full proposals will be due on November 15, 2019. Final award decisions will be announced on December 10, 2019.

Graduate Student Fellowships Application Process

Interested applicants must submit a Letter of Application. The Letter should be 2-3 pages and include a title for the proposed project, a description of the research, project dates and brief timeline of activities, an explanation of how the proposed project fits within this initiative, information on the project's methodology and significance, the total budget and budget justification, and collaborators, if applicable. The letter should be accompanied by a CV plus three letters of support from established researchers who can speak to the student's potential and the significance of the project. Letters of Application, CVs, and letters of support will be due August 30, 2019. Final award decisions will be announced on December 10, 2019.

Contact

Please direct questions, requests for additional information, and all application materials to Cristine Legare (legare@austin.utexas.edu) and Oskar Burger (oskar@austin.utexas.edu).