

International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES)

Commission on the Anthropology of Religion

Commission on Museums and Cultural Heritage

Commission on Visual Anthropology

Commission on Medical Anthropology and Epidemiology

Commission on the Anthropology of Pandemics

Portraying Religion and Health Photo Essay Award

I. About the “Portraying Religion and Health Photo Essay Award”

The IUAES Portraying Religion and Health Award is a Photo contest that invites visual explorations of the multifaceted relationships between religion, spirituality, and health across geographical and cultural contexts, through a plurality of methodological, theoretical and aesthetic perspectives. We seek photo essays that capture the experiences, actors, contexts and materialities that emerge from these relationships.

Theme: The relationship between religion/spirituality and health is an expanding area of anthropological research, prompted in part by the global spread of alternative, complementary and nonconventional medicines, the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and greater public interest in the intersection of religion and health.

Various forms of collaboration, intersection, negotiation, competition and conflict between religions and spiritualities on one side and biomedicine, and alternative, complementary, non-conventional and traditional medicines on the other side continue to exist and form. Religions and spiritualities may also include not only healing rituals, but also harmful practices to oneself or the others, like collective suicide, witchcraft, ingestion of harmful substances, and extreme body practices.

II. About the Organizing Committee

The organizing Committee of the Portraying Religion and Health Photo-Essay Award is composed of: Daniela Calvo (IUAES Commission on the Anthropology of Religion), Hanna H. Kim (IUAES Commission on the Anthropology of Religion), Renato Athias (IUAES Commission on Museums and Cultural Heritage); Mihai A. Leaha (IUAES Commission on Visual Anthropology), Iván Sarmiento (IUAES Commission on Medical Anthropology and Epidemiology), and Guadalupe Ramírez (IUAES Commission on the Anthropology of Pandemics).

III. Eligibility and Submission Guidelines

1. The “Portraying Religion and Health Photo-Essay Award” is open to junior scholars, including College, Master and Doctoral students, who will defend their dissertations after June 2025.

2. No registration fee is required.

3. Applicants for the Award should submit application to the email iuaes.photocontest2025@gmail.com

5. In the application, it is the responsibility of the authors of the Photo Essays to provide, at the time of submission, a single PDF document with all the information listed below:

a. Title of the photo essay, up to 200 characters with spaces.

b. Authorship.

c. Position.

d. Institution, City, Country.

e. Year of production.

f. Short narrative of the photographs in English, with up to 700 characters with spaces.

g. Expanded essay from 500 to 1,000 words (footnotes and references included). This text should include: α) Description of the research context for the photographs β) methodology employed; γ) discussion of the submitted photographs, aesthetics and poetics of the photo essay; δ) theoretical framing; ε) justification of the materials, techniques, types of photographic experimentation, sources and references of collections used, as well as the proposed layout, taking into account the photographic and anthropological contents of the essay presented, with up to 1000 characters with spaces; ζ) images; η) image subtitles (up to 1500 characters with spaces), optional; θ) mini biography of the author, with up to 500 characters with spaces.

The Photo Essay is accepted in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Submit between 5 to 10 images with a resolution of 300 dpi and at least 1200 pixels on the smaller side of the image (approximately 10x15cm, if printed). The images must be made accessible in a Google Drive folder, the access link for which must be made available to anyone with the link, and included in the submission PDF document.

6. If the essay is selected, participants must submit a video version of the proposed photo essay in the form of a photo film or slideshow. The video, which must be no longer than 5 (five) minutes, must contain the essay title, author, institution to which it is affiliated, as well as all the photographs that will be part of the Exhibition. The video of the proposed photo essay must be made available in a Google Drive folder, the access link to which must be available to anyone with the link.

IV. About the Jury and evaluation

1. The Jury for the Portraying Religion and Health Award is composed of members of the IUAES Commissions on the Anthropology of Religion, Museums and Cultural Heritage, Visual Anthropology, Medical Anthropology and Epidemiology, and the Anthropology of Pandemics. The selection of four winners will be based on criteria of the balance of photographic and written composition, including the evaluation of technical, experimental and visual anthropological merit.

2. In the sense of the above, the submitted photo essays will be selected based on the following parameters:

a. Relevance to theme, clear connection to intersections of religion and health, depth of exploration of the theme and originality of perspective

b. Visual Storytelling, cohesiveness of the photo essay narrative, effectiveness in conveying complex ideas through images and creative use of visual elements (composition, light, color, etc.)

c. Anthropological insight, demonstration of anthropological theory and methods, contribution to visual anthropology discourse and ethical considerations in representation

d. Technical quality, clarity and resolution of images, appropriate use of photographic techniques, post-processing and editing choices

e. Essay text, clarity of research description and methodology, articulation of aesthetic and poetic choices, the integration of text and images.

V. About the works selected for the exhibition and the awards

1. The photographic essays will be evaluated by the Jury and may be awarded according to the criteria established in this call.

2. The Jury will select four photo essays, and 12 photos (all from different authors).

a. The authors of the four selected photo essays will participate in a Round Table (online) and a Photo Exhibition at the upcoming World Anthropological Union (WAU) Congress 2025 at Antigua, Guatemala, November 3-8, 2025 (<https://waunet.org/>). The fees for IUAES association and the registration to the WAU Congress 2025 (online participation) are included in the prizes. The selected photo essays will also appear in the exhibition book (open access) along with other series and photographs selected for the exhibition.

b. Additionally, the 1st place will win a DJI Osmo Pocket 3.

c. The 12 selected photos will be published on the 2026 IUAES calendar, that will be available in digital format, for download and printing, at the WAU website, and the Facebook pages of the organizing commissions. All the photos will include the author's name and corresponding captions.

3. The authors of the selected photo essays and photos will receive a certificate, following the model of certificate of participation in activities at the WAU Congress 2025.
4. The selected photo essays will be shown during the WAU Congress 2025, and subsequently, during occasions to be defined and announced by the Organizing Committee.
5. The authors are subject to compliance with the procedures established in this notice, under penalty of disqualification.
6. The photo essays must be made available by authors to the Organizing Committee in digital version for dissemination and in the exhibition in the event spaces of WAU Congress 2025.
7. The photographic essays and the material to be exhibited in the Photo Exhibitions must be sent before September 30, 2025 to the address that will be communicated to the winners.

VI. About the Round Table at the WAU Congress 2025 with the selected Photo Essays

1. The Organizing Committee will organize a Round Table (online) based on the theme of Portraying Religion and Health. The authors of the four selected photo essays will be invited to participate as discussants. The aim is to increase the visibility of the content submitted to the Portraying Religion and Health Award and to provide a space for debate and reflection on the relationship between visual methods and the portrayal of the intersection of religion and health in ethnography.
2. An online meeting with the selected authors will be held to plan the Round Table.

VII. About the exhibition of the selected Photo Essays

1. The four selected photo essays will be exhibited in the spaces designated by the Organizing Committee of the WAU Congress 2025 in Antigua, Guatemala.
2. “Portraying Religion and Health Award” Organizing Committee, together with the Organizing Committee of the WAU Congress 2025 may adjust the schedule, whenever it deems appropriate, so that the works are shown before and after panels, round tables, debates, workshops and other activities, with the aim of broad dissemination.
3. The strategy and parameters for the assembly and exhibition of the photographic essays will be agreed upon between authors and the “Portraying Religion and Health Award” organizing Committee, based on exhibition spaces and the curatorial work of the Organizing Committee.
4. An online meeting with the selected authors will be held to plan the assembly of the exhibitions of photographic essays.

5. The responsibility and cost of producing the photographs for the exhibition will be the responsibility of the authors, with partial funding by the Organizing Committee for the Portraying Religion and Health Award.

VIII. About Portraying Religion and Health Award panel sessions

1. The Organizing Committee may, at its discretion, organize further Portraying Religion and Health Award panel sessions, aiming both to increase the visibility of the productions submitted to the Portraying Religion and Health Award and to provide a space for debate and reflection on the relationship between visual methods and the portrayal of the intersection of religion and health in ethnography.
2. The Portraying Religion and Health Award organizing committee has the prerogative to organize such sessions in the manner it deems most appropriate.

IX. Conditions

1. The “Portraying Religion and Health Award” organizing committee is not responsible for any technical problems in the exhibition of the works, resulting from errors or defects in the original files, or problems with the format chosen for their assembly in the exhibition space.
2. Works not received by the dates announced in this notice for the exhibitions will be disqualified.
3. Submission of works implies knowledge and acceptance of all the rules stipulated in this notice, and only proposals that meet all the requirements indicated here will be accepted.
5. Submission of works to “Portraying Religion and Health Award” implies acceptance of the organizing committee’s right to dissemination of the submitted materials, with due credit to the authors of the works by any media outlet. This includes dissemination of the materials on the WAU institutional communication channels and the Social Media of the organizing IUAES commissions for the purposes of promoting the “Portraying Religion and Health Award.”
6. By entering the competition, participants agree that their photographs may be used on open access platforms, including but not limited to Wikimedia Commons, and in archival, educational and promotional materials related to the World Anthropological Union Congress or WAU.
7. The Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA) will keep a copy of all digital photographs entered in the competition and will organize them according to its internal archival practices: organization, description, codification and access through the Online Catalog. The printed photographs selected for the exhibition will also be under the safekeeping of CIRMA, ensuring their long-term preservation and care. CIRMA will only act as a repository of the photographs without taking possession of reproduction rights and authorization to third parties on the images.

8. All photographs submitted to the contest will be available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0), allowing their use, modification and distribution, as long as the author is duly credited and shared under the same terms.

9. Issues and circumstances not mentioned in this notice will be the responsibility of the “Portraying Religion and Health Award” Committee and the WAU/IUAES Board of Directors¹.

X. Timeline

- Submit entries via the email iuaes.photocontest2025@gmail.com before March 29, 2025, 12 p.m. UTC.

- the results of the selection of the 1st prize and the four selected photo essays will be publicly announced (through the social media of the Organizing Commissions) and communicated to the authors by May 5, 2025.

- the online meeting with the four authors for the organization of the Round Table at the WAU Congress 2025 will be held by May 23, 2025.

- the online meeting with the four authors for the discussion of the Photo Exhibition at the WAU Congress 2025 will be held by June 30, 2025.

- the results of the selection of the 12 photos for the IUAES Calendar 2025 will be publicly announced (through the social media of the Organizing Commissions) and communicated to the authors by June 30, 2025.

- the online meeting with the selected authors for the exhibition book will be held by September 30, 2025.

- the calendar with the selected photos will be published (through the social media of the Organizing Commissions and the IUAES website) and made available for download by September 30, 2025.

- November 3-8, 2025: World Anthropological Union (WAU) Congress 2025 at Antigua, Guatemala (<https://www.waucongress2025.org/>).

¹ The activities at the WAU Congress 2025 proposed in this call align with the rules of the The WAU 2025 Congress Photo Contest Women doing fieldwork (<https://filmfreeway.com/WAU2025CongressPhoto>).