



SACRED WRITES
PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP ON RELIGION

July 5, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Northeastern University is pleased to announce the award of a grant of \$450,000 from the Henry Luce Foundation to PI Liz Bucar, Professor of Religion, for a two-year project called Sacred Writes: Public Scholarship on Race, Justice, and Religion. This generous funding will support the further development of the Sacred Writes public engagement program from July 2022 to June 2024.

Over the past four years, Sacred Writes has developed a successful public-scholarship training program for scholars of religion, and facilitated partnerships between established media outlets and scholars of religion. We have facilitated the creation and publication of more than 250 pieces of public scholarship, and equipped a cohort of more than 80 scholars to continue to do this work.

This new grant will fund four initiatives that build organizational capacity while explicitly centering anti-racism.

First, we will convene leaders of grant-funded projects, editors and media content creators, and other members of the Sacred Writes network working in race, justice, and religion at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in November 2022. At this “summit” meeting we will explore how race affects two large framing questions of public engagement on religion: *Why go public?* and *What are the risks, rewards, and responsibilities of public scholarship on religion?* These discussions will result in a white paper of guidelines for public scholarship best practices to be published on the Sacred Writes website.

Second, in response to feedback from Sacred Writes training alums, we propose to create and produce two additional training modules to better meet the needs of scholars working at the intersection of race, justice, and religion.

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Third, we will develop and implement a program to “train the trainers” in our signature curriculum to expand our capacity to meet the increasing demand for our programs. Our “Train the Trainers” program will be open to scholars interested in the intersection of race and public scholarship, with preference given to BIPOC scholars. Three scholars will receive two days of in-person training at Northeastern University followed by remote instruction and mentorship.

Fourth, we will convene four new 12-member cohorts (48 total participants) for intensive three-month online training sessions beginning in 2023. Sacred Writes trainings, which incorporates social media networks, synchronous meetings, and group projects, are as much about fostering relationships among and across members of cohorts as they are about delivering content. We will provide a robust interactive, experiential, and cohort-centered training to four groups of scholars working on race and religion. The training offers reflection on the “what,” “why,” and “how” of public scholarship; concrete skill-building; community; and one-on-one mentorship.

Religion is communal, omnipresent, and influential in all our political systems, and so it is important to engage religion when working for social justice. By supporting public scholars who work in the intersecting spaces of race, justice, and religion, Sacred Writes hopes to build a deeper public understanding that those intersections exist; and that religion cannot be reduced, for example, to the moral policing of individual behavior in service of a conservative political agenda. Training religion scholars in the skills of communicating with the public also serves as a model for the ways in which nuanced, research-based writing about all kinds of questions can help us think cooperatively about the answers. We are tremendously grateful to the Henry Luce Foundation for their renewed support of this important work.

For more information about Sacred Writes, please visit our website, www.sacred-writes.org.

