

Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion

Awarded by the Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Rules

1. Name of the prize

The prize shall be known as the Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion. The prize is named in honor of the late Professor Clifford Geertz, in recognition of his many distinguished contributions to the anthropological study of religion.

2. Purpose of the prize

The Prize seeks to encourage excellence in the anthropology of religion by recognizing an outstanding recent book in the field. Criteria for excellence include innovative scholarship, the integration of theory with ethnography, and the connection of the anthropology of religion to the larger world.

3. Eligibility

Any single-authored or co-authored book focusing on the anthropology of religion, broadly defined, is eligible for the Prize. Edited volumes, textbooks, and reference works are not eligible, nor are works in which religion is a secondary subject. The book's author need not be an anthropologist by profession, but the work should draw on and respond to research and theory within the anthropology of religion. As a matter of practice, the prize committee will aim over time to recognize a variety of types of scholarly excellence. Books must have been published in the two calendar years preceding the award. Books may only be submitted once.

4. Timing

The Prize will be awarded each year at the annual Business Meeting of the Society, held as part of the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Deadlines for submission and schedules for judging will be determined and publicized each year by the prize committee.

5. Award

The Prize award shall consist of a commemorative plaque and a cash prize. The prize for the inaugural year will be \$250.00, but may be adjusted in future years at the discretion of the Executive Board of the Society.

6. Jury selection and composition

The jury for the award will consist of six anthropologists of religion chosen by the Executive Board of the Society. Jurors must be members of the Society with established records of published scholarship in the field. Jurors will serve for two-year terms, with three new jurors to be selected each year. Jurors may not serve consecutive terms. Guidelines for ensuring the representativeness and impartiality of the jury will be maintained by the Executive Board of the Society.

7. Administration

The Prize is administered by the Prize Chair, who is responsible for publicizing the competition, coordinating communication among jurors, working with publishers, and coordinating the logistics of the awarding of the Prize. The Prize Chair must be a member of the Executive Board of the Society, and is chosen by the Board for a two-year term. The Prize Chair does not serve as a juror.

* * * PROPOSED NEW RULES * * *

8. Honorable mention

The Committee of jurors is expected to identify a second book as runner-up for honorable mention. The author(s) of runner-up books will be recognized on the SAR website and in *Anthropology News* and by receiving a printed certificate at the SAR's Annual Business Meeting. [Note: This language merely codifies and gives formal acknowledgment to past and current practices – JDH]

9. Recognition of finalists

The list of all finalists, or books that make it into the second round of judging and that are closely read and evaluated by all six members of the prize committee, will be published on the SAR website and in the *Anthropology News* article announcing the annual winner and runner-up. This will give public recognition to scholars who have written important books in the field and will provide members of the discipline in general with a useful list of current works in the anthropology of religion that have been carefully selected by a group of specialists in the field. The prize chair will also send brief messages to all finalists whose works were not selected as winner or runner-up to inform them that their book was chosen as a finalist for the Geertz Prize. [Most of this paragraph emerges from feedback by Janice and other 2015 Committee members; the last sentence is an idea that has been informally voiced in the past but that was never formalized. If these ideas are added to the list of rules, it will increase the likelihood that future prize chairs will know that these actions are expected rather than just optional courtesies. JDH] [Caveat: A former Chair of the Geertz Prize Committee argued that “we don't tell anyone who the finalists who didn't win prizes were. In the past, I was told when I became Chair, there were problems when authors who friends believed would be glad to know they made it to

the final round weren't. Or, more specifically, who thought if they'd made it that far, they really should have won. Bad feelings ensued and the result was a decision to keep all judging information within the committee. So there we are.”]

10. Splitting award between two books

In most years, the Committee is likely to arrive at a firm consensus, or at least a strong majority opinion, that a single book is clearly the most deserving winner of the award. However, if the Committee determines that there are two equally outstanding books among the finalists and is unable to reach a clear decision between one or the other, then it may recommend to the prize chair that both books be regarded as co-winners and that their authors split the award. [This is another idea that emerged during the 2015 judging of finalists. If Committee members agree that it's important to have the option of splitting the award available in future years' competitions, then I will include this paragraph in the proposed updated rules and send them to President Joel Robbins, who can then decide if it's something that needs to be put on the agenda for approval/modification/rejection by the Executive Board at our meeting in November. JDH]

11. AAA Policy on Press Announcements

AAA has a strict rule against academic presses using the information about a Geertz Prize winner or runner-up as part of a book's promotional materials BEFORE the annual meeting and SAR Business Meeting. AFTER the names of the winner and runner-up have been announced at the Business Meeting, the academic presses can use the award as part of their advertisement of the book.