



ISASR ESSAY COMPETITIONS 2018

The Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions (ISASR) invites entries for the 2018 Academic Study of Religions Essay Prizes. There is the *Sídh* Prize (Postgraduate) and the *Iress* Prize (Undergraduate). The respective competitions are open to any student registered (part-time or full-time) in an Irish third level institution for the 2017-18 academic year who would like to present for consideration an essay that has as its focus a topic in the field of the academic study of religions. The competition is open to the island of Ireland, i.e. the Republic and Northern Ireland. It is important to note that essays should be non-confessional in approach. Entries are welcome from students from all fields or disciplines engaged in the academic study of religions such as study of religions/religious studies, history, geography, sociology, anthropology, folklore, and historical or critical approaches to theology or scriptural studies. Previous winners of an ISASR Essay Prize cannot enter again.

~ The *Sídh* Prize (Postgraduate Essay Prize) ~

Explanatory note on the meaning of the term *Sídh*: *Sídh* (Old Irish pronunciation akin to the English word 'sheath', Modern Irish pronunciation akin to the English pronoun 'she') overall can be taken to refer to a 'location', the 'inhabitants' of that location and the quality of existence pertaining among them there. As a location it means such features of the physical landscape (both natural and constructed) as hillocks and tumuli that were, and are, regarded as entrances to the otherworld - along with the '*lios*' and the '*ráth*' and the '*dún*' of later usage. The inhabitants of the *Sídh* were regarded in early Christian tradition as the gods of the earth over whom the new incomer religion had triumphed and who are frequently featured in the early literature as the *Túatha Dé Danann*. Later tradition features them in story and legend as the fairy folk. Irish tradition, early and late, perceives the realm of the *Sídh* as associated with

delight and harmony - *Tír na n-Óg* (eternal youth); *Tír Tairngiri* (Land of Promise); *Mag Mell* (Plains of Joy) etc. In sum, *Sídh* connotes an alternative reality, a realm beyond the senses, a numinous place. The term in modern Irish can be used to mean 'peace'.

How to Enter: Please submit for consideration an essay of 4,000-8,000 words in length. The essay can be a published article or chapter or an unpublished thesis chapter or article. Each entry should be accompanied by a supervisor's email confirming that the applicant is a current student. The submitted work should be emailed in Microsoft Word format to isasr.essay.prizes@gmail.com by the **deadline of 25th June 2018**, stating '*Sídh* Prize' in the subject line. Only one submission is allowed per entrant. The essays will be judged by a panel of experts appointed by the ISASR. The judges' decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into. The prize will be a €100 book token and winners will be featured on the ISASR website.

~ The *Iress* Prize (Undergraduate Essay Prize) ~

The term *Ires(s)* in the Old Irish language means 'religion', 'belief', 'faith'.

How to Enter: Please submit for consideration an essay which has been previously submitted and assessed in an undergraduate module during 2017-18 academic year. The essay should have been awarded a grade of 2.1 (Second Class Honours Grade 1) or above, be word processed and be 1,500-4,000 words in length (please note that projects, dissertations or minor theses will not be considered). Each entry should be accompanied by a tutor's/supervisor's/lecturer's email confirming that the applicant is a current student and also confirming the essay's grade. The essay should be sent in Microsoft Word format to isasr.essay.prizes@gmail.com by the **deadline of 25th June 2018**, stating '*Iress* Prize' in the subject line. Only one essay is allowed per entrant. The essays will be judged by a panel of experts appointed by the ISASR. The judges' decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into. The prize will be a €50 book token and winners will be featured on the ISASR website.

For more information on the ISASR, please see our website:

<https://isasr.wordpress.com/>

