

Society for Psychological Anthropology



Spring 2025 Newsletter

**2025
BIENNIAL
FEATURE**

Edited by AJ Jones and Angela Leocata

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Welcome to the 2025 Biennial

As President of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, I extend a warm welcome to our 2025 SPA Biennial!

The current threats to our multiple lifeworlds and our singular planet are palpable and loom large; finding multiple ways to actively counter these threats is a challenge for everyone. From my vantage as President, I can affirm and attest that there is much vital energy in psychological anthropology to engage this challenge.

We are happy to be convening at the Tamaya Hyatt on the beautiful lands of the Santa Ana Pueblo. At the Thursday evening Welcome Reception, I will be honored to introduce an elder of the Pueblo, Mr. Emmett Garcia, who will offer a blessing for the success of our meeting. Warmest wishes for an engaging and enjoyable meeting!



**Janis H. Jenkins,
SPA President**



**Elizabeth
Carpenter-Song,
Program Chair**

We are looking forward to seeing everyone in New Mexico in a few weeks for the SPA Biennial!

Thank you for your contributions to the program. We have two Presidential plenary sessions, 30 paper sessions, 10 roundtables, two workshops, a poster session, awards ceremonies, and a special film screening.

Please see the [website](#) for the updated program.

We'll see you soon!

SPA Biennial Program & Planning Committees

Biennial Schedule

Please visit <https://spa.americananthro.org/meetings/> for the most up-to-date schedule with detailed session information.

Thursday, April 3rd

10:00-12:00: Pre-Conference Workshops

12:00-1:00: Lunch on Your Own

1:00-2:45: Sessions

3:00-4:45: Sessions

4:45-6:00: Break

6:00-8:00: Welcome Reception

Friday, April 4th

8:00-9:45: Sessions

10:00-11:45: Presidential Plenary I: Subjectivity and Security

12:00-1:00: Lunch on Your Own

1:00-2:45: Sessions

3:00-4:45: Sessions

5:00-6:45: Sessions

6:45-7:30: Dinner on Your Own

7:30-9:30: Special Event: Film Screening of "The Sacrifice" with Dr. Robert Lemelson

Saturday, April 5th

8:00-9:45: Sessions

10:00-11:45: Presidential Plenary II: Eruptions of Liveliness

12:00-1:00: Lunch on Your Own

1:00-2:45: Sessions

3:00-4:45: Special Event: Lifetime Achievement Awards Ceremony

5:00-6:45: Sessions

7:00-9:00: Biennial 2025 Reception

Sunday, April 6th

8:00-9:45: Sessions

Biennial Announcements

SESSION CONNECTIONS & ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

Session/event chairs are instructed to bring their own laptop and HDMI connector to ensure smooth operations.

To enhance accessibility, please use (and practice) the [live captioning feature](#) in PowerPoint ahead of your session. To turn on: On the **Slide Show** ribbon tab, select **Subtitle Settings** and then select the language and position of captions.

Session/event chairs may wish to load all presentations on one laptop and turn on this setting before the session begins.

PUBLISHED A BOOK SINCE 2020?

Bring a copy for the conference book display to celebrate and share your work with your SPA colleagues!



DON'T FORGET TO BOOK A RIDE!

Plan your transportation to/from the Albuquerque Airport: Transportation options include Lyft, Uber, or a taxi, all of which we recommend reserving ahead of time to ensure they are there to pick you up.

Welcome from the New Editors of Ethos



***Ethos* Co-Editors,
Julia Cassaniti &
Jacob Hickman**



We feel privileged serve as the new editors of *Ethos*. We very much look forward to working with the SPA community and beyond to publish groundbreaking work in the field of psychological anthropology. As we have assumed the co-editorship this past few months, we have been working to take over the day-to-day operations of the journal and articulate an editorial vision. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves, introduce our new editorial office, and share some thoughts regarding our editorial vision for the journal. We have also written an editorial entitled “Past Present,” that provides more detail about our vision and initiatives that we are planning, which is coming out in the March 2025 issue of *Ethos* later this month (see <https://doi.org/10.1111/etho.70002>; this welcome letter includes some excerpts from the editorial).

To briefly introduce ourselves, Julia Cassaniti is an anthropologist and professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia. Dr. Cassaniti conducts research on local interpretations of religious and cultural ideologies across transnational South-East Asia, and their implications for understanding perception, emotion, mental health, and the mind. Jacob Hickman is a professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University. Dr. Hickman’s ethnographic research spans the global Hmong diaspora, as he explores the psychocultural dynamics of moral personhood and cosmological imagination in contexts of existential threat and dramatic social change.

Ethos Welcome, cont.

As co-editors, we lead a strong team that make up our editorial office, including three associate editors—Keir Martin, Matthew McCoy, and Ted Lowe (our outgoing editor, kindly staying on as Associate Editor for a smooth transition)—and our newly appointed Managing Editor, Soren Pearce. We hope to add one or two more additional scholars to this executive editorial group (see our call for a Book and Media Editor, below), as we work to cultivate a sustainable collective model for the editorship of *Ethos*. We are also fortunate to be working with a particularly strong editorial board, made up of new and returning members who are committed to furthering scholarship in the field of psychological anthropology.

Taking on the co-editorship of *Ethos* has been both daunting and exciting. *Ethos* stands at the interface of the social and the psychological, and it continues to be a prime outlet for what the founding editors so deftly called the “institutionalized instability” of the disciplines (Goldschmidt & Price-Williams, 1973, iv). It is an exciting time to edit our field’s flagship journal, with changes to the academic publishing landscape and the wider social world calling for new perspectives on psychological anthropology research.

There are several specific frontiers of scholarship that we are especially excited to welcome to *Ethos*. We invite scholarship on the ways that bodies are crafted through, and constitutive of, cultural practices (including theories of embodiment, somatic experiences, phenomenology, gender, ethnicity, and the biocultural dimensions of human experience); scholarship that considers what it means to be and become psychologically healthy and flourish (including psychiatric, psychoanalytic, psychodynamic, clinical, (dis)function, psychopathology, kinship, family, upbringing, and educational research); scholarship that considers the relationships between language, culture, and thought; and scholarship that considers how actual and aspirational worlds are interactionally constructed (including work on theory of mind, perception, neuroanthropology, indigenous knowledge systems, ontology, cosmology,

Ethos Welcome, cont.

morality, ethics, and affect). We seek work that speaks to and engages important issues for our current world, and to the deep relationships that their expressions have with a variety of broader social phenomena.

Our vision for *Ethos* aims to continue the legacy of our founders and those of the editors before us, while continuing to integrate perspectives from psychology and anthropology that advance theory in a broadly conceived field of psychological anthropology. This includes meaningful engagement with related areas of scholarship. We are especially eager to publish articles that attend to human experience through an integration of anthropology's contextual focus and psychology's emphasis on mental processes and dynamics. We invite authors from various disciplinary and sub-disciplinary backgrounds to consider publishing their research with *Ethos*, particularly those analyses that elucidate both the fundamental psychological and cultural dimensions of human experience.

We are thankful for all of the support we have received from the SPA Board, all of the effort that Ted Lowe has put into handing over the management of the journal, and all of the effort that all of you in our community put into producing and reviewing quality scholarship for the journal. We look forward to working with you during our tenure at *Ethos*. We will be at the SPA Biennial in New Mexico in April, and we hope to meet many of you there.

Sincerely,

Julia Cassaniti and Jacob Hickman

Call for Media/Book Review Editor

The Ethos Co-Editors are soliciting nominations (including self-nominations) for a “Media Review Editor” position to join the Ethos Editorial Office.

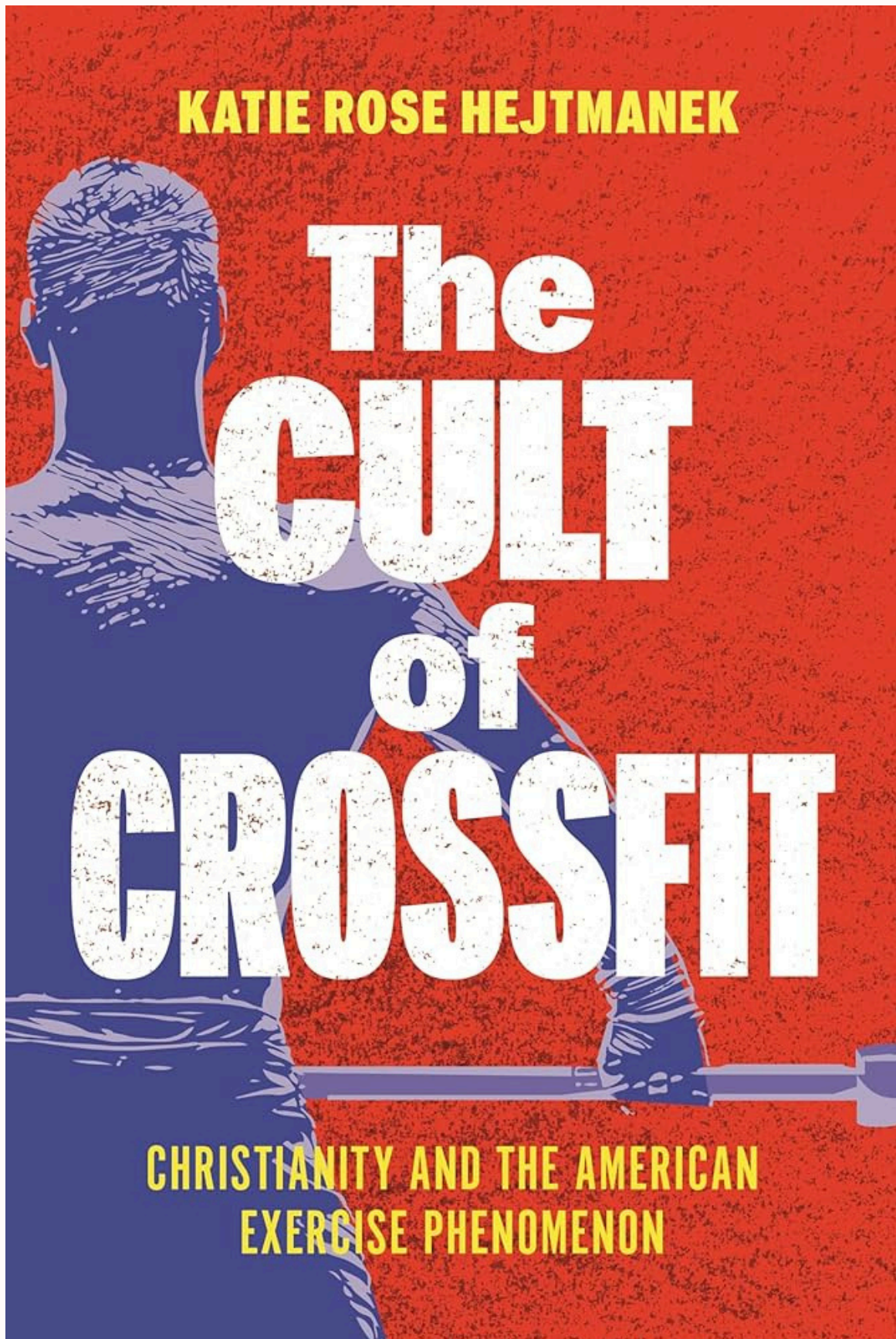
This position will be similar to a traditional “Book Review Editor,” but will also include reviews of media-related scholarship beyond books—including films, exhibits, and other creative media that contribute to the field of psychological anthropology. This position will help our editorial collective keep *Ethos* on the cutting edge of our dynamic field, both continuing in the tradition of editing reviews of important books in the field, but also expanding to embrace reviews of multimodal psychological anthropology scholarship.

The Media Review Editor will be responsible for curating lists of books, films, and other media to be reviewed (in consultation with other editors and the editorial board); soliciting authors to undertake reviews; and editing review submissions to the journal.

For more information on the journal, see <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15481352>.

If you are interested in joining our editorial office in this capacity, please email us at ethos_spa@outlook.com.

Featured Book



Featured Book, cont.

The Cult of Crossfit: Christianity and the American Exercise Phenomenon

Katie Rose Hejtmanek
Professor of Anthropology
Brooklyn College



When I reached out to see if I, as an anthropologist, could observe happenings in my local CrossFit gym, they invited me to a workout. I wasn't invited to *observe* the workout but to join in, to do pull-ups and sprint as fast as I could in competition with others. It seemed to me the perfect *psychological anthropology* opportunity: to live out the methods and theories of embodiment and somatic modes of attention, from day one. Embodiment is essential to my anthropology. I lived in a mental institution for children for my first book (*Friendship, Love, and Hip Hop*, published in the Society for Psychological Anthropology's Culture, Mind, and Society book series).

Featured Book, cont.

The Cult of CrossFit is a book constructed through the workouts I endured and the body I built as I tried to understand the fitness regimen. But CrossFit isn't just about the workouts, it's a whole empire of frameworks, beliefs, devotions, communities, futures, pasts, ideologies, and stories that are lived out and built into a CrossFitter's body, gym, and community.

I began my research in 2016 and did my final WOD (workout of the day) of Murph (mile run, 100 pull-ups, 200 push-ups, 300 squats, mile run wearing a fourteen-pound vest) three years later. During that time, I spent years observing gyms in New York City and anywhere I traveled to, from Peru to Morocco, Paris to Hong Kong, Albuquerque to Chicago. I also spent my sabbatical researching CrossFit in Delhi, India and Melbourne, Australia. These cross-cultural investigations put into stark relief what was very *American* about the practice,

especially the militaristic, apocalyptic, salvatory, heroic, and garage and oracle capitalistic elements that were missing in other parts of the world. As I dug deeper into these story lines, the Christianity of the practice revealed itself. It isn't the Christianity of the pulpit or the church. It is the cultural Christianity that permeates much of the United States: in the air we breathe, in the secular bodies and communities we build, an afterlife of the colonial conquest.

The Cult of CrossFit examines what I call cultural Christianity through official stories, underlying codes, punishing workouts, and communities of sufferers found in American CrossFit gyms. The book is as much about the contemporary United States as it is about CrossFit, and it reveals how violent, militaristic, devotional nationalism gets embodied, one workout at a time.

-KRH

Multimodal Feature

The Assault Alarm

Natasja Eilerskov

You stare at the empty chair in front of you,
I stare at the windows filled with people following each of your movements.
He is watching you,
the extra guard they hired because your behavior has changed.
The assault alarm that I have reluctantly promised to wear,
weighs heavily on my chest.
I feel guilty for agreeing to it as part of fieldwork, and for the suspicion it carries
with it.
It feels like putting a shield between us.



Multimodal Feature, cont.

You see your mother when you look at me,
her gentleness and warm hands.

When I speak, you hear how you wanted her to stay, when she left you alone with
your father.

Your father, who locked you in the house and punished you.

You deserved it, you once told me.

Now you and I both move through the walls of the psychiatric housing facility
where you must live.

Now you are the reason they set the extra security.

Not for you, but against you.

When I look at you, I turn into your mother

I see your eyes change, and I know it has happened before.

In your words, I hear stories of how people in front of you has turned.

How your friends turned into enemies

How you lost track of who to fight and who to trust

How you screamed at staff at the facility, because you felt needles injected into
your neck,

held by the staff's empty hands.

And how your own empty hands suddenly punished someone, who suddenly
wasn't your mother

The turns and turns has locked you up, and locked you up, at enclosed psych
wards.

I was angry about the assault alarm and its assumptions when I first got here.

Not tactfully nor gently it divided us

Decided who to protect

Decided who to protect from.

But now the promise of protection has become my comfort

And I take to heart to rules of how to be around you

Never face to face

Never small spaces

Never let you walk behind me

Multimodal Feature, cont.

I feel like I am playing with fire
whenever a connection is starting to appear.
I need to leave before things turn.
You and your kindness make me feel guilty,
and my fear makes me feel shameful.
Fear isn't allowed, where I come from,
and sometimes I only want to retell stories of us laughing about psychedelic flower seeds.
It's not that I thought connection would exist without caution,
and I generally allow my instincts to confuse me.
But when I watch our reflections in the door,
I feel a nervous break in the rule of not letting you walk behind me.

Natasja Eilerskov is a Medical Anthropologist from Aarhus University and a PhD student at the Department of Society and Health, Roskilde University, Denmark. Her current doctoral work examines the lived experiences of individuals within the Danish social psychiatry system, with a particular focus on those living with mental illness and using illicit substances, and their interactions with somatic healthcare.



Testimonials

We asked our members: What most **excites you** about your research? Why does **psychological anthropology matter**? How has the SPA been a **meaningful space** for you and your work?



**GRACE NNENNA
FREDRICK**

**PhD Candidate in
Anthropology**

**University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee**

Broadly interested in mental illness and carceral institutions, my doctoral research explores how justice-involved individuals with mental illness construct and negotiate their identities within institutions meant to support, yet often control. By focusing on treatment and alternative programs, I examine how labels such as “mentally ill” or “criminal” shape individuals’ self-perceptions and agency. Psychological anthropology has equipped me with the tools and language to engage deeply in these issues, and I’m eager to contribute to conversations that advance the discipline. I’m thrilled to attend my first SPA conference this spring and connect with scholars whose work has illuminated my path.

Testimonials, cont.

**JARRETT
ZIGON**

**William & Linda
Porterfield Chair
in Biomedical
Ethics and
Professor of
Anthropology**

**University of
Virginia**



I've often described my research trajectory in terms of asking the question: "why would one get out of bed in the morning and how do they look themselves in the mirror before bed at night?" From hope, despair, addiction, and therapy in post-Soviet Russia, to anti-drug war activism around the globe, to moral experience everywhere, all this research has sought to examine the existential conditions and struggles of living a human life. For me, the SPA has always been a home where I have felt free to think – sometimes clearly, oftentimes experimentally – and to learn from others about these conditions and struggles. Without this welcoming space, I'm not sure I'd be the anthropologist I am today.

Want to share your research and reflections on psychological anthropology? Email your **100-word blurb** and **image** to jaudrey@wustl.edu.

ETHOS

Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology

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