

Religion & AI Teaching and Learning Resources

October 2023 - [YouTube Video](#)

Overview: While discourses around religion and Artificial Intelligence have been with us for decades, the exponential growth of models such as GPT-3 (the basis of Chat GPT) and the ascendancy of Open AI as a company has accelerated the conversation at both philosophical and practical levels. This panel seeks to address the question of how religious studies as a discipline can serve as a fruitful conversation partner for both perennial and emerging questions around AI. For instance: to what extent are such historically determined concepts as “soul” and “real” helpfully informed by religious studies? As the academy wrestles with incorporation of AI into both student work and scholarly research, how might religious studies as a discipline be affected? Will the landscape of the practice of religion be altered significantly by AI, or are such prognostications premature? Join us as we explore these and other salient questions surrounding this timely topic.

Host:

Robert Saler Associate Professor of Theology and Culture, Christian Theological Seminary

Panelists:

Katherine Schmidt is Associate Professor at Molloy University in New York.

Jon Ivan Gill Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Gustavus Adolphus College and Cross-Community Coordinator at the Center for Process Studies.

Kristel Clayville holds a PhD in Religious Ethics from the University of Chicago’s Divinity School and completed Fellowship training in clinical medical ethics at the MacLean Center, where she continues as a Senior Fellow.

Sources from Panelists

Show Notes

Sources Mentioned in Video:

People:

[Dr. Andrew Whitehead](#) – “Secularizing Religion”

- Mentioned in the webinar, [Religion & the Public Intellectual](#)

Terms Mentioned

- A.I Hallucinations: content generated by A.I that is unfaithful or illogical based on the provided content. Happens when A.I “starts to make things up” and provides fabrications or inaccuracies.

- [“When A.I Chatbots Hallucinate”](#)
- [“What are AI Hallucinations”](#)
- Escapism: a tendency or push to find distractions in forms of entertainment from unpleasant realities.
 - [“Investigating TikTok as an A.I User Platform”](#)

Teaching Resource 1 – Assignment

The panelists mention their ideas and uses of A.I in the classroom, Kristel offers us a valuable idea to use in the classroom. Have your students send a question to an A.I source like ChatGPT. After they get a response, have your students respond in a way that correlates with class material.

Teaching Resource 2 – Discussion or Debate

After watching the video, use the conversation and ideas they mention to discuss or debate the pros and cons, uses or other aspects of A.I in the classroom.

Some ideas to consider:

1. The humanness or lack thereof in A.I (the therapist example)
2. By submitting teachers “intellectual property” into A.I programs they are making them better with the teacher's property and against their consent
3. Education as a data processing machine.
4. What does A.I provide for us as researchers, students, educators, learners or more?

Teaching Resource 3 – Assignment and Question Ideas

Based on the video and other resources, explore the following questions.

1. How does A.I privilege certain material or ideas, continually, how do our definitions of religion privilege certain material, people, ideas or more?
2. What religious language do we see at play in conversations about artificial intelligence?
3. How are our education systems like data processors?
4. How can students using A.I platforms like ChatGPT be a “logical conclusion” of our education systems?
5. How might AI disrupt traditional religious practices, rituals, or community structures?
6. In what ways can AI be used to support religious life (e.g., virtual clergy, automated scripture analysis)?
7. How do different religious traditions define consciousness, and how might these definitions challenge or support the development of conscious AI?
8. Can AI ever possess a soul or spiritual essence? How do various religious doctrines address this possibility?
9. What are the theological implications of creating machines in the "image" of humans?

Related Resources

[Religion and Science](#)

[Digital Projects in the Classroom](#)

[Religion in the Digital Age](#)

[New Religious Movements, Popular Media, and Violence in American History](#)

[The Binary between Science and Religion](#)

[The Link Between Black Studies and Technology](#)