Religion & Webinar Teaching Resources

Religion & AI (Artificial Intelligence) – October 2023

Resources from Panelists

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

Books:

- [Theologia Crucis: A Companion to the Theology of the Cross](#)
    - "Recovery of Paul and Luther's theology of the cross has been an enduring legacy of twentieth-century theology, and in our own day the topic has continued to expand as more global voices join the conversation. The array of literature produced on the cross and its theological significance can be overwhelming. In this readable and concise introduction, Robert Saler provides an overview of the key motifs present in theologians seeking to understand how the cross of Jesus Christ informs the work of theology, ministry, and activism on behalf of victims of injustice today. He also demonstrates how theology of the cross can be a lens through which to understand crucial questions of our time related to the nature of beauty, God's redemption, and the forces which seek to overwhelm both."
- [All These Things Into Position: What Theology Can Learn from Radiohead](#)
    - "Radiohead is simultaneously one of the most experimental and most successful rock bands on the planet. While their lyrics rarely reference religion, in this book Robert Saler argues that the discipline of Christian theology has a great deal to learn from the band when it comes to unflinching engagement with the world's brokenness and its longing for redemption. Market dynamics, the influence of capitalism on art, ecological theology, aesthetics, and Christology all come together as Saler asks what it might mean for Radiohead to ""soundtrack"" a theology of defiance against the forces that create death in our daily lives."

Jon Ivan Gill Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Gustavus Adolphus College

Books

- [Underground Rap as Religion: A Theopoetic Examination of Process Aesthetic Religion](#)
    - "Underground rap is largely a subversive, grassroots, and revolutionary movement in underground hip-hop, tending to privilege creative freedom as well as progressive and liberating thoughts and actions. This book contends that many practitioners of underground rap have absorbed religious traditions and ideas, and implement, critique, or abandon
    them in their writings. This in turn creates processual mutations of God that coincide with and speak to the context from which they originate."

- [Toward Afrodiasporic and Afrofuturist Philosophies of Religion](#)
  - "Based on the categories of mainstream philosophy of religion, we must ask the question if said categories are adequate to describe the conceptual frameworks of traditions not philosophically dependent on Western theistic understandings, such as religious traditions and philosophies of life emerging from the continent of Africa and appearing in the United States, the Caribbean, North, Central, and South America, and Europe. This book hosts students ...who have analyzed the field of philosophy of religion as it stands to determine which of its insights can be applied to Afro-diasporic and Afrofuturist notions of "religion" and which ones cannot. Their reflections in these chapters will ask: how do we define Afro-diasporic religion, what would a robust philosophy of religion of Afro-diasporic and Afrofuturist religions draw from, what categories would/should it contain, how would we construct such a non-Western methodology of philosophy of religion, and what sources would we use to construct such a philosophy of religion? In an attempt to aesthetically experience what Afro-diasporic and Afrofuturist philosophies of religion are/could be, the text will rely heavily on fiction novels, poetry, music, movies, and texts written by Afro-diasporic people from various social locations and perspectives on some African notions of religion, among other centers of reflection."

Article

- [Ancestors Change Constantly: Subversive Religious Colonial Deconstruction in the Religion of Black Panther](#)

Major question more people should be thinking about:

- How are race and race-related constructions conceptual technologies that are either transcended as arbitrary or reified as arbitrary yet necessary in a digital age where consciousness has the potential of being programmed in ways not possible 50 years ago?

Fun fact:
- "I experiment with these ideas within my own contexts of an artist, record store owner, and traveler who rarely stays stationary. All of these contexts are interrelated, and most times defy the logic or border/boundary."

Website

- https://jonivangill.wordpress.com/

Syllabus

- https://raac.iupui.edu/teaching_resources/phi-216-philosophy-of-race/

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

Book:

- [Virtual Communion: Theology of the Internet and the Catholic Sacramental Imagination](#)
    - "Virtual Communion: Theology of the Internet and the Catholic Sacramental Imagination provides a theological account of the internet from a Catholic perspective. It engages digital culture by providing a context for media and mediation within the Catholic tradition, specifically focusing on the ecclesiology and sacramentality of the church. Katherine G. Schmidt argues that the Catholic imagination is inherently consonant with the idea of the "virtual," understood as the creative space between presence and absence, bringing the fields of media studies, internet studies, sociology, history, and theology together in order to give a theological account of the social realities of American Catholicism in light of digital culture. Overall, Schmidt argues that the social possibilities of the internet afford the church great opportunity for building a social context that allows the living out of Eucharistic logic learned in properly liturgical moments."

Publications:

- ["From Sunday School to #SundayFunday: Social Media and the Semi-Public Performance of the Weekend." American Studies Journal 61 (2016).](#)
- [Learn, Remember, Act: Theological Anthropology and A.I Metaphor](#)
    - "Anxieties over the capabilities of artificial intelligence reflect our assumptions about its capabilities. From a theological perspective, these assumptions are often inflated if not wholly mistaken, demonstrating an Edenic impulse to create in our own image without realizing the limitations of our creations. This paper analyzes the language used for AI, arguing that the uncritical and unnuanced application of the metaphors of "learning, memory, and action" exacerbates problematic assumptions about AI vis a vis its human-like capabilities."

Conference presentations:

- "The Comment Section of the Faithful: The Role of the Laity in Ecclesial Visions of Media Ecology." Full, Conscious, and Active: Lay Participation in the Church's Dialogue with the World. Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas/College Theology Society. Rome, Italy. July 2016.
- "Virtual Space and Liturgical Space," College Theology Society. Rockhurst University. Kansas City, Kansas. May 2016.

Major question more people should be thinking about:

- The Degree to which the developers of AI technologies are willing or able to develop them outside of capitalist goals. In question form: To what extent are technology companies open to the contributions of experts in the humanities who want to analyze these technologies and suggest ways in which they need to change that may (probably will) negatively affect profit?

Fun fact:

- "I love the Muppets and teach a course that is inspired by them called "Playful Media and Civil Discourse.""

Kristel Clayville

Publications:

- [The Heart of the Matter: Patient Autonomy as a Model for the Wellbeing of Technology Users](#)

Major question more people should be thinking about:

1. What power structures are hidden by the use of AI, and what kind of accountability can we create for AI systems?