

Religion and Digital Cultures in Africa & Oceania

Editors:

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Religions are historically situated and mediated phenomena (Horsfield, 2015). The mediatisation of religion, and more specifically the conceptualisation of 'digital religion' further demonstrates the pervasive exemplification of religion's ongoing mediated entanglements. Campbell and Evolvi (2020) have theorised digital religion studies as the study of "how online and offline religious spaces and practices have become bridged, blended, and blurred."

Existing studies in the field of digital religion have highlighted how representations of religious identity, formations of community, and questions of authority are constructed and contested in online spaces and the consequences of these multi-faceted arrangements for offline experiences and environments. Digital spaces may contest as well as re-inscribe traditional discourses, ideologies and practices of power and privilege, inclusion and exclusion while offering novel spaces for these productions and circulations of identity, authority, and community.

In light of the continuous and rapidly evolving nature of digital technology, environments, and cultures, this current and fourth wave of digital religion studies extends beyond the purview of scholars of religion and media. Scholars of religion, sociology, anthropology and the literary arts, those invested in research areas such as politics, gender, theology, race, and identity will find that digital spaces are not only additional sites where beliefs, discourses, and practices are created and circulated but also where it may be encountered, excavated and engaged. Scholars of media too, may benefit from a serious reflection on the nuances and novel encounters with digital cultures, that a conceptual and empirical emphasis on religion may imbibe.

Although still in its infancy, like the study of religion and media, digital religion studies is already dominated by the epistemological sensibilities of European and North American contexts. For this collection of essays, the editors conscientiously consider non-Western scholarship and invite creative and critical contributions that "challenge and confront elements of the global knowledge system, which are driven by an implicit "civilising mission" in which methods and intellectual approaches drawn from the West are seen as sacrosanct, while approaches and concepts emerging from the Global South are deemed to have a lower ontological density in the hierarchical ordering of knowledge" (Schoon, Mabweazara, Bosch, and Dugmore 2021).

In foregrounding the necessity and importance of acknowledging and producing diverse intellectual histories that take seriously differences in identities, experiences, social practices, beliefs and ideas, the editorial collective wishes to bring together a collection of essays that explore the intersections of religion and digital cultures in Africa and Oceania. As previously colonised contexts, Africa and Oceania are striking for in their potential to provide theoretical frameworks, espouse conceptual approaches, suggest methodological orientations, and consider reflexive practices that are deliberately decolonial in scope.

The editors welcome empirical studies and grounded approaches that deploy digital methods and explore digital expressions of religion. We also invite contributions that consider religion more expansively, and consider phenomena and practices that are not conventionally religious in nature and scope but operate within and produce similar paradigms. Contributions which focus on the production and circulations of ethics, morality, digital religious performances and aesthetics will also be considered. We envision creative theoretical and conceptual contributions that chart, characterize and contextualize the digital turn in the study of religion and its implications for the aforementioned post-colonial contexts.

PUBLISHER

We intend to approach an A-grade academic publisher or high impact internationally accredited journal for publication.

This will be discussed once abstracts are received.

IMPORTANT DATES

Proposed publication date:
July 2023

Submission of abstracts:
28 February 2022

Notification of acceptance:
18 March 2022

Full papers due:
30 November 2022

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