

Salter Vann

## Servers as Religion - Spring 2024 reading list

This month-long list contains a group of texts that, combined, do their best to grapple with the wide range of work being done in the space coalescing between new technological structures and long-existing religious roles in society. Addressing both artistic and academic approaches to this topic from a variety of lenses, a more comprehensive understanding of this intersection can be reached. The list progresses week by week in elaboration to guide the reader into the topic in a fluid way.

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### Week 1 - Popular Conceptions of Data and Religion

The purpose of this week's selections is to invoke a basic understanding of the topic from a popular perception. This base understanding of the topic can be built upon following this.

Read

[“The Philosophy of Data”](#) (2013)

David Brooks

[“How the internet is taking away America's religion”](#) (2014)

arXiv MIT Technology Review

Watch

[“Computer Networks”](#) (2017)

Crash Course

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### Week 2 - Elaboration and Intersections

This week's readings are more complex, as they, either directly or indirectly, begin to delve into the relationship between religious elements/institutions and new technologies/networks.

Read

*Psychopolitics* (2014)

Byung-Chul Han

“Big Data” chapter

[“Stop Believing: The Data Center as Religious Monument”](#) (2023)

Sarah Chekfa

Watch

*Serial Experiments Lain* (1998)

*All Light, Everywhere* (2021)

Theo Anthony

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### Week 3 - Religion From the Perspective of Data Science

Common notions from data science can be helpful when applied to the field of religious research. This research includes the field of religious studies as well as research conducted by religious institutions themselves.

#### Read

[“Teaching Religion with Data”](#) (2021)

Randy Reed

[“Data Centers Get Religion”](#) (2007)

Barbara Darrow

“The ‘World’s Most Beautiful Data Center’ is a Supercomputer Housed in a Church” (2019)

Daniel Oberhaus

#### Watch

[“Using the World Religion Database to forecast volume of religious groups”](#) (2014)

BrillPublishing

Note: While kind of a sketchy resource, this video effectively demonstrates the practices described by Reed in “Teaching Religion with Data.”

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### Week 4 - Data From the Perspective of Religion

When the relationship from last week is reversed, important revelations can again be found. This perspective can yield new ideas about the nature of data and its purpose.

#### Read

[“Big Data, Ethics and Religion: New Questions from a New Science.”](#) (2017)

Michael Fuller

[“Is God Against a Data-Driven Church?”](#) (2020)

Sitthavee Teerakulchon

Note: This was a very funny blog post that I stumbled across while researching.

[“Artificial Deaths”](#) (2024)

Arianna Caserta

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