

A.I. and Humanity: News from AAAS DoSER



DoSER Newsletter, January 2018

Fostering dialogue between scientific and religious communities since 1995

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Happy New Year and best wishes for 2018! The AAAS Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion (DoSER) ended 2017 with several captivating workshops and lectures that highlighted the value of science communication and engagement with religious communities. At the 2017 DoSER Holiday Lecture, an artificial intelligence innovator and a professor of moral theology and ethics (Drs. Kunda and Scherz, see below) cast a unique light on profound questions concerning artificial intelligence and how we as humans experience the world and think and relate to technology. We launched Phase II of the Science for Seminaries project, which will expand the role

science plays in U.S. theological seminaries, potentially reaching dozens more institutions and the large swath of the public their students will eventually engage. In 2017 and in January 2018, the Engaging Scientists project hosted four workshops that helped scientists employ useful frameworks, understanding, and skills developed for effective science engagement with a largely religious public. The project will be hosting additional events on campuses throughout 2018. We are encouraging faculty at research universities to apply for a campus workshop to aid their scientists in public engagement (see below).

We hope you will join us in Austin at the 2018 AAAS Annual Meeting February 15 – 19, 2018. Make sure to register for DoSER's symposium on Gene Editing and Human Identity, where we will explore the impacts of human gene editing at the individual, societal and species level. The session is followed by the annual DoSER evening reception, during which we will be pleased to honor the winners of the 2017 Science for Religion Reporters Award. The four winners will be recognized for journalism that relates the latest scientific discoveries to audiences interested in the interface of science and its societal and ethical implications.

– Jennifer Wiseman, Director, AAAS DoSER

**REGISTER FOR THE
AAAS ANNUAL MEETING »**

WINNERS OF THE 2017 AAAS SCIENCE FOR RELIGION REPORTERS AWARD



Stories on the value of the philosophical and religious questions that a discovery of extraterrestrial life would raise, the science behind the research finding that going to church is good for your health, the text of the Quran and what an examination of it reveals, and the impact of the most effective contraceptive devices on political,

philosophical and religious perspectives are among the work of journalists named winners of the 2017 AAAS Science for Religion Reporters Awards. The stories were part of the submitted work by journalists Brandon Ambrosino of Delaware, Peggy Fletcher Stack of Utah, William Saletan of Maryland and Yonat Shimron of North Carolina, each of whom will be honored at the 2018 AAAS Annual Meeting in Austin as this year's award winners.

[Read more about the 2017 Science for Religion Reporters Award Winners »](#)

2017 HOLIDAY LECTURE — OF MINDS AND MACHINES

The 2017 DoSER Holiday Lecture cast a unique light on profound questions concerning how we as humans experience the world, think and relate to technology. Maithilee Kunda, assistant professor of computer science and computer engineering at Vanderbilt University and artificial intelligence innovator, explored how visual thinking contributes to learning and intelligence, focusing on its relevance to human autism and applications to artificial intelligence. Paul Scherz, assistant professor of moral theology and ethics at the Catholic University of America, reflected on what these tools mean for humans in the workplace. Reflecting on the way humans shape artificial intelligence can “expand our understanding of human thought, and our understanding of ourselves.”

[Watch the 2017 Holiday Lecture »](#)

ENGAGING SCIENTISTS WORKSHOP SERIES

DoSER's Engaging Scientists project hosted a workshop series to support scientists in effective, dialogue-focused engagement with diverse (and especially religious/spiritual) publics, building upon best practices for science communication. The examples and discussion topics were tailored to the attendees at each meeting, which included astronomy, museum, neuroscience and geophysical professionals; science journalists; and representatives from religious communities. Participants applied insights from the workshop content to constructively engage with real-world scenarios and questions they may

encounter from students and the public at the intersection of faith and science. Workshops occurred at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History, the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union and the annual meeting of the American Astronomical Society. Workshops will continue in 2018 at both science society meetings and at the campuses of interested research universities.

[Learn more about the Engaging Scientists project and workshops »](#)

SCIENCE FOR SEMINARIES PHASE II ---

AAAS DoSER and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) are embarking on a new five-year initiative that will offer a unique suite of activities designed to expand the role that science plays in U.S. theological seminaries. The new Science for Seminaries Phase II project is geared toward the goal of broadening contact with science in theological education for the benefit of faculty and students, and ultimately providing the religious public with the leadership it needs to consider advances and implications of science, in the context of their faith communities. After a very successful three-year pilot project with 10 seminaries, this new iteration is designed to expand the reach of the original project by providing opportunities for additional seminaries to integrate science in their core curricula, leveraging the significant interest in the pilot project seen from nearly 40% of North American seminaries.

[Learn more about the Science for Seminaries Phase II project »](#)

DoSER IN MOTION AT THE 2018 AAAS ANNUAL MEETING IN AUSTIN ---

Gene Editing and Human Identity: Promising Advances and Ethical Challenges

This session will explore the impacts of human gene editing at the individual, societal and

species level.

Friday, February 16, 2018, 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

AAAS Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion Reception

Open to all registrants

Friday, February 16, 2018, 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

UPCOMING DoSER EVENTS ---

Life Emerging in an Ancient Universe: SXSW Conference, March 12, 2018, Austin, TX

This session will highlight the exciting discoveries of modern telescopes and discuss the significance of life in a vast, ancient and awesome universe.

Engaging Scientists Campus Event: Submission deadline February 9, 2018

This is an opportunity for universities to hold a science communication and engagement event on their campus, with hosting expenses paid by AAAS. The goal is to build constructive dialogue about science by scientists with diverse (and particularly with religious/spiritual) students and publics.

OTHER AAAS HAPPENINGS ---

AAAS Annual Meeting: February 15 – 19, 2018, Austin, TX

The AAAS Annual Meeting brings together leading scientists, educators, policymakers and journalists to discuss cutting-edge developments in science, technology and policy.

Science Talk '18: March 1 – 2, 2018, Portland, OR

The AAAS Center for Public Engagement With Science and Technology will be offering an interactive social media workshop at Science Talk '18.

INVEST IN DIALOGUE ---

Did you know that supporting DoSER's vital work of facilitating conversations between scientists and religious communities is as easy as clicking the link below? Your investment will help us expand our dialogues into exciting new areas. Email us at doser@aaas.org to learn more.

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For more information about this event, contact doser@aaas.org