

Jacob Aaron Boss

Curriculum Vitae

Queen's University, School of Religion
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My research explores the use of technology, especially cybernetics, brain interfaces, and artificial intelligence, to transform and enhance human bodies and human intelligence. I received my doctorate in Religious Studies on the "science and technology" track, and bring expertise in Informatics, Cognitive Science, Critical Theory, and the Anthropology of Technology to my work.

Current Employment

- 2023 **Postdoctoral Research Fellow**, School of Religion, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, Kingston, Ontario
- 2023- **Managing Editor**, JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION, Oxford University Press

Education

- 2015-2023 **Doctor of Philosophy**, Indiana University, Religious Studies
- 2013-2015 **Master of Arts**, Indiana University, Religious Studies
- 2004-2008 **Bachelor of Arts**, University of Iowa, Asian Languages and Literature

PhD Thesis (2023)

- Title *Practical Transhumanism: Life at the Grassroots of Human Augmentation*
- Advisory Board Professor Lisa Sideris, Environmental Studies, University of California Santa Barbara, Provost Professor Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Religious Studies and Maurer School of Law, Indiana University, Senior Lecturer Jennifer Terrell, Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering, Indiana University, Ron-Cole Turner, H. Parker Sharp Chair in Theology and Ethics (Emeritus), Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Emeritus Associate Professor Stephen Selka, Anthropology and Religious Studies, Indiana University
- Description This dissertation is based on five years of ethnographic research in the United States on grassroots transhumanism. It argues that research into human-computer integration, body modification, and human augmentation has focused on well-resourced institutions and celebrity researchers, neglecting grassroots, marginalized, and underground research efforts. This dissertation demonstrates through ethnographic data collection and social informatics analytics that there is a sprawling and inchoate movement of do-it-yourself (DIY) actors engaged in extra-institutional development, design, hacking, and implantation of devices, including lifesaving and life sustaining materials. The work of grassroots researchers is uniquely shaped and informed by concerns about limited resources, and by the specific needs of the marginalized communities they belong to and serve.

Masters Thesis (2015)

- Title *Guru's and CEO's, Disciples and Consumers*
- Advisory Board Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Provost Professor, Religious Studies and Maurer School of Law, Indiana University. Constance Furey, Professor, Religious Studies, Indiana University
- Description This MA thesis explored the historical development of nonprofit law as a technology that balanced public goods against individual risk and responsibility, and the reasons why religious leaders might opt to pursue legal status as another type of tax-exempt corporation such as a public-benefit nonprofit corporation instead of a religious corporation.

Publications

Monographs (in progress)

The Age of Enlightenment

Ethnographic, historical, and textual study of the Transcendental Meditation Movement and its intentional communities of Fairfield and Maharishi Vedic City, Iowa. Fieldwork in progress. Writing proposal.

Please Try This At Home

Ethnography of do-it-yourself cybernetics and medicine. Fieldwork complete. Writing proposal. Based on Ph.D. Dissertation.

Peer-reviewed articles

A Corporation in Your Head? An Ethnography of Brain Implants. *Edward Elgar Handbook of Religion and Artificial Intelligence*, edited by Robert M. Geraci. (Forthcoming)

"Introduction: On Religion and Algorithms." *American Religion* 5, no. 1 (2023): 93-94.

<https://doi.org/10.2979/amr.2023.a916423>

"The Darkness Inside Us: Artificial Intelligence and Reproductive Futurism." *American Religion* 5, no. 1 (2023): 130-136. <https://doi.org/10.2979/amereli.5.1.09>

"Alcancando Através da Nuvem: Effervescência Coletiva e Obscurantismo de IA" / "Reaching Through the Cloud: Collective Effervescence and AI Obscurantism." *Debates Do NER* 23, no. 43 (2023): 69-77. <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8136.135572>

"Punks and Profiteers in the War on Death." *Body and Religion* 5, no. 2 (2022): 135-159. <https://doi.org/10.1558/bar.1821>

Book chapters

"For the Rest of Time They Heard the Drum." In *Theology and Westworld*, edited by Juli Gittinger and Shayna Sheinfeld. Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020.

"The Harmony of Metal and Flesh: Cybernetic Futures." In *Spiritualities, Ethics, and Implications of Human Enhancement and Artificial Intelligence*, edited by Christopher Hrynkow. Vernon Press, 2020.

"Matters of Life and Death: Scientific Ethics in Frankenstein." Written with Lisa Sideris. *A Companion to Frankenstein*. Indiana University Themester, 2017.

Refereed digital publications

"Human Augmentation Research Network and Transhumanism." Written with Jeremy Cohen and Sharday Mosurinjohn. *Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network*, 2022.

"At Least Do No Harm" *Consortium for the Study of Religion, Ethics, and Society*, 2015.

Encyclopedia entries

Encyclopedia of Artificial Intelligence: The Past, Present, and Future of AI. Edited by Philip Frana and Michael Klein. ABC-CLIO, 2020. Entries written for "Campaign to Stop Killer

Robots,” “Anne Foerst,” and “Kevin Warwick.”

Book reviews

- 2023 *The Spiritual Significance of Overload Boredom* by Sharday Mosurinjohn. Reviewed in *Reading Religion*.
- 2021 *Black Transhuman Liberation Theology* by Philip Butler. Reviewed in *Reading Religion*.
- 2018 *Unsettling Science and Religion: Contributions from Queer Studies* edited by Lisa Stenmark and Whitney Bauman. Reviewed in *Reading Religion*.

Conference Presentations and Panels

Invited presentations

- 2024 “Punks and Profiteers Panel.” American Academy of Religion, San Diego, California.
“Pedagogies of Trust in the Era of ChatGPT.” McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario
“The Spiritual Technologies of Transcendental Meditation.” Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario.
- 2023 “‘The Grass and the Stars.’ Dying and Kinning in the Age of Technoscience.” The University of Bergen, Norway.
“Perspective from the Journal of the American Academy of Religion.” Publishing on Teaching, a panel at the American Academy of Religion. San Antonio, Texas.
“Religion and Machines.” The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture. Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 2022 “Pay it No Mind: Beyond Consumerism and Mind-Body Dualism in Transhumanism.” Teaching Religion in Public: Afrofuturism and the Posthuman. The Center for Religion and the Human, Indiana University Bloomington.
- 2021 “Transhuman Visions in Contemporary Media.” Post-Apocalyptic and Dystopian Fiction, Indiana University.
- 2020 “Engaging Narratology: Evaluation as Teacher-Student Storytelling.” Religion in Public Life/Teaching Religion: “How Do Scholars Change Institutions That Normalize Inequality?” The Midwest Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. In-Person Session cancelled by pandemic.
- 2019 “Cybernetics for the People.” Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.

Other presentations

- 2023 “Gods of Blood and Salt: Dante’s Transhumanism Revisited.” International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture. University of Arizona, Tempe, Arizona.
“Transhumanism is for Punks.” International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture. University of Arizona, Tempe, Arizona.
- 2022 “The Religion of Transhumanism at the Grassroots.” Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S). Cholula, Mexico.
“Kill the Law, Save the World (Revised and Expanded).” The American Academy of Religion, Denver, Colorado.
“The Keybase and the Glory.” The American Academy of Religion. Denver, Colorado.

- “Kill the Law, Save the World. Anthropology, AI, and the Future of Human Society. The Royal Anthropological Institute, London.
- 2021 “Dying in the Meat: Grassroots Transhumanism on the Engines of Immortality.” The American Academy of Religion. San Antonio, Texas.
- 2020 “Grassroots Transhumanism: Weeds in the Garden of Neoliberalism.” The Joint Graduate Student Conference of the University of Chicago and Notre Dame. In-Person Session cancelled by pandemic.
- 2019 “Punks and Profiteers in the War on Death.” The American Academy of Religion. San Diego, California.
- “Virtual Asuras and Ascetic AI: Digital Media Arts and Pedagogy for the South Asian Religions Classroom.” The Annual Conference on South Asia. Madison, Wisconsin.
- “The Steel Cocoon.” The Society for the Anthropology of Religion. Victoria University, Toronto.
- “Transhumanism at the Grassroots.” Queen’s University. Kingston, Ontario.
- 2018 “Transhumanist Ethics in the Anthropocene.” Religious Perspectives and Alternative Futures in an Age of Humans. A Conference funded by Humanities Without Walls. Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.
- 2017 “Artificial Beings, Natural Feelings: Rudolph Otto’s Phenomenology of Religion and Robots.” The Graduate Student Conference of the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.
- “The Harmony of Metal and Flesh: Ecotheology and Cybernetics.” The Midwest Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Ball State University. Muncie, Indiana.
- 2014 “Public Performances of Dissatisfaction: Looking Beyond Nation-States in Maharishi Vedic City.” The Annual Conference on South Asia. Madison, Wisconsin.

Grants and Awards

- 2024-2025 Awe-some Spirituality – Religious Studies and Psychology Fellowship, Oxford Brookes University, (subgrant from John Templeton Foundation).
- 2023-2025 Mitchell Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at Queen’s University
- 2023 Dying and Kinning in the Age of Technoscience, a fully funded invitation-only weeklong workshop in Bergen, Norway, hosted by the Human Futures project.
- 2022 Teaching Excellence Award, School of Education and Student Academic Center, Indiana University Bloomington.
- 2021 Teaching Excellence Award, Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering at Indiana University Bloomington.
- 2021, 2019, 2017 Devonia and Stephen Stein Fellowship in the Study of Religion
- 2020 Dissertation Fellowship, College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University Bloomington.
- 2019 Greenburg Albee Fellowship, College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University Bloomington
- 2019 Society for the Anthropology of Religion award to graduate students for travel to present at the international conference.
- 2018 Teaching Excellence Award, Department of Religious Studies, Indiana University Bloomington.

- 2017 Research Fellowship from The Politics of Religious Freedom at Home and Abroad Project, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.
- 2014 Dhar India Studies award for travel to present at the Annual Conference on South Asia.

Teaching Experience

2018-2024 **Instructor on record**, INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Independently designed and taught courses across social informatics, general education and religious studies.

Course list:

- *Social Informatics* • Introductory Course for undergraduate Informatics, Computer Science, and Engineering students.
- *Unlocking Your Creativity* • Experimental undergraduate course through the Student Academic Center.
- *How to Succeed in College* • Introductory Course for new undergraduate students.
- *Happiness* – Introductory Course for undergraduates under the Religion and Popular Culture heading.
- *The Transhuman Condition* • Intensive mid-level course for undergraduates, offered through the Collins Living-Learning Community. Received student-nominated Teacher of the Year award for this class.
- *Hacking the World* • Intensive introduction to critical theory for undergraduates.
- *Come Hell or High Water* • Survey Course for undergraduates, under the Religion, Ethics, and Public Life heading.
- *Religions of Asia* • Survey Course for undergraduates.

2013-2022 **Teaching Assistant**, INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Served as teaching assistant for courses across social informatics and religious studies.

Course list:

- *Advanced Information Ethics* • Jennifer Terrell
- *Social Informatics* • Jennifer Terrell
- *Religion in America* • Candy Gunther Brown
- *Religions of Asia* • Michael Ing
- *Original Sin* • Constance Furey
- *Religion, Ethics, and Public Life* • Lisa Sideris
- *Concepts of Self: East and West* • James Swan-Tuite
- *The Information Society* • Nathan Ensmenger
- *Intro to Christianity* • Candy Gunther Brown
- *Intro to Islam* • Nur Amali Ibrahim
- *Intro to the Hebrew Bible* • Jason Mokhtarian
- *Intro to Hinduism* • Rebecca Manning
- *Asian Religions and Popular Culture* • Heather Blair

Other Professional Experience

2022 **ProHealth REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates) Evaluator**,

I was hired for this role because of my mixture of ethnographic and informatics experience. I was lead evaluator for the National Science Foundation funded Proactive health Informatics Research Experience for Undergraduates site. Evaluators coordinate with the IRB, the NSF, conduct interviews with undergraduate participants, analyze data and generate reports for program faculty and graduate student mentors to improve the program.

- 2022 **Associate Director of the Global Living-Learning Community**, INDIANA UNIVERSITY
 As Associate Director of the GLLC I oversaw an International Studies themed dormitory and approximately one hundred participating student residents. I managed a student services administrator, a graduate assistant, and an undergraduate assistant, day to day operations, budget allocations for student programming, presided over the student executive council, and facilitated living-learning community events. I managed recruitment, retention, and communication strategies for resident undergraduates. As AD I held office hours for students, resolved resident issues, interfaced with residence life staff, and led student resident field trips.
- 2019 – 2022 Research Assistant to the Center for Religion and the Human, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.
- 2018 – 2023 Editorial Assistant for the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.
- 2017-2019 Research Assistant to the Being Human in the Age of Humans project, funded by Humanities Without Walls.
- 2014-2015 Research Assistant to The Politics of Religious Freedom project, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Professional Service

- 2024 Anonymous Peer Reviewer for *Comparative Studies in Society and History*
- 2023 Co-Chair, Human Enhancement and Transhumanism Unit of the American Academy of Religion
 Anonymous Peer Reviewer for *Body and Religion*
 Chair, “A Transhuman Panelfesto.” After Earth? Religion and Technology on a Changing Planet. The Conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture. Arizona State University. Tempe, Arizona.
 Expert consultant for training of academic advisors and instructors in the Student Academy Center at Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.
- 2022 Anonymous Peer Reviewer for the *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*
 Panelist, “Course Design: The Basics of Creating a Course for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Instructors.” The Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.
- 2021 Chair, “Identity and Infinity in Technofuturism.” Human Enhancement and Transhumanism Unit at the American Academy of Religion. San Antonio, Texas.
- 2019-2023 Steering Committee Member, Human Enhancement and Transhumanism Unit at the American Academy of Religion.
- 2018-2020 I convened a series of pedagogy workshops throughout the year for faculty and graduate students at Indiana University.
- 2018 Anonymous Peer Reviewer for the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.
- 2017 Vice President of GQ (GradQueers), an LBGTQ+ campus-wide support student organization with a focus on graduate students. Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.
- 2016 Chair, “Wonder in Restoration, Relationality, and Reenchantment.” Wonder and the Natural World International Conference. Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.
- 2014 Chair, “Diverse Perspectives on State.” A panel at the Annual Conference on South Asia. Madison, Wisconsin.

Media Engagement

- 2023 “DIY Transhumanism Communities for Human Flourishing: Meet the Grinders.” AI and Faith. <https://aiandfaith.org/featured-interview-jacob-boss/>
- 2021 “Biohacking Implants and DIY Science.” DIGETHIX – Ethics Inside the Frame of Technology. <https://digethix.org/digethix-17-biohacking-implants-and-diy-science-with-jacob-boss/>
- 2022 “A Very Kind Conversation Between a Cyborg and Some Biohackers.” <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2020/10/06/a-very-kind-conversation-between-a-cyborg-and-some-biohackers/>
- Alex Pearlman, “Health-tracking implants can create bionic cows. Are humans next?” Experience Magazine. <https://expmag.com/2020/06/health-tracking-implants-can-create-bionic-cows-are-humans-next/>
- 2017 “Microchipping: The Future of Implant Technology.” WFIU-NPR. <https://indianapublicmedia.org/noonedition/microchipping-future-implant-technology.php>

Professional Memberships

- American Academy of Religion
- American Anthropological Association
- Society for Social Studies of Science
- Association for Computing Machinery
- International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture.

Languages

English	Native speaker	
Japanese	Advanced	<i>speaking and writing</i>
Hindi	Advanced	<i>speaking and writing</i>
German	Intermediate	<i>academic reading focus</i>
Hebrew	Intermediate	

Referees

Lisa Sideris

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