

BRIDGE Initiative: Sample ELSI & Religion Research Topics

The topics below are offered simply as examples to help spark your thinking about the kinds of questions a BRIDGE-funded project might explore. They are illustrative, not exhaustive. If your own interests or expertise point toward a related but different question at the intersection of genomics and religion, we would welcome hearing about it.

- How Christian and other religious traditions theologically understand, interpret, and evaluate a broad range of genomic applications, including direct-to-consumer genetic testing, newborn genomic screening, pharmacogenomics, and hereditary cancer risk assessment, through theological, historical, comparative religion, or other scholarly lenses.
- How religious, philosophical, legal, or ethical frameworks shape reasoning about genomic medicine, access to genomic treatments, and questions of human dignity, identity, and justice.
- How religion, in interaction with personal factors (e.g., scientific knowledge, personality traits), social and cultural factors (e.g., acculturation, community variables, differential experiences in health care settings), and structural factors (e.g., cultural competency of providers, continuity of care, cost of services), may shape people's perceptions of or engagement with genomic information and technologies. Research on this topic may draw on quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods and may come from disciplines including psychology, public health, intercultural studies, and nursing.
- How genomic information and technologies are communicated, represented, or received within religious communities, including through pastoral care, health communication, media, or community education.
- How different faith traditions understand the moral status of the embryo and the beginning of life, and how that shapes views on prenatal testing and reproductive decision-making.
- How the philosophical debate over what counts as “natural” versus an unacceptable tampering with the given applies to contemporary gene editing.
- How the history of eugenics, including its embrace or resistance by religious institutions and leaders, offers a cautionary lens for how faith communities engage genomic science today.
- How genomics policy and law, including current debates over reproductive genetic testing, intersect with religious communities' advocacy, moral commitments, and legal engagement.
- How novels, films, and news coverage shape public understanding of genetics, and how those portrayals are received differently within religious versus secular audiences.
- Whether and how genetics research on social stratification and inequality is understood, discussed, or contested within religious communities and institutions.

- How schools, including religious and faith-based schools, navigate the ethical questions raised by using genomic data to predict student outcomes, and how to teach genetics responsibly without reinforcing outdated racial narratives.
- How questions of who owns, patents, and profits from genomic technologies intersect with religious teachings on economic justice, stewardship, and equitable access to care.
- What predicts whether a person of faith embraces or resists genomic technologies such as prenatal testing, gene editing, or stem cell therapy.
- How religious commitments among scientists and health professionals shape their engagement with genomic research, and how science and health curricula might integrate faith and ethical perspectives.