

Religion & Comics Resources from Panelists

[Youtube Video](#)

Overview

Throughout history, comic books have occupied many roles for religious communities. They continue to do so today. Comics have been mediums for both the positive and negative portrayal of religious belonging. They have served as objects of devotion, as well as of controversy and censorship. Some comics are, themselves, religious artifacts. One might approach comics from a literary analytical perspective, identifying and analyzing the theological and otherwise religious themes and characters that appear therein. Join us for a conversation, however, that will discuss comics as sources for the study, teaching, and publication of American religious studies.

Matthew J. Cressler Ph.D. is Chief of Staff at the Corporation for Public Interest Technology and an independent scholar of religion, race, and culture. He is the author of *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: The Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migrations* (NYU, 2017) and numerous peer-reviewed articles on Catholic and African American religious histories, clerical sexual abuse, horror movies, comic books, and more. He has written for America, The Atlantic, National Catholic Reporter, Religion News Service, The Revealer, Slate, U.S. Catholic, and Zocalo Public Square. Together with Adelle M. Banks, he co-reported the Religion News Service series “Beyond the Most Segregated Hour,” which won a Wilbur Award from the Religion Communicators Council. He is the creator of Bad Catholics, Good Trouble (badcatholics-comics.org), an educational webcomic series that brings to vivid life true stories of Catholic injustice and the ordinary people of faith who did extraordinary things to confront white supremacy and colonial violence in their communities.

Website: <https://matthewjcressler.com/home/>

Yvonne Chireau is Professor in the department of religion at Swarthmore College, where she teaches courses on theories of religion, Africana religions, and American religious history. She is the author of *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (2003) and the co-editor of *Black Zion: African American Religions and Judaism* (1999).

Articles

Chireau, Yvonne. “Looking for Black Religions in 20th Century Comics, 1931-1993.” Religions 10.6 (2019): 400-. Web.

Chireau, Yvonne. “From Horror to Heroes: Mythologies of Graphic Voodoo in the Comics.” A New Gnosis. Cham: Springer International Publishing. 25–57.

Books

Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition (2006)

- *Black Magic* looks at the origins, meaning, and uses of Conjure—the African American tradition of healing and harming that evolved from African, European, and American elements—from the slavery period to well into the twentieth century. Illuminating a world that is dimly understood by both scholars and the general public, Yvonne P. Chireau describes Conjure and other related traditions, such as Hoodoo and Rootworking, in a beautifully written, richly detailed history that presents the voices and experiences of African Americans and shows how magic has informed their culture. Focusing on the relationship between Conjure and Christianity, Chireau shows how these seemingly contradictory traditions have worked together in a complex and complementary fashion to provide spiritual empowerment for African Americans, both slave and free, living in white America.

A major question that you seek to answer or think that more people should be asking.

- What does Religion look like in the comics?

Fun Fact: “Although I write about and read comics, I have never been to Comic Con, but will present there for the first time this year”

[Website](#)

Other media:

[Black Magic Matters: Hoodoo as Ancestral Religion](#)

- Does Black Magic Matter? A brief discussion of the African American traditions known as Hoodoo, Conjure and Rootworking, and practices of divination, spiritual protection and healing. We will discuss the origins of magic in the specific context of slavery in America and consider the meaning of black magic in the present day. Like their enslaved forebears, today’s practitioners cultivate ancestral spirituality in support of individuals and communities, and to heal diverse afflictions of the body politic, intergenerational trauma, racial and sexual violence, and economic impoverishment.

[Voodoo Brothers: Africana Religions and the Comics](#)

Jericho Drumm – favorite Africana character in comics

Jenny Caplan a scholar of American religion and popular culture. She specializes in American Judaism and work extensively with film, television, internet media, humor, graphic novels, video games, board games, and other sites of pop culture engagement. She has been studying religion and religious history since 1997 and has published extensively on media portrayals of Jews and Judaism.

[Website](#)

Book

Funny, You Don't Look Funny: Judaism and Humor from the Silent Generation to Millennials

- In this comprehensive approach to Jewish humor focused on the relationship between humor and American Jewish practice, Jennifer Caplan calls us to adopt a more expansive view of what it means to "do Jewish," revealing that American Jews have, and continue to, turn to humor as a cultural touchstone. Caplan frames the book around four generations of Jewish Americans from the Silent Generation to Millennials, highlighting a shift from the utilization of Jewish-specific markers to American-specific markers.

Hussein Rashid is founder of islamicate, L3C, a consultancy focusing on religious literacy and cultural competency. He works with a variety of NGOs, foundations, non-profits, and governmental agencies for content expertise on religion broadly, with a specialization on Islam. His research focuses on Muslims and American popular culture. He writes and speaks about music, comics, movies, and the blogistan. He has published academic works on Muslims and American Popular Culture, Malcolm X, qawwali, intra-Muslim racism, teaching Shi'ism, Islam and comics, free speech, Sikhs and Islamophobia, Muslims in film, American Muslim spaces of worship, and the role of technology in teaching religion.

Books

Ms. Marvel's America: No Normal

- Mainstream superheroes are becoming more and more diverse, with new identities for Spider-Man, Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man. Though the Marvel-verse is becoming much more racially, ethnically, and gender diverse, many of these comics remain shy about religion. The new Ms. Marvel, Kamala Khan, is a notable exception, not only because she is written and conceived by two women, Sana Amanat and G. Willow Wilson, but also because both women bring their own experiences as Muslim Americans to the character. This distinct collection brings together scholars from a range of disciplines including literature, cultural studies, religious studies, pedagogy, and communications to engage with a single character, exploring Khan's significance for a broad readership. ... With essays from and about diverse voices on an array of topics from fashion to immigration history to fandom, this volume includes an exclusive interview with Ms. Marvel author and cocreator G. Willow Wilson by gender studies scholar Shabana Mir.

Islam in North America

- The overview chapter provides students with an introductory grounding in the field. Chapters take a multidisciplinary approach, and focus on the expressions of Islam in its

diverse forms. The book is illustrated throughout with over 75 images and each chapter contains suggested further reading. A glossary of key terms and concepts is included. Case studies include Islam in Cuba, Islam and the Black experience, and the Hijab. Topics covered include Muslims and Politics in the US, Islamophobia as/and racism, Muslims in American popular media, the Latinx Muslim experience, and religious diversity in Canada. From tracing street names, such as Malcom X Boulevard in Harlem, to exploring how Islam has been constructed as a normatively male religion, this book provides a much-needed resource for students and instructors that acknowledges that Muslims navigate their identities in a world where Orientalist ideas continue to dominate politics, policy, and public imagination.