

Religion & Comics Show Notes

1. What got you into comics and examining the relationship with religion? When did you first start to think of comics as sources for thinking, researching, and writing on American religion. How do you engage them in scholarship and in teaching?

Hussein: When I was 11 or 12 got involved in the X-Men, where the tag line is doing good in a world that hates and fears them. It can be seen as an allegory of race, sexuality and more recently religion. A real outsider sense to the series that resonated with me. Magneto as a Jewish man, others as catholic that come up in their backstories. You see religion and race coming in explicitly. Ms. Marvel came out in 2014 and it was first where Muslim character headlined the series, the religion is interesting, how they deal with it and navigate. I also deal with immigration and how that impacts it, how we tie it to race and belonging.

Yvonne: In the 60's as a kid, a neighbor had everything, so I got really into it. As a scholar now we see religion everywhere and it got me questioning black religion and where it is in comics. It grew on me.

“Once you are trained in religious studies you can't unsee it.”

Jenny: *Maus* was the first comic I read all the way through in one sitting. Before that the boys would not let me investigate them so when I did it was interesting. In 2000, lots of things in comics were changing and that was in my mind as I became an academic. I am interested in the representation of various kinds of characters.

2. Comics are important in representation and imagination. Think about, in our subfields, the positives and negatives in which comics have helped or hindered marginalized communities. How have they reinforced the racialization of religious communities or how have they opened spaces for the portrayal of religious diversity?

“Comics are an important artifact of religious imagination and representation for marginalized religious communities.”

Jenny: There were Jewish coded things happening, but they were very lightly coded until they were ready to be explicit.

Yvonne: Voodoo and hoodoo in comics are a wonderful way to start seeing the racialized areas of culture. Black religion is not just about Christianity. Looking at comics in expansive ways and seeing how these representations of Black religions is built in the comics. Positive or negative. What do the comics have to say about race, religion or more? How are they talking about Voodoo, Black religion or others?

Hussein: Method, a way we can think about these comics in cultural memory. What are we making out of these stories, how they receive the messages. Comics do function as cultural

artifacts, and we can use them to learn and study these cultures and time periods. What is the cultural context, why is it important? What is happening in the world when people are writing these comics?

3. What is your favorite non superhero or one comic you have taught or want to teach and/or consider a go to recommendation?

Jenny: *Scalped* written by Jason Aaron and illustrated by R. M. Guéra. It is extremely compelling. Also, *A Contract with God*, by Will Eisne. It is one of the most Jewish things you can imagine to study in this intersection!

Yvonne: Animal Man, Coyote Gospel

Hussein: Black AF, Squire, and The Arrival. No normal of Ms. Marvel

Matthew: *The Wicked* + *The Divine* created by Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie.