

# Religion & Comics Teaching Resources

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## 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.

## Host:

**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.

## Panelists:

**Jenny Caplan**, University of Cincinnati is 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. Jenny’s book, *Funny, You Don’t Look Funny: Judaism and Humor from the Silent Generation to Millennials* was published in 2023.

**Yvonne Chireau**, Swarthmore College is professor in the department of religion, 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). Her varied thoughts on the historical intersections between magic, Africana religions, comics, and popular culture tropes of black spirituality can be found at the research blog *The Academic Hoodoo* ([academichoodoo.com](http://academichoodoo.com)). She is currently co-producing a documentary film about contemporary reclamations of the African American ancestral traditions known as *Conjure, Hoodoo, and Rootworking* by millennial practitioners, artists, educators, and entrepreneurs.

**Hussein Rashid, Independent Scholar** 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. He co-edited a book on Kamala Khan/Ms. Marvel with Jessica Baldzani called *Ms. Marvel's America: No Normal*. He also co-edited *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Muslims and Popular Culture* with Kristian Petersen, and another volume *Islam in North America* with Huma Mohibullah. His most recent publication is *Teaching Critical Religious Studies* co-edited with Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand and Beverley McGuire. He is currently working on a cultural history of Muslims in America.

## **Resources from Panelists**

### **Show Notes**

#### **Sources Mentioned in Webinar**

Ms. Marvel with Hussein

*Up, Up and Oy Vey: How Jewish History, Culture and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero* by Rabbi Simcha Weinstein.

*Superman is Jewish?* By Harry Brod

The Rag Man from DC Comics

*History of Religion and Superman* by Martin Lund

*Do The Gods Wear Capes?* By Ben Saunders

First Black villain: Haitian voodoo man