Arts & Humanities

Comic-Book Characters Who Went to Columbia

If you want to give superheroes (and supervillains) intellectual credibility, make them Ivy League alumni.

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Elodie Yung and Charlie Cox as Elektra Natchios and Matt Murdock in the Netflix series *Daredevil*. (Marvel / IMDb)

Daredevil

Being blind didn’t stop superhero Matt Murdock from getting an Ivy League education. According to the *Daredevil* series, the lawyer and vigilante majored in pre-law at Columbia, where he met love interest and fellow superhero Elektra Natchios, arch nemesis Lawrence Cranston (aka Mister Fear), and best friend and legal partner Foggy Nelson.



Ioan Gruffudd as Reed Richards in *Fantastic Four*, 2005. (20th Century Fox / Marvel / IMDb)

Mister Fantastic

As a member of the Fantastic Four, Dr. Reed Nathaniel Richards, also known as “Mister Fantastic,” brings a mind-boggling range of scientific expertise to complicated superhero feats. The former child prodigy owes some of his genius to his prestigious degrees — including one from Columbia, according to the series.



The character of Superwoman in *Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths*, 2010. (Warner Bros. Animation / DC Entertainment)

Superwoman

Kristin Wells — one of several DC Comics heroines to assume the identity of Superwoman — flaunts her academic credentials as a Columbia professor. The character was introduced in 1983 as teaching a Columbia history class in the year 2862, in which she tells students of the future that Superwoman was “quite possibly the greatest heroine of the 20th century.”



Benedict Cumberbatch flaunts a Columbia hoodie as Dr. Strange in *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, 2021. (Columbia Pictures / Marvel)

Doctor Strange

While the Marvel Universe doesn't specify the alma mater of Dr. Stephen Strange, in the 2021 film *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, the New York City neurosurgeon (played by Benedict Cumberbatch) is shown sporting a Columbia hoodie under his winter coat. The sweatshirt isn't the *Spider-Man* franchise's only Columbia cameo: the 2002 film, which stars alumnus James Franco '11SOA as Harry Osborn, features a scene filmed on College Walk.



Erin Kellyman as Karli Morgenthau, a female version of Karl Morgenthau, in the limited series *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, 2021. (Marvel / Disney+ / IMDb)

Flag-Smasher

Before becoming the terrorist-supervillain known as Flag-Smasher, Karl Morgenthau majored in political science at Columbia, hoping to become a diplomat. But after his father was killed at a political demonstration, Morgenthau chose a more violent career path, eventually becoming an arch nemesis of Captain America.



The character of Firestorm in the animated TV series *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. (Warner Bros. Animation / DC Entertainment / dc.fandom.com)

Firestorm

Columbia isn't explicitly mentioned in DC's *Firestorm* series, but superhero Jason Rusch is described as attending "Columbus University" in New York City — a likely homage to the real-life institution.



Patrick Stewart as Professor X in *X-Men*, 2000. (20th Century Fox / Marvel / IMDb)

Professor X

As the founder of the X-Men, Charles Francis Xavier is known for his telepathic powers. According to his backstory, the bald, wheelchair-bound mutant grew up in an affluent family in Westchester County before earning several medical and scientific degrees, including a Columbia PhD in anthropology.



Camila Mendes as Veronica Lodge in the TV series *Riverdale*. (Berlanti Productions / Archie Comics / CBS)

Veronica Lodge

Veronica Lodge of *Archie* fame applies to Barnard in *Riverdale*, the 2017–2023 live-action TV adaptation of the long-running comics series. In a (possible) coincidence, real-life Barnard alumna Susan Rovner ’91BC served as president of the Warner Bros. television division at the time of the show’s development.

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