

## **Looking Beyond the Allegory: The True Depiction of Race in *X-Men***

Danielle Mueller

*Departmental Affiliation:* Political Science  
Christ College

In 1963, the first issue of *X-Men* was published, introducing the Marvel Universe and the world to mutants, super-powered individuals born with amazing powers. Feared and hated by the world they have sworn to protect, the mutant X-Men are often interpreted as representing a variety of marginalized groups. Modern scholarship generally focuses on the Bryan Singer film series and mutants as representative of homosexuals and Jews. Despite the validity of these modern readings, this focus has neglected the depiction of race in the original *X-Men* comics and has reduced the racial message of *X-Men* to a simple allegory in which mutants represent the oppressed minority, the X-Men represent civil rights activists, and humans represent the oppressive majority. However, a close reading of *X-Men* comics from the 1970s and 1980s indicates that the series' depiction of racial and ethnic minority characters complicates this simple allegorical reading. Although the series seems to emphasize diversity through an ethnically diverse cast of characters, *X-Men*'s exclusion of minority characters that identify with their cultural backgrounds, along with its emphasis on the cultural backgrounds of the Caucasian characters, presents a problematic picture of race in which sameness is valued over the diversity the comic supposedly advocates.

### *Information about the Author:*

As a longtime fan of comics, Danielle Mueller was thrilled when she had the opportunity to study them in the spring of 2012 for a research paper in Prof. Jennifer Miller's Christ College seminar Speculative Fiction: Race, Ethnicity, and Difference. In the future, she hopes to continue to study works within the medium of comics and to help expand research on this often overlooked medium.

*Faculty Sponsor:* Dr. Edward Upton

*Student Contact:* [danielle.mueller@valpo.edu](mailto:danielle.mueller@valpo.edu)