

WEEK 1

Supermagic.

AFROFUTURISM AND THE BLACK SUPERHERO

Since its positing by Mark Dery in 1993, Afrofuturism as a cultural production space has been connected to comics and Afrocentric superheroes. However, this hasn't been a fact that has been focused on in the study of the movement, until recently. Luke Cage is essentially a science fiction adventure story. How does Cage fit into the continuum of black costumed adventurers and their connections to Afrofuturist aesthetics?

WEEK 2

Life in Marvelous Times.

LUKE CAGE AS INDEX FOR BLACKNESS IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

Luke Cage is the first mainstream superhero to have his own solo series (1972) but his influence on the Marvel Comics Universe has not been as significant or popular as it is now. Luke Cage acts as the index for black people, black history and black men in the Marvel Comics Universe. How has the character changed and grown over the years as black images in the media have shifted and evolved?

WEEK 3

Fake Bonanza.

RACE AS SCIENCE FICTION

Race is a story that we're told and its used to divide us and those divisions are profitable. Our entire country was fueled by the lie that we are different because of our skin, eyes, and hair. Race is a type of science fiction. Luke Cage's steel hard skin speaks to the indestructible nature of that construct and how that metaphorical "cage" still causes real pain and disenfranchisement of the people he represents. Black speculative fiction is a powerful technology to bend those cages and maybe even break them.

WEEK 4

Fear Not of Man.

LUKE CAGE AND BLACK SPIRITUALITY

Luke Cage's father is a preacher and in the Netflix series, Cage is obviously portrayed as a messiah figure. He is Abel to Diamondback's Cain and only vulnerable to a bullet named for Judas.

The tensions between his father, his brother and his responsibility to Harlem are constantly tested. How does the Black Church figure into Cage's sense of self and his mission to save Harlem and the people who reside there.

WEEK 5

Mr. N*gga.

LUKE CAGE AS INDEX FOR BLACK RESPECTABILITY

In Season One of Luke Cage, the Hero of Harlem is the holder of the Swear Jar and represents the hard working blue collar brother who knows every jot of black history and who never uses the “N” word. However, this sometimes hypocritical and class-based monolithic idea around black identity in our country always falls short. There is no one black morality. There is no one black identity. How do we make the cage of black respectability more flexible?

WEEK 6

Ghetto Rock.

LUKE CAGE, RACE, SPACE AND GENTRIFICATION

The Harlem that is depicted in the Netflix Luke Cage show doesn't really exist. In real life, Harlem has become a highly gentrified space and is a far cry from the very black and crime-ridden streets that Cage patrols in the show. Harlem holds a special space in the minds of African Americans as a sort of historic black utopia. A safe space that represented black excellence and freedom. Space and race are conflated and Luke Cage represents the intersection.

WEEK 7

The Boogie Man Song.

LUKE CAGE AND THE DEMONIZATION OF THE BLACK MALE BODY

Luke Cage is an indestructible, super strong black man. In short, he is the nightmare and obsession of white supremacy. The scary, but fascinating, black man who will destroy the world with his unchecked rage and primitive ways. This stereotype has persisted for generations and has affected public policy, law, and every institutional narrative about black people in our country.

WEEK 8

Ms Phat Booty

LUKE CAGE AND BLACK SEXUALITY

Luke Cage was created to take advantage of the popularity of the Blaxploitation film craze of the 1970s. Cage is essentially “*Shaft* with superpowers.” *Shaft*’s sexual prowess is something that is part of the character and also plays into the hypermasculine power fantasies of both the classic films and the superhero genre in general. Does Cage’s interest in various blends of “coffee” (a euphemism for sex in the show) undercut the character’s mission and how black women relate to him?

WEEK 9

Murder of a Teenage Life.

LUKE CAGE AND THE MOVEMENT FOR BLACK LIVES

It's impossible to be alive in this moment and not see the narrative implications of a bullet-proof black man. Cage's appearance on the Netflix show comprises a hoodie that is constantly riddled with bullets. We have a superhero, who is black, that HAS to be shot every episode to prove that he is bullet-proof. What does this mean in the era of Black Lives Matter and how does it help or hinder the work that must be done?

WEEK 10

Crime and Medicine.

LUKE CAGE AND MEDICAL APARTHEID

Luke Cage is wrongfully sent to prison and, while there, is subjected to an experiment that gives him his powers. Cage represents not only the increasing human rights issues around the Prison Industrial Complex but also the long and well documented history of sanctioned medical experiments on black people. From the Tuskegee Experiments to the creation of HeLa cells, the black body has long been a site of plunder for medical advancement. Cage is no different.