

# Comic-Book Characters Who Went to Columbia

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

By

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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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