Fictional Columbia Alumni: TV Edition

36 characters you may not know went to Columbia.

By Mussaad Al-Razouki ’07DM, ’08BUS | Sep. 22, 2021

Part I: Lawyers

Meghan Markle in "Suits," USA. (Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo)

Before she became a royal duchess and media fixture, Meghan Markle played Rachel Zane, a paralegal who attends Columbia Law School, in the legal drama Suits (2011–2019).
In *Modern Family* (2009–2020), **Mitchell Pritchett** (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) is a double Ivy League graduate, having attended both Cornell University and Columbia Law School.
Superhero **Matt Murdock** (Charlie Cox); his best friend, **Foggy Nelson** (Elden Henson); and ex-girlfriend, **Elektra Natchios** (Élodie Yung), are Columbia Law School alumni in Netflix’s 2015–2018 *Daredevil* adaptation.
Jamie Ross (Carey Lowell) studied for the bar at Columbia before going on to serve as an assistant district attorney on Law & Order (1990-2010). In 2005, she appeared as a trial judge on the show’s short-lived spin-off Law & Order: Trial by Jury.
New Jersey state-senate candidate Taissa (Tawny Cypress) is revealed to be a Columbia Law School alumna in Yellowjackets, the 2021 series about members of a high-school soccer team who survive a plane crash.

**Part II: Doctors**
In *Grey’s Anatomy* (2005–), **Derek Shephard** (Patrick Dempsey); his best friend, **Mark Sloan** (Eric Dane); and ex-wife, **Addison Montgomery** (Kate Walsh); are all Columbia medical-school graduates who work at the same hospital.
Doctors and on-and-off couple **Sam Bennett** (Taye Diggs) and **Naomi Bennett** (Audra McDonald) are Columbia alumni in *Private Practice* (2007–2013), a *Grey's Anatomy* spin-off centered on Addison Montgomery.
As evidenced by a shirt seen in season two, New York City OB/GYN **Mindy Lahiri** (Mindy Kaling) of *The Mindy Project* (2012–2017) is a Columbia alumna.
Queens native **Joel Fleischman** (Rob Morrow), another Columbia med-school alum, brings his health expertise and city sensibility to a remote Alaska town in *Northern Exposure* (1990–1995).
While Dr. House himself didn’t attend Columbia, neurologist Eric Foreman (Omar Epps) and oncologist James Wilson (Robert Sean Leonard) of the 2004–2012 medical drama House are both alumni.
In the supernatural series *Lost* (2004–2010), real-life Columbia grad Matthew Fox ’89CC plays physician **Jack Shephard**, a med-school alum who gets stranded on a remote island after a plane crash. (Naturally, his medical knowledge proves extremely valuable.)
Rising doctors **Matt Camden** (Barry Watson) and **Sarah Glass Camden** (Sarah Danielle Madison) attend Columbia medical school in the 1996–2006 family drama *7th Heaven*. 
Vanessa Redgrave had a recurring role on *Nip/Tuck* (2003–2010) as Erica Noughton, a psychologist with a PhD from Columbia.

**Part III: Undergrad Alumni**
In *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), mob princess **Meadow Soprano** (Jamie-Lynn Sigler) attends Columbia College and lives on campus.
Both **Will Truman** (Eric McCormack) and **Grace Adler** (Debra Messing) of *Will & Grace* (1998–2020) are alumni. In fact, they began their famous friendship during their first year at Columbia.
Leighton Meester and Blake Lively in "Gossip Girl," The CW.

Blair Waldorf (Leighton Meester), Serena van der Woodsen (Blake Lively), and Nate Archibald (Chace Crawford) all attend Columbia College in the 2007-2012 teen drama Gossip Girl.
Tracy McConnell (Cristin Milioti), the titular mother of *How I Met Your Mother* (2005-2014), is a former Columbia economics major.
After graduating high school with honors, Carol Seaver (Tracey Gold) of the 1985–1992 family sitcom Growing Pains goes on to attend Columbia.
In the NYC cop drama *Blue Bloods* (2010–), Bridget Moynahan plays Erin Reagan, an assistant district attorney and single mother who graduated top of her class at Columbia. Reagan’s daughter, Nicky Reagan-Boyle (Sami Gayle), graduates from the College in season eight.
Kimmy Schmidt (Ellie Kemper) of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015–2019) moves to New York City after being held captive in a bunker for fifteen years. In the show’s third season, she receives a Columbia scholarship but ends up flunking out.
In Saved by the Bell (1989-1993), high-school student Jessie Spano (Elizabeth Berkley) gets rejected from her dream college, Stanford, before settling for Columbia.
Esteban Reyes (Demián Bichir) is a drug-cartel leader who attended Columbia in Weeds, the 2005–2012 dark comedy created by Jenji Kohan ’91CC.
In *Castle* (2009–2016), mystery writer Richard Castle’s daughter, Alexis Castle (Molly C. Quinn), attends Columbia for undergrad.
Public-relations professional **Val Tyler** (Jennie Garth) is an alum in the sitcom *What I Like About You* (2002–2006). Her less ambitious younger sister, Holly (Amanda Bynes), tries to follow in her footsteps but ends up skipping her Columbia admissions interview to hang out in Coney Island.

*This article was originally published in March 2021. It was last updated in September 2021.*