

BRANDON O'NEAL DEAN

EDUCATION

- PhD** University of Iowa, Religious Studies Aug 2016
Dissertation: “‘Look Up in the Sky’: Superman as Lived Religion in Contemporary American Culture”
- MA** Western Michigan University, Comparative Religion Dec 2009
Thesis: “Looking for the Religious in Rock and Roll: Bob Marley as Prophet, Jimi Hendrix as Priest, and Jim Morrison as Mystic”
- BA** Indiana University, Religious Studies and Psychology May 2003

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Ballard and Seashore Dissertation Fellowship, University of Iowa** 2015
- Alice Marguerite Blough Award, Department of Religious Studies, University of Iowa** 2015
Awarded to outstanding graduate student paper of the year for “‘Los Tratados Chick Son Leídos’: An Examination of Jack T. Chick’s Hispanic Outreach”
- President and Mrs. Eugene Gilmore Award, Department of Religious Studies, University of Iowa** 2014
Awarded for excellence in the study of religion and visual culture
- Alice Marguerite Blough Award, Department of Religious Studies, University of Iowa** 2013
Awarded to outstanding graduate student paper of the year for “How Mama Lola Got to Tori Spelling’s House: An Examination of the Portrayal of Vodou in Contemporary American Popular Culture”

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA Aug 2025 to Present
Assistant Professor of Instruction, Department of Religious Studies

University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA Jan 2022 to Aug 2025
Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies

- Taught Introduction to the New Testament, Religion in America Today, Medieval Religion & Culture, Modern Religion & Culture, Gods & Superheroes, Sport & Religion in America, Religion and Contemporary Pop Culture: Sinners, Scandals, and True Crime, Religion and Women, and Introduction to African American Religions

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI Jan 2021 to Dec 2021
Instructor, Department of Comparative Religion

- Taught Death, Dying, and Beyond

University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA Aug 2020 to Dec 2020
Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies

- Taught Introduction to African American Religions

Iowa State University, Ames, IA Aug 2018 to May 2020
Lecturer, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

- Taught Religion in America
- Taught New Testament

University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA Aug 2017 to May 2018
Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies

- Taught Religion in America Today
- Taught Sports and Religion

University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA Aug 2010 to May 2016
Teaching Assistant, Department of Religious Studies

- Taught Religion and Social Life: Superheroes!
- Ran Discussion Sections for The Quest for Human Destiny I, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and Introduction to Buddhism
- Graded for The Quest for Human Destiny III, Religious Conflict in the Early Modern Period, Early Modern Catholicism, and The Bible and the Holocaust

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI Aug 2008 to May 2009
Instructor, Department of Comparative Religion

- Taught Introduction to Religion
- Taught Writing about Religion

PUBLICATIONS

Book Chapter

Dean, B.O., “Holy Horror: DC Comics’ the Spectre as Theodic Monster.” In *Religion and Horror Comics: Framing the Monstrous and the Divine*. Edited by Brandon R. Grafius and John W. Morehead. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2024.

Online Article

Dean, Brandon. “A TikTok Jesus promises divine blessings and many worldly comforts.” *The Conversation*, November 15, 2023.
<https://theconversation.com/a-tiktok-jesus-promises-divine-blessings-and-many-worldly-comforts-213130>.

PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES

Paper Presentation, “God’s Red-Headed Sex Fiend: The Rediscovery of John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community in Popular Literature at the Dawn of the 1960s,” Annual Meeting of the Midwest Popular Culture Association-American Culture Association, Chicago, IL, Oct 2022.

Paper Presentation, “‘You’ll Just Sing about Jesus and Drink Wine All Day’: The God(s) of Randy Newman’s *Sail Away* (1972),” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX, Nov 2016.

Paper Presentation, “‘Los Tratados Chick Son Leídos’: An Examination of Jack T. Chick’s Hispanic Outreach,” Annual Meeting of the Popular Culture Association-American Culture Association, Seattle, WA, Mar 2016.

Paper Presentation, “‘Infiltrate...Populate...Legislate...Decimate...Eliminate’: Islamophobia in the Cartoon Tracts of Jack T. Chick,” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, GA, Nov 2015.

Paper Presentation, “The Faceless Christ of Jack T. Chick: An Exploration of the Christology of Chick Tracts,” Annual Meeting of the Popular Culture Association-American Culture Association, New Orleans, LA, Apr 2015.

Invited Speaker, “The Controversial Christian Comics of Jack T. Chick,” Rod Library Mini-Con, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, Mar 2015.

Invited Speaker, “‘Evolution Is the Religion of Scientists Who Laugh at God’: The Anti-Evolution Cartoon Tracts of Jack T. Chick,” Darwin Week 2015, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, Feb 2015.

Paper Presentation, “Superman on a Sunday Morning: An Examination of the Church Based Marketing of *Man of Steel* (2013),” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA, Nov 2014.

Paper Presentation, “Moore and Gibbons’ *Watchmen* vs. Waid and Ross’ *Kingdom Come*: Deconstructed and Reconstructed Apocalyptic Narratives in Comics,” Annual Meeting of the Popular Culture Association-American Culture Association, Chicago, IL, Apr 2014.

Paper Presentation, “How Mama Lola Got to Tori Spelling’s House: An Examination of the Portrayal of Vodou in Contemporary American Popular Culture,” Annual Meeting of the Upper Midwest American Academy of Religion, St. Paul, MN, Mar 2014.

Paper Presentation, “‘Let Me Stand Next to Your Fire’: Jimi Hendrix’s Flaming Guitar as Sacrifice,” Religion, Literature, and the Arts Conference, Iowa City, IA, Sep 2013.

Paper Presentation, “Boxing Superman: *Superman* vs. *Muhammad Ali* as a Response to Political Cynicism in 1970s America,” Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, NE, Mar 2013.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

North American religion; North American religious history, American Christianity, religion and popular culture; religion and comic books, visual culture, African-American religions