

INCORRECT_ Star Wars, Fandoms, & Fanatics

Mon, Nov 28, 2022 1:36PM 49:14

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

star wars, fandom, religion, movies, fucking, jedi, people, canon, george lucas, mark hamill, episode, text, called, folks, hear, fans, megan, nerds, yoda, space

SPEAKERS

Ilyse, Megan

- I** Ilyse 00:17
This is keeping it 101, a killjoys introduction to religion podcast for 2020 to 2023. Our work is made possible through both a UVM reach grant and a Luce-AAR advancing public scholarship grant. We're grateful to live teach and record on the current ancestral and unceded lands of the Abenaki Wabanaki and Aucoisco peoples. As always, you can find material ways to support indigenous communities on our website.
- M** Megan 00:40
What's up nerds? Hi, hello, I'm Megan Goodwin, a scholar of American religions race, gender and politics.
- I** Ilyse 00:47
Hi, hello. I'm Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst historian of religion, Islam recent racialization and South Asia and I am deeply concerned I'm going to regret this episode.
- M** Megan 00:57
You did this to yourself. Blanche did this to yourself. It's not how the force works. Today's episode is an incorrect, incorrect. Oh boy. Oh boy, where we kindly but firmly insist that religion does more in different work than you think it does. On today, we want to challenge some basic assumptions about fandoms and specifically, da-dun, da-dun, da-dun, star wars! Fandoms we are insisting are not 100% secular. They're not just for funsies. And they definitely have stuff to teach us or tell us about religion. Hooray!
- I** Ilyse 01:37

Megan. Megan, I hate Star Wars.

M Megan 01:42

I know. I will announce to the pod right here and tell you that Ilyse wrote that Star Wars joke and I'm really really, really proud of her.

I Ilyse 01:53

I guess I reluctantly do love that Star Wars gives us so much to talk about in terms of what people get wrong about religion. Yeah. Because boy, does this shitty fucking franchise have so much religion?

M Megan 02:08

Oh, dare you? Yes, it does.

I Ilyse 02:11

Star Wars is in part, like right there in the credits based on Joseph Campbell's bullshit theory about heroes. It has texts, so many tannin it does fans devotees, if you will, who fight each other. Yes, fucking imperialists and non fans that how the texts should be read, should be interpreted, should be portrayed.

M Megan 02:36

Correct. Han shot first.

I Ilyse 02:38

There's virtue signaling, there's products and capital. There's people raising their kids in the fandom.

M Megan 02:46

Yeah, no, I'm gonna sneak it to your kids. It's gonna happen. I'm so excited. I can't wait. Sorry. Go ahead.

I Ilyse 02:50

We see all the things, all the things we see in religious communities playing out including up to a literal religious movement where folks identify as Jedi

a literal religious movement where folks identify as Jews.

M Megan 03:01

Yah, yah, yah. Yah. Yah.

I Ilyse 03:05

Listen, Goodwin, I famously cannot stand these movies. I am unimpressed. I just broadly just overall unimpressed by each and every single film.

M Megan 03:19

I want to point out that you insisted on watching the trash like Lucas Refurb for starters. So that's a little bit on you, but fine.

I Ilyse 03:27

You're not helping the argument that the fandom is inherently fundamentalist

M Megan 03:31

I'm the problem. You're, you're correct. Yes.

I Ilyse 03:34

So the fandom particularly of Star Wars, which I am condescending to take on an entire fucking episode

M Megan 03:45

You volunteered, you volunteered to...

I Ilyse 03:48

It gives me a lot to talk about in terms of fundamentalisms and extremeisms. It's, and I hate this movie. I know. And yet, here we are.

M Megan 03:58

Sure. Here's the thing. I'm so like, I'm so happy right now for like 18 different reasons. Like first

and foremost, as you know, I love the wars. B) of all nothing makes me happier when you rage about things particularly stupid movies. For a number of reasons. Like one, the shit that comes out of your mouth is just magic. But two, like I will refer to the group text in which you talked about Indiana Jones and his father raw-dogging Nazis like I'm never getting over that

I Ilyse 04:23
Don't air my shit man.

M Megan 04:25
We can cut it if you want but also I think that's an important text. Also, though, when you get mad you get so much more audibly Jersey and it just fills my soul with delight. Woof okay, but also why I love you raging about Star Wars in particular. There's so much okay, I'm gonna try I'm gonna try to keep it

I Ilyse 04:47
You can have as many as you want.

M Megan 04:49
I have so many. So like first of all, the thing that's great is like a it makes you talk to me about stuff that I love even while you're hating on it. And this is I think a space where I love you the most because we can disagree about this, like I have truly ended at least one friendship because somebody said something shitty about The Last Jedi. I'm not even kidding.

I Ilyse 05:11
So what you're saying is I'm on borrowed time. And that's

M Megan 05:14
What I'm saying is that I cherish you, because when you're ragging on Star Wars, you're also correct.

I Ilyse 05:20
Like, I'd like to hear that one more time.

M Megan 05:24

When I ragging on Star Wars, you are correct. These are not like well thought out, beautifully plotted movies. They are some hot fucking nonsense, and they were intended to be hot, fucking nonsense. And the problem is when the fans were fucking George Lucas, for that matter, try to take it seriously. That's when it's the worst, if it's not a romp through space, and we're just thinking about fucking Harry nonsense that crosses deserts. I'm not even gonna get into it, but they conceal their numbers. Anyway. They're not good movies. I just love them. And also, Oh, you're right, that the fans are a problem. Like there are a lot of toxic fandoms out there, but I don't know that I've ever seen fandoms do so much damage so quickly, to human beings who love the property as much as if not more than they do. It is just, it's not just toxic. It's like cannibalistic and I fucking hate that because that is that is not what we're about here friends. Also, I will never stop cherishing the moment where you texted me to specifically complain about the fact that George Lucas doesn't know how a flotilla works because you know how a flotilla works because British history but George Lucas just makes shit up.

I Ilyse 06:40

Yeah. Listen, don't bring a knife to a gunfight George Lucas.

M Megan 06:49

George Lucas brought a lot of weed to a British studio. And now here we are is what's happening.

I Ilyse 06:56

I just All right, listen, let's keep me organized, today let's keep you organized today.

M Megan 07:01

Good luck to you.

I Ilyse 07:03

Here's what we're going to talk about nerds. We're going to talk about the purposeful religious imagery in the wars. Will this be robust? No, it will not. Because because I do not fucking care. I want you to know that I know that it's there. Before you come for me on the internet, like you always do when I say you hate these films. Number two, we are going to be talking about canon, debates about central texts and the way that traditions emerge, change and reform, because that is about "the fandom" it is also about the afterlife of the texts. And that is like a religious theory thing that is you know, cognate here, and then we're going to talk about extremism fundamentalism and you fucking guessed it, flotilla sponsored imperialism.

M Megan 07:55

Sloppy flotillas, though, because tucking George Lucas didn't do his homework.

I Ilyse 07:58

He didn't do his homework, at which point, get out my house. Before we get started. I have some disclaimers. You rotten nerds. I will never, ever never answer questions about this episode. I will not comment further. my final word on the Star Wars! I can't stand it. You like the Star Wars? Great. Fine. You have a passionate opinion about calling Star Wars A New Hope. And it doesn't line up with mine. I don't give a flying fuck. Am I? Am I personally offending you with my distaste for these movies? Again, Ask the goyim I have indeed heard of your Lord and Savior. And I'm completely unmoved. It's a movie series. I'm gonna say what I'm gonna say and then I'm going to have said it move on bigger dudes, then you have forgiven me my hate of this stupid series. So I don't care don't come for me in my mentions, because all I will say is I said what I said

M Megan 09:13

I don't care for a star war.

I Ilyse 09:18

I don't care for it and I won't respond to it

M Megan 09:20

So happy right now. I will also say though, okay, one I just love it when you hate things. It's the best. It just is, two: I think these are all really important issues that you're raising and I'm excited to get into them. First and foremost. Religion is what people do. And people do religion with Star Wars. So sorry, not sorry. I am really glad that we're talking about this even though it is making you so viscerally grumpy

I Ilyse 09:48

Listen, partially playing the heel and partially Yes, it does. It makes me grumpy for lots of reasons we can talk about later. But let's talk about religion. You are exactly right. Religion is what people do and people Do religion with Star Wars? Let's let's talk about again, I think the most boring part of it, what is the religious imagery in the wars?

M Megan 10:08

Okay, the stuff that I think George Lucas probably kind of knew he was doing on purpose a little bit. You already mentioned Joseph Campbell and like the hero's journey,

I Ilyse 10:19
oh, Boo.

M Megan 10:22
Boo already, Joseph Campbell is an anti Semite. And yet his shit is part of what gets cited about these movies from the jump and get cited as like a good thing, rather than something that should be critiqued and then discarded.

I Ilyse 10:34
Yeah, like the hero's journey, the hero 1000 faces is some old catnip for early religious studies, people, myself included, quite frankly, but it is sexist, it is racist, and it is above all else anti semitic. So if you don't, we're gonna put stuff in the show notes about all of that. But if that's your proof text, we got some rocky foundation.

M Megan 11:01
Yes. And texts are what people do with them. So given that my own I know, you know, I'm just saying like my own personal self is at least 15 to 30%, Princess Leia, and all of the best folks in the Star Wars genre broadly, are women, people of color, or both? I think it's important to note the texts do more than they intended to do. But you're not wrong. Joseph Campbell should suck a dick but not in a way where he's going to enjoy it. Tther your religions misses in Star Wars include the fact and I love this so much. Shout out to Dr. Allison Melnick, Dyer for teaching me this, Ewoks speak Tibetan. Why who can say? But because Orientalism

I Ilyse 11:48
Because Orientalism

M Megan 11:49
correct

I Ilyse 11:50
these movies are lousy with oriental Yeah, yeah. They've got the jedi in there like generic monkey garb. Is that? Is that like, Buddhist? Is that like the Friar Tuck look? @ho knows, but they all achieve enlightenment, they speak backwards Yoda talk because it's like, you know, foreign and then there's like violence versus excessive violence dark versus light and that dude, Admiral Akbar,

M Megan 12:19
yeah, that's not great it's a trap. Like it's a trap.

I Ilyse 12:22
The Orientalism is just everywhere.

M Megan 12:27
It jumps right out. Yeah, it's like, again, if someone tried to drunkenly explain Daoism to George Lucas, and then he drunkenly tried to make some notes. This is probably what would happen. So yeah, yeah, that's not great either. I don't I don't care for that.

I Ilyse 12:43
Another religion-y thing that's in here, which is also good Earth, like worlds literature stories. Is the mother fucking orphans?

M Megan 12:55
Up to including Jesus, right? Like Jesus was a very special orphan who got adopted by...

I Ilyse 12:58
I mean, as an orphan, I hate orphan origin stories, because it is eugenics. Right? Where your birth stuff is your true self and that's all that you need to know. So forget context, socialization, history or personality? who fucked and had, you most important of all, what's that genetic history? Is it Darth Vader? That's all I need to know.

M Megan 13:27
Okay, just I just I feel the need to say that this is precisely why the last Jedi was so radical and why so many people disliked it is because Rian Johnson tried to be like fuck a Jedi. It's about what you do. And you know who you want to build teams with. It is not about your special blood magic.

I Ilyse 13:45
But in in your he's like Luke, I'm your father. And then Luke is immediately thrown in like a fucking despair. And he's like looking out the window. He's like, Oh, no, that's my dad.

M Megan 13:57
I feel like oh my god

I Ilyse 14:11
All I care about is Luke feeling some like deep genetic connection to some dude who's trying to kill him? And like looking out the window wistfully. Like, Oh, I love you. I need you. I'm sad, no. As an adaptoreno. I say bullshit.

M Megan 14:29
That's fair. That's fair. Luke needs a lot of therapy, he made out with a sister like there's a lot going on there. I get it. That's fair.

I Ilyse 14:34
The exceptionalist, the religiosity there. It's all right there. And if you thought Star Wars was just some sci fi opera incorrect, there's a lot of religion baked in. But I actually don't care about the text itself. I actually care about what happens to the text and the Canon afterwards. So I'm going to move us into point number two canon debates and the way traditions change and emerge. So first and foremost for me because I famously a historian care a lot about when Star Wars went from Star Wars to like Episode Four: A New Hope I care a lot about that because

M Megan 15:14
Okay, I just I feel like it's it didn't go for like it started in episode four and then it went don't just go...

I Ilyse 15:18
No, I understand but the way that people refer to it and how it gets cited as a movie, the title fundamentally changes. That's true. People now when you hear people talking about it, we'll just say A New Hope not Star Wars, which refers to all of the Star Wars, as opposed to the original movie, which was released under the title Star Wars in 1977. So we know that the history here is not actually lining up with how people refer and discuss these things. That's true, which shows us that the Canon expands and changes even to the basics of naming.

M Megan 15:56
That's true. Yes. Full stop. Okay, I'm gonna say you're correct. Yes.

I Ilyse 16:00

I Ilyse 16:00

The arguing over order. Okay. Let me rack it up. In the pandemic, when everyone was going cuckoo banana pants because they had not left their house. I decided that every night I would get unconscionably drunk and watch bad movies. And so at some point, we did all the Marvel movies and then we did all the Indiana Jones movies. And then we did all the Star Wars after much dragging of my feet. Now, as an incredibly drunk person. I put on the Twitter, like a dummy, who had never been to Earth before. "I'm starting with Star Wars"

M Megan 16:34

Yeah, that was a mistake. Mistakes were made.

I Ilyse 16:37

Then some of y'all, just dog piled? How could you start with number four? Number four is in the middle.

M Megan 16:44

Of course you started with number 4, how fucking dare they?

I Ilyse 16:46

How could you start with this? What versions are you watching? Is it the King James Star Wars? Or is it the Pentateuch Star Wars? I don't fucking know. I don't care. I'm going in the order that they were released in the movie theaters. You dummies

M Megan 16:59

You are watching the wrong one because it just anyway, sorry, Han shot first.

I Ilyse 17:05

Again, you are just proving your point, I know. I don't central texts. And if the text available to me is the King James Star Wars, then that's the one I'm going to read because I got proselytized by Disney plus, not by 1977 Like, multiplex at the mall in Paramus.

M Megan 17:27

Okay, I just I need us to pause on proselytized by Disney plus, because I think we've talked about the fact that I'm pretty sure the conclusion to Michael's book is going to be about Disney. And I'm fucking citing that that is going in the footnotes anyway.

I Ilyse 17:41

Well, all I want to say is that as I'm drunk texting and I should have stopped y'all will this is helping you I had a pandemic alcoholism problem because I was arguing with some of you sock puppets on the internet, about the order in which to watch Star Wars as if a) I care and if time is not real. Time is real. Chronology is real. They wouldn't have had a number two Star Wars, if number one Star Wars didn't come out, even if they call it four and five, ridiculously

M Megan 18:11

six, four and five. It's true, it's true

I Ilyse 18:14

I know it works in trios. I don't care. So here's what I care about. I care about why people care about what order I care about why something came out in 1977, which is not that old, has people referring to different movies by different titles, and really arguing about it like genuinely having a foul like have skin in the game. And I care that people really debate about what counts is canon? What about all these new TV spin offs to those count? Or are they set aside? What about the Christmas special from like, 1979? Does that count? Where does it fit into the canon?

M Megan 18:48

Oh, girl. Oh, girl. Don't you don't want to talk about the Christmas special.

I Ilyse 18:52

I don't want to talk about any of this. Yeah, but y'all fuckers talk about it. I'm gonna push the Bear.

M Megan 19:00

That's fair. Only one of the movies to the best of my knowledge was kind of softcore porn. No. And it is the Christmas Special. Anyway.

I Ilyse 19:08

I don't know what's happening in that Christmas, but I'm curious if that's a Christmas I could get behind.

...

M Megan 19:14

I don't know there's work is involved. I don't think it's your thing.

I Ilyse 19:17

Oh, definitely not. Anyway. Okay. So I'm again, playing up the heel here, but I want you to hear how this canon is both changing and emerging. Like literally as we go like, all of these new episodes of whichever one just came out are coming out.

M Megan 19:35

It's Obi Wan, the one that just came out is Obi Wan. You're just you're just doing it to hurt me now. That's fine.

I Ilyse 19:39

Okay, I actually I actually knew that because I did my homework.

M Megan 19:42

I know. You know, that's the thing. You're just trolling me and I let you do it.

I Ilyse 19:45

it. I'm playing a heel. I'm just pictured me jumping off the ropes here. Okay.

M Megan 19:51

I love that a lot. Also, I never get to be the babyface. So this is fun. This is a fun roll.

I Ilyse 19:54

Let's do it. And I'm small. So it's very funny. It's very funny to picture meeting the heel against you The good guy. I also want to talk about the way that Canon fits in with existing societal issues, specifically, white supremacy and anti blackness. So all of the new stuff like the Mandalorian and Obi Wan, and I'm blanking on one of the other ones, but all of these new movies or new episodes and like barf the pretension of calling your movies episodes, they're talking for hours long. It's all stoked, intense fandom reaction. All of it has been geared at women, particularly women of color and Black women. So it's rooted in this notion. Also, John Boyega, John Boyega took an awful lot of shit. Yes, sorry. It's rooted in this notion, though, that the real Star Wars is white, is male, and I'm assuming not queer or not Jewish, for example,

M

Megan 20:57

And you're starting to see a little more queerness. But it is reluctant. I think it absolutely has to do with the cult of Disney and how things get marketed in China. So you get some queer bait Enos but not a whole lot of actual queer characters. I also want to point out your point from earlier about how Orientalist the series is Oh, yes, stands in tension, with the treatment of Kelly Marie Chan, who massive Star Wars fan brought in rose Tico, a character whom I will love until my dying day. And she was harassed off the internet and honestly, out of public by folks again, claiming to love the series that she loves, and was making better. It just makes me sick.

I

Ilyse 21:43

But she's not allowed to love the series is white and male and she is not no and Orientalism is fine. But people from Asia so not so much right? Or not, right? Like we can love their products, we cannot love them, which is a tenant of racism, which I which for me shows us how the canon and the construction of canon and who is allowed to participate in the canon, right? Who gets cast as these actors, and then how the fandom like bullies and harasses them, or boycotts movies, or whatever, mirrors debates that exist around race representation, but also the like emotional panic and the fucked up ness of white responses to things that we see in other religions like a black Jesus or a Palestinian Moses. They're not dissimilar phenomenon, and they're both rooted in white supremacist understandings of canon, but also white supremacist readings. Nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus has lily white skin and bright blue eyes. It does not say that

M

Megan 22:45

he's got hair like a lamb. This is a man of color. Like it's not it's gonna anyway, sorry, yes, good.

I

Ilyse 22:52

Regardless, like the Canon says one thing but the interpreters of canon and the keepers of canon insist that the Canon says something else. Yeah, so I want us to keep that in mind when we're talking about how the fandom is going through. And I guess the last thing I want to say about this willingness of the fandom is to accept new narratives. So like the add ons, the prequels, the subsequence, the multigenerational stories here. It's there, right? People are flocking to these new movies and new TV narratives, even as there is intense scrutiny about how those narratives fit into the extant canon. And the pressure to make all these sections make sense. Like literally yesterday as I was drafting this goddamn script. Mark Hamill is out on the internet. He is an actor, okay. I don't know if you need to hear this nerds. Mark Hamill has not been to space.

M

Megan 23:46

How dare you?

I

Ilyse 23:48

He is not a man named Darth Vader's son. He is just a fucking white dude. And he's being consulted on how to pronounce spacey words as if he lives in space and knows Chewbacca or Han Solo. These are not real people. They're not real.

M

Megan 24:07

And AD AD isn't. It's not real either. So I feel like he does get to weigh in on this. And I will also point out super nerdily that there is a precedent for this because Gene Roddenberry also did consulting for NASA, but Gene Roddenberry was qualified to do that in a way that Mark Hamill is not and I love him, but,

I

Ilyse 24:23

but the fact that the fandom qualifies him. Yes, tells us something about the afterlives of these texts. Mark Hamill is not Luke Skywalker, except for all these raging foaming at the mouth fans who 100% take his word as gospel. Yeah, pun intended.

M

Megan 24:41

Ha! I see what you did there and Hamill plays with it I think because that's why he's still has a career but

I

Ilyse 24:47

for me otherwise he couldn't do anything else because you are only Luke that is you. You are him.

M

Megan 24:49

you are only Luke that is you. You are him. But he's he's leaned into it even as he's done other acting work in a way that like Carrie Fisher, for example, really struggled with not that I have listen to her Princess diarest book multiple times, where she never wanted to be Princess Leia like, not that she didn't want the part, she did want the part. But like, she thought she was doing a cute little sci fi movie that no one would see. And then like she'd get back to real acting. And instead, this became her entire life up to and including the fact that like, her likeness, was not her own. Because when she started, she was a 18-19 year old actress who didn't think about things like likeness rights. And so George Lucas has made her career off selling her likeness for her actual living face for years, and she just couldn't get it back. She didn't necessarily want to be doing public, like Princess Leia stuff. But it was also a way she could make money. And then this was a place that like really got to me, she got to a place where even if it's not how she thinks about herself, she saw how much it meant to everybody else. And that was really moving. So anyway, I'm having Carrie Fisher feels. What What were you saying about fandom?

I Ilyse 25:13

I was saying that we see a lot of extremism and fundamentalism and imperialism in that fandom. And as a scholar of all of those things. It is one of the reasons why I can't eff with these movies. And you know what? I'm going to let you all know secret. I thought the first three episodes four through six had like camp, and arc and narrative and they were fine. Were they everything I think you all think they are? absolutely not what I dedicate my life to following this shit around? Absolutely not. Do I need my children indoctrinated in the church of Luke Skywalker? Fuck no. But do I appreciate a campy 70s movie? Yes, all of my stuff I consume is camp you dorks. of course I love a camp wasn't as campy as I said it could be. No, I do not think that there is better camp out there. But, the extremism, the fundamentalism, and in the imperialism of it, is that we encounter these movies now without ever having encountered them. So I already told you about how I watched the I watched the Star Wars in chronological release order and everyone truly like dog piled in this way where I was doing it wrong. And it was ridiculous that I hadn't yet encountered these things. Because how could I even be an American? And I was like, Hey, we're doing some interesting metrics here. counts as what, it's almost like you have a measuring rod on whether or not I am a legitimate member of a community based on your understanding of a fucking movie franchise. Which as a Jewish woman hears, it sounds like, "you've heard of the Bible, right? And if not, you better had and then you better love it as much and in the exact same way as I do". But I also want us to hear about like the extremism around again, like the racism, the belittling the gatekeeping, that happens, the online trolling, these are movies. These are motion pictures rooted in a capitalist and exploitive system.

M Megan 28:18

There's a lot of novels now too. And comics. Oh, well,

I Ilyse 28:21

because it's capitalism, whatever they can make money on, they're gonna make money on and you dupes are buying it all. And that's fine. If it gives you pleasure, go for it. I love spending money on things that give me pleasure. But don't pretend like you're not building a worldview out of a bunch of fiction.

M Megan 28:38

Yes, absolutely. And also, a thing that I appreciate about this, empire is the spaces that folks who have it and also haven't found homes or representations for themselves, in the like core canonical movies continue to expand the universe and give us new ways to think about it. So there are folks who are writing really like subversive and genre stretching, work, who are people of color, who are queer, who are women, who are non binary, and all of that is happening. And so I'm excited about that potential at the same time that I'm going to just say it again, for the record, you're right, like this is a fandom that has some deeply, deeply sucky parts. And those parts of the parts that don't like last jedi, specifically, the parts of the fandom that suck are all of these racist, sexist, homophobic awfulness. And for those of us that do love

this franchise, and I do with the entirety of my soul, like, truly I think by weight, I am 25% Star Wars. But as Rose Tico teaches us how we're going to win is not fighting what we hate, but saving what we love. So I want to focus on the parts that are worth saving.

I Ilyse 29:55

Yeah, and again, I'm not mad that people like stuff. I like a lot of stuff. I care a lot when the cultural imperialism of it goes unquestioned where the really stuff that's in it that's questionable at best is either glossed over or not encountered when we are attacking actors for taking a job because they look not white. And like your imaginary space universe doesn't have black people in it, like a shell like honestly, like, I hope you forever have diarrhea and Scratchy toilet paper like that's my opinion on that.

M Megan 30:39

Diarrhea forever. No toilet paper, full stop.

I Ilyse 30:42

I think there's also this cultural imperialism of it, right? Where like the Star Wars font, the ways that like a like, and that's great, actually, like, I think having a big cultural impact is interesting and amazing. It's incredible to me that something that was cooked up in the 70s still has this lasting import, and it is shorthand globally. I have a small child, who if we can sample if we can sample his sounds you'll hear my son has never seen a star war. Okay, he's five. So he has not seen a star war. He knows that he will only see a star war with either aunt Megan or his our or uncle Jason. Like those are the two people who will like, kidnap him and do a star war. Because I don't care.

M Megan 31:29

No, this is like when my mom said if I had kids, she was going to baptize them. Well, I'm not looking. No, you're right again. God dammit, but I need it. I need him to see a star war. I need it so bad. Okay, sorry. Go ahead.

I Ilyse 31:39

But, my kiddo who you will hear as the bonus clip on this episode knows a lot about Star Wars. Like what did he say? He said that Yoda is a man who lives in a tree near a swamp. I do not know why he knows that. I do not know like from other children. Because this zeitgeist but also the inescapability of these films Yeah, married with the marketing the relentless marketing at Gen X millennial parents with baby Yoda and regular Yoda and Star Wars clothing and someone got signed into like in what is the ball thing the at the like roly one.

M Megan 32:18

Megan 32:10
Oh god. No, that's BB eight. God.

I 32:20
Okay that one, was the one that looks like a big elephant.

Megan 32:25
Right? That kind of Yes. No, BB eight is that what's its agenda?

I 32:29
Yes. Okay, so the BB eight someone when he was like a infant got him like a onesie that looked like that. Like it made him look like that. Someone else got him like an R2D2 something and I was really mad because like if you're gonna get him something at least get him to see Threepio gay one. Like I want the gay robot to be in my

Megan 32:46
house for gay for each other. I'm pretty sure but anyway,

I 32:50
I don't again, I don't know those robots.

Megan 32:52
I don't know. I don't know her.

I 32:56
The relentless marketing and the inescapability of it means that my child who is cannot read and has not gone to kindergarten yet knows all of these all of these guys. He will he thinks they're called Dark Vader and dark mall, which is very cute. But he has a gist of it. Right? In this way that there is a cultural saturation and inescapability and I assume this is gendered but a cache. Alright. Simon clearly learned this from his buddies, who has parents who are part of this fandom, or at least allowed their small preschooler to watch these movies which I have questions. Finally, in terms of fandoms, extremisms and canon, Meghan, what do you know about the Jedi religion? Because

Megan 32:56

M Megan 33:56

it's tricky. It's tricky. Okay, we talked more about invented religions way, way back in the day. So I think it might be episode two. Right? Where we're talking about the Satanic Temple and invented religions, which is a concept that Carol Cusack gives us. So she suggests that religions that come out of things like fandoms and fiction, tell us something important, less about the folks who are doing them and more about the culture to which they're responding. I'm gonna really try not to go off the deep end here. I will say yes, some people religiously identify as Jedi. I will also say the Jedi Church itself is new ish. Identifying religiously as a Jedi is something that folks have been doing for decades. Like I can't speak to 1970s. I can tell you that when I was in college, I was on listservs. with folks who are religiously identified as jedis. This has interacted with the state in very interesting ways. So there was a survey in I believe Australia, where folks were even before Jedi church, we're identifying religiously as Jedi. And on the one hand, I love this with the entirety of my being because these systems are fucked up. And yes, always play with their minds. So spaces where you need to identify as a religion to I don't know, like get a driver's license. That's weird. And definitely let's mess with that. This is me thinking also about the church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster and folks arguing that they should be allowed to wear colanders in their pictures because of religion. And like, yeah, yeah, if we're going to have free exercise, yes, it should be for everybody. At the same time, and this is the conversation that we have in class, who is free to mess with systems, it's white people, it's usually white dudes, and the smugness around like haha, I'm trolling the system doesn't usually come with an awareness of like, Haha, I am using my privilege to troll the system in a way that like, I don't know, Muslim women, Jewish women who need to cover their heads because of their religious commitments are not given space to push back in that same way and are not safe to do it. So that part makes me really angry.

I Ilyse 36:02

Yeah, no, I, I struggle. And if I could read my marginalia here, let's do this. You literally wrote that, like, at NRMs make me so fucking mad because holy hell, My people are out here getting shot. Like we have cops at my synagogue every single day now. And these bitches are making like a religion out of fake monastic robes that sort of look like head coverings. And, like, the safety of others is just not part of the game. I just I struggle that doesn't mean that I think I'm right or that I don't understand the like, ethical problem that I'm posing here, because I do actually think we should fuck with the system. But I don't have that privilege. I don't really even have the privilege to enter a non policed space to go pray anymore. And so I struggle while we'll talk about Jedi religion, I would be remiss not to name one of my dearest and oldest friends, Omid Safi, who talks a lot about Jedis as Sufis and Sufis as Jedis, and has put up with me since 2001. Really loathing these movies when they are near and dear to his heart, so nerds be like Oh, Meade, and just accept that I don't like this. And move on. Megan, how about we sum up?

M Megan 37:16

Okay, sure. So fandoms, and specifically, the Star Wars fandom help us think about religion in I think we said three important ways. First, it's a space where we see deliberate religious tropes deployed in pop culture, and especially in popular culture that has developed, I think it's fair to call it a rabid fandom. Second, the way that we as a people treat the Star Wars, tells us something interesting and important about how canons work, how we think about folks

wrestling with and making new meanings of sacred texts, dare we say, and the way that religious and para religious traditions emerge and change over time. And frankly, the ways that those changes happen around larger cultural tensions about things like race and gender and sexuality and who gets to belong in your very special favorite thing. And then finally, it's a space where we see that even a franchise that is nominally based in critique of empire replicates the violence of empire. And that is a thing that like, I have been joking all along that it's really fun and funny to watch. You be mad about stuff, but this is something that I take really seriously, that's again, I I love this world with the entirety of my being, and I fucking hate a lot of its fans. And that is something that I need to sit with. And I hope Star Wars fans who have made it through this episode, you will too.

I Ilyse 38:54

Yeah, yeah, I want to I want to just on my own sum up, I want to say that like, as a historian 1977 is recent. So I actually think it's fascinating to look at how fast and hard and seriously Star Wars, all of them have created communities debates, economies, languages, like actual fake language, but also like catchphrases, shared vocabulary, shared imagery, and real world views or lifestyles for people. Right, like it is important to some people to watch these movies with their children.

M Megan 39:28

The other thing I want to interject here too, is that in it's creating of languages and economies and debates and communities and real world views and lifestyles, nobody talks about believing in Star Wars. Nobody thinks Mark Hamill is somebody out there does but most folks don't actually think Mark Hamill has been to space. Like I will admit that it fucked me up seeing a return of the Jedi so early because he gets that hand replacement. And I didn't realize that that wasn't medical science. So my relationship to medical science has been uh, I'm very disappointed, frankly ever since. Like, so much of our popular discussion around religion is do they believe this? And while they might believe in the tenets of it, and by they, I mean, we I firmly believe that how we win is not fighting what we hate, but saving what we love. But I don't think Rose Tico was a real person I know. She's an actress named Kelly Marie Tran. So this is another space where religion is more complicated than just belief. You were summing up.

I Ilyse 40:29

I think that sums it up pretty well. And so like, I will just, I will just say, Man, Megan, I hate Star Wars.

M Megan 40:40

I know.

I Ilyse 40:43

Ilyse 41:19

I frankly found a lot of it boring and pretty lazy about like an orphan and bad guys and whatever camp was achieved in the first three and the chemistry between Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill. Like all of that was great. And for me, like I lost entirely in the seriousness and pretension of the leader series, which was all in service to the fans and frankly, is the fault of the fans. There's no humor in my experience of this fandom and I can stand very little less than a humorless religion.

Megan 41:19

Okay, I just want to point out that the chemistry between John Boyega and his best friend Harrison Ford was comedy gold, and also the deep queerness of Oh shit, I just blanked on his name, Oscar Isaac, and truly any living creature is a delight and very funny to watch. But you're not wrong given that the most recent trilogy ended on a humorless and overly long and stupid boring and frankly, like fucking racist, dumbass JJ Abrams. Bullshit. Yeah, you're right. Overall, the fan service has been to entirely the wrong fans. And that is dumb and stupid. It's stupid in the face lot.

Ilyse 41:59

It tells us a lot about how religious communities that get religious communities and become really insular. Right? Because if I had encountered these films without having also been simultaneously screamed at by random fans, I might feel differently about the text. But because the text comes with a side of you fucking moron, how dare you. It's almost like, I'm being told what to think and feel and experience true.

Megan 42:30

It's true, even by the people who love you most. And who might have said something like, What the fuck do you mean, you're watching the Disney Plus version? I won't have you out in the streets. Watch. Watching some Greedo shot first bullshit like no one loves here is the thing that I said you're right.

Ilyse 42:46

So like, I just I want us to hear how those things go hand in hand, particularly when folks get really, what G about like, what do you mean missionizing sing is inherently violent? Because everyone who tries to tell me that I need to love these movies. Is doing some mission work. And I am not down.

Megan 43:10

You're right. You're right. You're right again. You're right. I love these movies. And you're correct. You are correct.

I Ilyse 43:14
So yeah, wait,

M Megan 43:16
let's don't pack up your stuff yet. Nerds. You've got homework

I Ilyse 43:20
homework. Why don't work. Alright guys, I did some research. And let me tell you, there are so many men, so many fucking men. Google look white. So many white men. Just Star Wars thing about and calling it scholarships. So you know what? I'm not going to cite them all here because it makes me mad to cite a man theology all about the Star Wars that ends the introduction with may the force be with you and motherfucker. You have got to be kidding me. This shows but I'm not speaking into existence here. I will cite a very good article that I read in preparation for this to make sure I wasn't totally crazy, by John Lydon called whose film was at anyway canonicity and authority and Star Wars fandom from the Journal of the American Academy of Religion a number of years ago.

M Megan 44:10
Wow. I just want to pause and note that the you've flagship Journal of our discipline published an article about Star Wars like if we needed a concrete good example of how far this has penetrated into religion and religiosity. God damn, okay, okay.

I Ilyse 44:27
Susan Mackey callus has a very short piece called the Star Wars trilogy in the hero and the perennial journey home and the American film, which like map, but it's, it's old at this point, but and it really refers to the first Star Wars trilogy, but it's interesting and it does a lot of the mapping about like religious imagery in Star Wars. And then there is Marcus Altino Davidson's piece from Star Wars to Judaism, the emergence of fiction based religion, which seemed okay. There's also a couple of things Isn't religion Bolton, I will link to them. And I just want to say out loud that a book exists by a rock'n'roll journalist called the Jedi in the lotus, Star Wars and the Hindu tradition. And you can't tell everybody but I am read with fury and read that this book exists. Why? Go through that book? And if you do, don't fucking tell me about it. Because its existence hurts my heart. Goodwin, what are you recommending? Because you actually know people that write about this stuff?

M Megan 45:33
I do. I both know and and people who I guess you too,



Ilyse 45:37

but but they'll continue to like you after this. They might cut ties with?



Megan 45:42

No, because again, you're right. Okay, so I want to just highlight a couple things. So contingent magazine has a number of really great Star Wars pieces. Aaron Bartram, one of the CO editors and founders wrote some really great stuff about Star Wars and I highly recommend it and you should read it and also contingent magazine. It's just great. Also Yours truly, along with Matthew Kressler and Richard Newton did a scholarly response to the last Jedi which is available on Richard's blog sowing the seeds to check that out. Richard also wrote a piece about Star Wars is American religion. I'm a fan of as you know, Star Wars but also Richard and sometimes American religion, so I think you should read that as well. And then the last thing I'm going to recommend because I feel it is on point is a film called FANBOYS. Which I have to say ideally love, it is not unproblematic. It is deeply sexist, as is the Fandom of Star Wars, but it is the tale of friends who have drifted apart coming together for one last ride before it's too late. And it's very poignant because the movie that they really need to see before it's too late is episode one. And well, I'll just leave it there. Anyway,



Ilyse 47:01

that is the only star war I saw in the movie theater. I think after I had one of my major knee surgeries I was high as a kite not like on like, on like prescription medicine everybody it was like allowed but I 100% got poured into that chair was very convenient confused by racist Jar Jar Binks and like as you should be, I think I left in the middle like I'm pretty sure I just wandered off like if you're sensitive



Megan 47:25

to Orientalism is episode one and well all the other ones but episode one.



Ilyse 47:29

I think I wandered off and like the Westwood movie theater here Welcome. Can be that much Demerol. Anyway, shout out to Evie Wolfe, Rachel Zieff, Juliana Finch and the k one team whose work make this pot accessible and therefore awesome. Listen to all social media will among many other things for which we are grateful.




Megan 47:46

We sure are. You can find Megan that's me on Twitter @mpgPhD and Ilyse @profirmf or thought @keepingit_101 Find the website at keepingit101.com. Peep the insta if you wanna if you want to check us out on Tik Tok now because we're doing that I guess drop us a rating or review and your pod catcher of choice and with that never asked

I Ilyse 48:06
me about Star Wars Hey, Ilise, yes, Megan.

M Megan 48:13
May the force be with you. Peace out nerds. Do your homework. It's on the syllabus.

I Ilyse 48:38
I really need someone who can talk about Star Wars. Alright, what do you know about Star Wars?

 48:44
So a lot of people don't know about them. Really? Really? I'm pretty sure Megan knows about them. That's true.

I Ilyse 48:54
What about Yoda never heard of that guy. Yes. Little Yoda. Yeah, he was intrigued. Okay. You're a swamp.

M Megan 49:10
He likes a swamp. That's true.