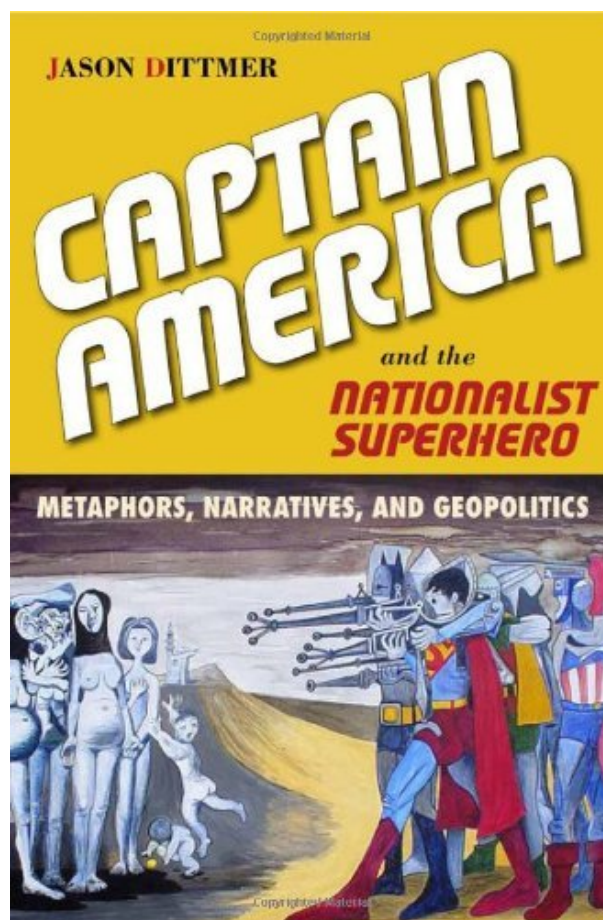
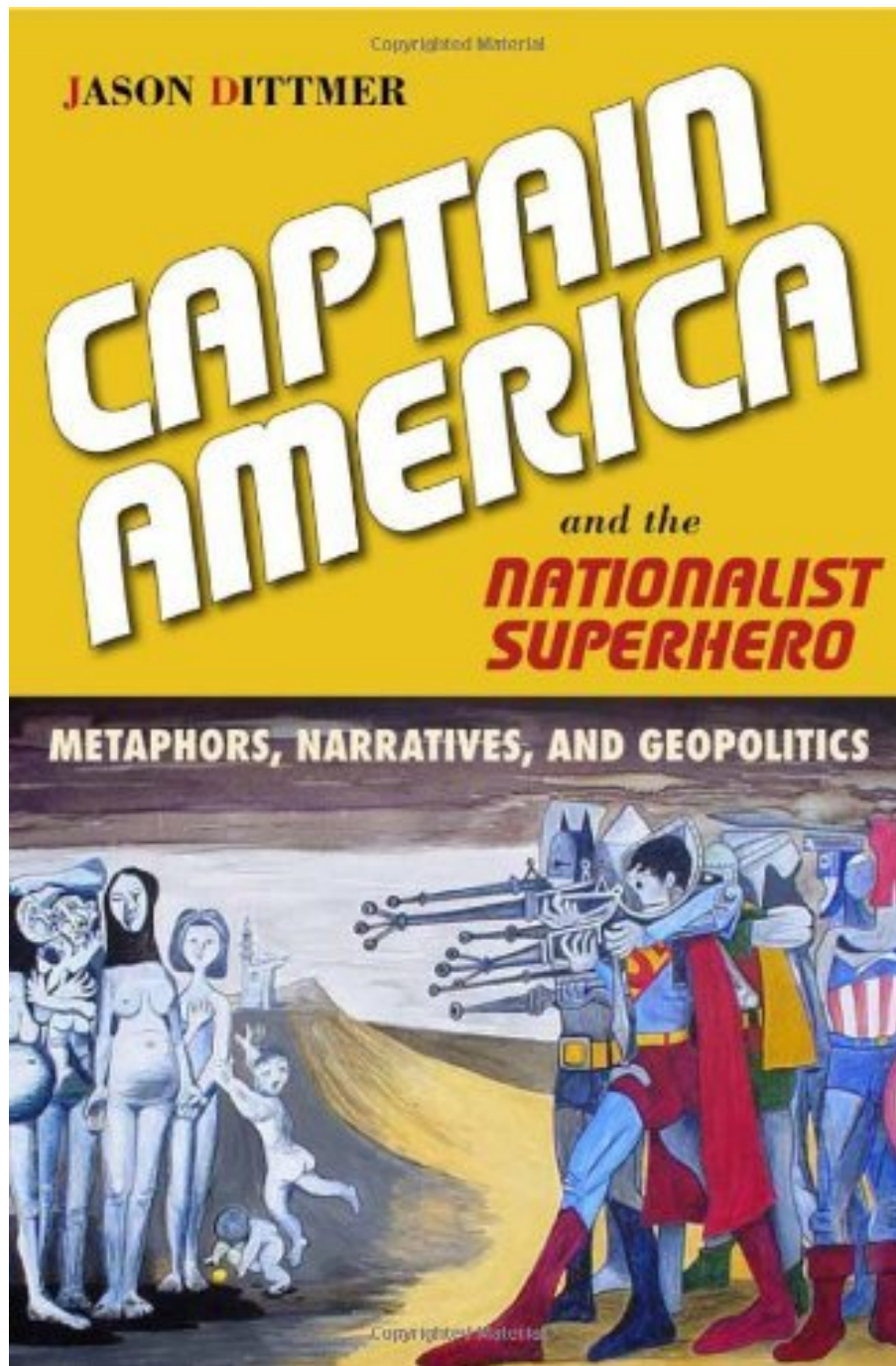


**CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE
NATIONALIST SUPERHERO: METAPHORS,
NARRATIVES, AND GEOPOLITICS BY
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Review

"[A] novel and provocative analysis about how the figure of the 'nationalist superhero' reflects, consolidates, and propels the nationalistic metaphors and narratives that are inextricable elements of the modern nation-state and of the modern, self-governing citizen... Dittmer's tome is theoretically informed and sophisticated. It makes a compelling case for the position that the ways that a people entertains itself, its popular culture, are fertile sites for analyses of how that people comes to know itself and others. Summing Up: Highly recommended."--Choice

About the Author

Jason Dittmer is Reader in Human Geography at University College London. He is also author of *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, and Identity* and coeditor (with Tristan Sturm) of *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions*.

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Nationalist superheroes—such as Captain America, Captain Canuck, and Union Jack—often signify the “nation-state” for readers, but how do these characters and comic books address issues of multiculturalism and geopolitical order? In his engaging book *Captain America and the Nationalist Superhero*, geographer Jason Dittmer traces the evolution of the comic book genre as it adapted to new national audiences. He argues that these iconic superheroes contribute to our contemporary understandings of national identity, the righteous use of power, and the role of the United States, Canada, and Britain in the world.

Tracing the nationalist superhero genre from its World War II origins to contemporary manifestations throughout the world, *Captain America and the Nationalist Superhero* analyzes nearly one thousand comic books and audience responses to those books. Dittmer also interviews key comic book writers from Stan Lee and J. M. DeMatteis to Steve Englehart and Paul Cornell.

At a time when popular culture is saturated with superheroes and their exploits, *Captain America and the Nationalist Superhero* highlights the unique relationship between popular culture and international relations.

- Sales Rank: #1468422 in eBooks
- Published on: 2012-11-16
- Released on: 2012-11-16
- Format: Kindle eBook

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and Great Britain. We all know about Captain America

By Murdoc

Dittmer analyses the superheroes who take their names from and give their allegiance to three countries: The United States, Canada, and Great Britain. We all know about Captain America, while Union Jack and Captain Canuck are much more unknown and surprising. He explains the characters' politics and histories in-text, and analyses these from the standpoint of geopolitical theory. Dittmer follows how the characters changed as the attitudes of the public of their nation, and the nation's international policies, have changed. For example, the character of Captain America's sidekick Bucky was able to happily kill Nazi soldiers in the 1940s. The violence was justified and celebrated as a fantasy for children who wanted to support the soldiers. In later years, an American child wielding a machine gun in a war zone was seen as horrifying and inappropriate. Captain America, who had at first encouraged Bucky, had to undergo a retelling where he disapproved and tried to defend his sidekick's innocence. The characters also take on different political actions and identities depending on how many countries the title is meant to be sold to. Dittmer's example of this is the Marvel Canadian team title Alpha Flight, which started as giving Canada representation in a very United States-centered industry but later became yet another branch of X-Men.

I want to see an updated version of this book now that many important and interesting changes have been made in the comic book industry. For example, the first two chapters focus on the choice of personifying a country as which race and which gender. These chapters would have to change some meanings and explanations now that Marvel has published a female Latina America-based hero (America Chavez of Young Avengers) and the current Captain America is Sam Wilson. Wilson is not the first African-American character to don the identity of Captain America, and that is briefly discussed in this book. Unfortunately, I think this book focuses too much on global political theory and symbolism without considering what factual, traceable events were occurring in the world to motivate creation and changes in nationalist superheroes.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Captain my Captain

By Ian Gordon

The great strength of this book is that it shows how comic book creators negotiate tricky questions of ideology and nationalism over long period of time. Dittmer's Captain America finds new ways of asserting his nationalist identity over the years both responding to crisis, say Watergate, and triumph. Superhero comics may have faintly ridiculous plot lines especially when read over many years, but Dittmer does a great job of unpacking stories for the ways in which they construct identity without getting over involved in the minutiae. To a certain extent it is the ways that writers mobilize histories, myths, and legends to keep their characters of the moment that lets us see how comics do not just reflect ideology but create it. A figure like Captain America is hugely variegated and Dittmer shows us how that works nonetheless to make him a nationalist superhero.

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