

## **To Believe or Not to Believe**

### **Atheism and Nonreligion in Media and Popular Culture**

Research has clearly and repeatedly illustrated that media and popular culture can be an important resource for religious individuals and religious institutions, and for identifying contemporary attitudes to religion. These days, many learn about religion from media and popular culture, not via religious institutions, which is why the latter invest a lot of money and time in their social media presence and or support different cultural sectors. Media and popular culture can provide important insights about faith, religious traditions, and innovations in today's world and function as resources and as a space of resonance for religious meaning making.

However, media and popular culture can also be an area for presenting critique of religion and provide spaces for the reflection and expression of atheistic and nonreligious worldviews. Scholarly work has illustrated the important role social media can play for nonreligious individuals looking for a community of likeminded people. Particularly YouTube-atheists have been explored in multiple studies highlighting their focal points and areas of conflict. Some studies have also investigated how atheists have been treated and presented in popular culture, particularly in American television series. Yet this is still an area in need of much more research.

In this upcoming thematic section of the Journal of Religion, Film and Media we wish to further explore what atheism and nonreligion looks like in media and popular culture today and in the past. How are atheist characters portrayed in film and television and how have these representations possibly changed over time? In what ways are nonreligious views expressed in popular music and music videos? What kinds of debates about religion are prevalent on YouTube or platforms like Instagram or TikTok? What kind

of atheist-communities can we find online and what questions are essential for those active in these communities? How is atheism discussed in contemporary journalist outputs and represented in new media?

Suggested topics:

- Atheist characters in films or television series
- Atheism and/in documentary films
- Nonreligious themes in popular music
- Atheism/nonreligion in video games
- Atheist YouTubers
- Deconversion narratives online
- Nonreligious communities online
- Debating or critiquing religion online
- Lived atheism online
- Atheism in the news
- Journalism on atheism or nonreligion
- Atheist media campaigns

We invite scholars from a range of relevant fields, such as literature, film and media studies, theology, and the study of religion, as well as of sociology or political sciences, to contribute to this issue. The issue also includes an open section for articles on other topics in keeping with the profile of JRFM. The deadline for all submissions is **1 May 2026**. The publication is scheduled for 15 May 2027. Contributions of 5,000 to 6,000 words (including notes) should be submitted for double-blind peer review through the journal website at [www.jrfm.eu](http://www.jrfm.eu). We kindly ask authors to register and to follow the instructions for submitting contributions, especially taking note of the [style guide](#).

For questions regarding this call for papers or the submission and publication process, please contact the editors of the issue, Natalie Fritz ([natalie.fritz@evtheol.uni-muenchen.de](mailto:natalie.fritz@evtheol.uni-muenchen.de)), Sofia Sjö ([sofia.sjo@abo.fi](mailto:sofia.sjo@abo.fi)) and Teemu Taira ([teemu.taira@helsinki.fi](mailto:teemu.taira@helsinki.fi)).