

Prof. Heather Freeman

(University of North Carolina at Charlotte)

“Podcasting and Popular Media as Research Advocacy in Magic and Esoteric Studies”



Scholars of magic and esotericism advocate for nuanced understandings of religious, spiritual, and magical diversity, which is relevant to both other academic disciplines and lay audiences. These scholars often confront stigmas, however, from religious conservatism, nationalist ideologies, and cultural bias. Nonetheless, popular media forms offer avenues to communicate discipline-specific research to broad audiences. Our diverse team of humanities, social science, and arts scholars created three six-episode seasons of the podcast "Magic in the United States." With funding from a 2023 NEH Media Projects Grant, the series was professionally produced, marketed, and distributed by PRX. Each episode focuses on the magical practices of a specific community and period in U.S. history, unpacking the words "magic," "religion," and "spirituality." Targeting lay audiences, the podcast demystifies these histories through rich storytelling, scholar interviews, and practitioner testimonials. Principle Investigator and podcast host Heather Freeman will discuss listener feedback as well as actions taken by generalist audiences, practitioners, and academics from other disciplines in response to this series. She will also frame this approach as a model for effectively communicating research in magic and esotericism through various media and social platforms.

Heather D. Freeman (she/they, b. 1974) is a Professor of Digital Media in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Director of the Center for Magic, Esotericism, and Occulture. She is an artist, esoteric practitioner, and the host of the NEH-funded podcast series *Magic in the United States*, produced by PRX. In this talk, Freeman will discuss how scholars can translate research in magic and esotericism into accessible language on popular media forms, and why this inherently collaborative effort fosters curiosity in diverse audiences, as well as future research in magic and esoteric studies. Visit Freeman's [linktr.ee](https://linktr.ee/heatherdfreeman) for more information: <https://linktr.ee/heatherdfreeman>.



TUESDAY 14.1.2025 6.15-7.45 PM

Big Seminar Room, Hartmannstr. 14, Building D1, Erlangen

Link for Virtual Attendance:

<https://fau.zoom-x.de/j/62556506187>

