Superhero movies and TV have become one of the major success stories of entertainment in the 21st century. As an element of the SF/fantasy genre of fiction, comics, TV shows, movies and books featuring people with superpowers have mostly been dismissed as escapist, unrealistic fiction. The impact of fictional presentations on real world understanding of life and society has focussed more usually on gritty real world drama and "literary fiction". However, the prevalence of superhero tales and their widespread consumption by ever-larger percentages of the population of many countries (the US and Europe particularly) requires us to re-evaluate their relevance as modern myths that not only allow viewers to dream of being super men and women, but inform their thinking about societal threats ranging from organised crime to autonomous weapons, and surveillance technology to terrorist or rogue states with nuclear or biological weapons.

In this talk the humanities method of "close reading" is applied to three recent superhero tales: Marvel's Daredevil (season 2; from Netflix and Marvel); Batman V Superman (from DC); Captain America: Civil War (from Marvel). Using clips from these movies, societal issues of security policy are presented and explored and it is argued that they are highly influential in how people consider security policy decisions. Whether it is voters deciding whose approach to trust on law enforcement or on whether the death penalty should be allowed, police or other law enforcement officials implementing policies, or individuals deciding to involve themselves in stopping a man with a knife attacking people on a London street, the modern myths of the superhero, exemplified in these films, influence their decisions.