

* * A B O V E T O P S E C R E T * *



UW20: CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The George Washington University: Fall 2007

Dr. Eric Drown

home.gwu.edu/~edrown

C O U R S E S Y L L A B U S



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Introduction: University Writing 20 aims to enhance first-year students' abilities to read, think, and write critically, as well as to equip them with university-level research and project-management tools.

We'll meet these goals by studying conspiracy theories and the people who create them. On first glance conspiracy theory hardly seems worth studying. What, after all, can be learned from reading the writings of paranoid crackpots given to delusional accounts of the world? But, as you will see, conspiracy theory is a form of thinking to which most Americans subscribe at one time or another to explain some aspects of their lives. Moreover, it is a form of writing with some significant parallels to university writing. Both academics and conspiracy theorists conduct extensive research, use elaborated arguments to convince others to see things their way, and circulate their work in highly critical public arenas. By developing sophisticated analytical methods and conducting first-hand research in conspiracy communities, you'll learn to see conspiracy theorists as astute, if eccentric, observers of society. More importantly, you'll learn how to use academic research and writing to formulate and answer questions that are more than merely academic. Writing assignments include an analysis of the "Dark Alliance" investigative journalism controversy, a research report, a research essay, peer reviews, and presentations. Other assignments as necessary. You should be aware that all the writing you do in this course is "public," by which I mean much of it will be published to other course participants by way of the course website.

This four-credit course is demanding. You will need to be self-directed, to be able to work within small and large groups, to get work done on time, to take and give constructive criticism. If you feel uncomfortable with these requirements, please talk to me immediately so we can decide if this is the right learning opportunity for you. Many students have found the course both challenging and rewarding.

Faculty Contact Information:

Office: 561 Rome Hall
Hours: Tu: 11-12; F: 11-12
and by appointment

E-mail: edrown@gwu.edu
Phone: 202-994-2325

Reference & Instruction Librarian Contact Information: Paola Ceccarini

Phone: 202-994-1324 IM: caloap E-mail: paolac@gwu.edu

Required Course Materials:

James McConnachie and Robin Tudge, *The Rough Guide to Conspiracy Theories*

David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen, *Writing Analytically*, 4th ed.

Andrea Lunsford, *Easy Writer*

Course texts are available at the GW Bookstore in Marvin Center or online at Amazon.

Course Website:

I'll be using Blackboard for announcements, handouts, electronic submission of work, to provide access to required readings and for other purposes. You must quickly become familiar with its operation. To access the course website, go to <http://blackboard.gwu.edu/>. Click on the Login button. Login using your Colonial Mail address (using only the part that comes before @gwu.edu) and password. Choose this course: <UW20: Conspiracy Theory—Dr. Drown>.

Grade Distribution: (IMPORTANT NOTE: *Every assignment* in the Writing Portfolio must be completed in order for students to earn a passing grade for the course).

Writing Portfolio (25-35 pages): 90%

“Reading Conspiracy Theories” (Close Reading) – 20%

Peer Review Letter 1 – 5%

“The Things People Believe” (Research Report) – 20%

“Theorizing Conspiracy” (Research Essay) – 40%

Peer Review Letter 2 – 5%

Participation and Preparation – 10%:

I assess participation using these criteria: quality and frequency of preparation for class; quality and quantity of participation in class discussion and activities; collegiality; degree to which student takes responsibility for her or his learning and improvement; ability to take criticism constructively, attendance in class and at symposium; writing and sending of symposium feedback notes.

For more on these assignments consult the <Projects and Tasks> menu on course website and the handouts attached to this syllabus.

Grade Calculation:

Use the spreadsheet on Blackboard to calculate your grade. For letter values, substitute numerical values as follows:

A =	B =	C =	D =	F =
4	3	2	1	0

Attendance:

This course is a workshop with substantial collaboration. It requires your constant participation, preparation, and engagement. Students who are absent from class jeopardize not only their own work, but the work of their colleagues. Consequently, *any student who fails to attend or to prepare for class 5 times will have their **final** grade reduced **one whole grade point**. Students who fail to attend or prepare for class more than 5 times will fail the course. **Special attendance policies are in effect on peer review days and final conference days. Consult the Course Calendar for more information.***

Additional Work Required at the Discretion of the Instructor:

Some of you may require additional work on writing fundamentals not properly part of this university writing course. If, in consultation with you, I deem it necessary for you to work on your fundamentals, this work will be required. It will not be graded as extra-credit, but you cannot pass the course without satisfactorily completing the work as assigned.

The R Grade and the F Grade:

Students who, in the judgment of the instructor, are in need of further work to write up to university standards, and who have made a good faith effort in the course will be required to take the course again and will receive an R grade on their final transcript. While the R grade is a permanent notation and such students receive no credit for the course, it does not factor in their GPA or total credit hours. Students who fail to make a good faith effort, who do not complete significant portions of the course, who are substantially absent from class, or who violate other expectations of academic behavior will receive an F.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:

The Code of Academic Integrity is available online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>. Please read through it carefully.

Any act of academic dishonesty will be treated as a serious offense in this class. By turning in any assignment students declare that they are the sole and original authors of their work and are in compliance with The George Washington University's Code of Academic Integrity. Additionally they assert that they have properly credited any words and ideas not their own (whether those words and ideas originated in a published source, on the Internet, from a multimedia presentation, or from a fellow student). Students with questions about how to properly credit the work of others should consult with the instructor. "Patch-writing," unauthorized collaboration, and failure to present bibliographies and works cited lists for any piece of writing (whether "draft" or "final") all constitute academic dishonesty in this course and are grounds for discipline.

<p>Acts of scholastic dishonesty and any other violations of the Code of Academic Integrity may result in an F for the course and additional disciplinary action.</p>
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Requirements for Written Work:

BACKUP: Error or breakdown—yours, mine, or the machine's—happen. I will hold you responsible to have copies of your work at all times. As a result, you should make frequent backup files or photocopies of all your work. Some easy ways to maintain a readily-accessible back-up file are to e-mail one as an attachment to yourself periodically, or to keep a copy of your work in the File Exchange area of your individual section of the course website (find it under <Group> and look for your name).

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP: All submitted work must be accompanied by a signed page with the following declaration: "I, [name], declare that I am the sole and original author of this work. This assignment was completed in compliance with the requirements of the course and The George Washington University's Code of Academic Integrity." The Code of Academic Integrity is available online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

FORMATTING: All writing assignments must be word processed in **Times New Roman 12**, and double-spaced throughout (except for identifying items). Print on one side of the paper only. Do not justify the right margin of the page. All pages must bear the name of the author, be numbered and stapled together. Every submission must have a title, but do not include a

separate title page. Submissions that do not meet these formatting requirements will not be accepted until they do meet them; papers turned in late as a result of misformatting will be treated in accordance with the late submission policy below.

SUBMISSION OF WORK AND LATE SUBMISSION: You will submit your work in electronic form using the “View/Complete Assignment” interface of the <Projects and Tasks> menu of the course website (not email!) *before the class meeting for which it is assigned*. The final grade of assignments submitted one to three weekdays after the due date will be reduced a letter grade. No assignments will be accepted more than three weekdays late.

Incompletes

Incompletes will not ordinarily be given for this course. If there are specific extenuating circumstances, please contact me by email as soon as practical after they arise.

A Word on Office Hours

Office hours are intended to be opportunities for students to come for one-on-one discussions about anything: from writing and research problems to problems with class dynamics. You just want to talk about ideas or something interesting you’ve read? Come on in. I like talking with students. I’ll do my best to make you feel comfortable. Please take advantage of this time. I also intend to be available for some office hours using the chat feature of the course website.

Phone Messages

If you call my office and find that I am not available, please *do not* leave voice mail messages for me. Instead, send me an email (edrown@gwu.edu) outlining the problem. If it is a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday between 8 and 5, I’ll probably get back to you that day or the next. If it’s Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, you can expect a reply on Tuesday.

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. Students requiring reasonable accommodation must provide me with a documentation letter from Disability Support Services no later than Tuesday, September 18, 2007. Please contact the office of Disability Support Services (Marvin Center Suite 242; 801 21st St. NW, Washington, DC 20052; Tel. 202-994-8250; V/TDD 202-994-8250; FAX 202-994-7610; dss@gwu.edu) with any questions or requests for accommodations.

Cell Phones, Pagers, Recording Devices

Please turn off all cell phones or pagers before entering the classroom. If, and only in the case of an anticipated emergency, you expect to receive a call during class, please set the ringer on vibrate, rise quickly, exit the classroom, and answer the call outside the room. In no case may lectures or discussion be recorded by students on any kind of device without my explicit written consent.

Tentative Course Calendar

(This may change as necessary. I will consult with the class before making substantial changes)

<i>Date</i>	<i>How to Prepare for Class</i>
<p>Tu, 9/4</p> <p>Notice, focus, describe, significance</p>	<p>First day of class. Complete the “Recent Writing Experience” Survey <i>before coming to class</i> (find it on the course website under “Surveys”).</p> <p>Read Michael Kelly, “The Road to Paranoia” (available on the course website under “Readings” → “Required”) <i>before coming to class</i>.</p> <p>IMPORTANT NOTE: I won’t be asking you to read <i>The Rough Guide to Conspiracy Theories</i> as a class. Instead, you need to browse the book on your own (including the very useful “Conspiracy Theory Archive” starting on p. 393) to get a sense of the kinds of plots in which conspiracy theorists believe. We’re using this book as a starting point for the research projects that you’ll take up later in the course. By October 16, you’ll need to commit yourself to a topic. But you’ll need to start preliminary research well before then. Starting today, you should start browsing the web for conspiracy sites and discussion groups (I’ve given you a start on the course website), looking for conspiracy theory in the media, news, popular culture, literature, history, even academia—wherever you find it. Go beyond noting that this stuff exists and start collecting primary sources (actual manifestations of conspiracy beliefs) and secondary sources (writing that seeks to explain conspiracy beliefs). At first, you shouldn’t be particularly selective. Just looking for and finding primary and secondary sources should be interesting and help you think of questions to ask about conspiracy theorists and their beliefs (write these questions down!). Start keeping a list of primary and secondary sources. After the first major project, your research will get much more targeted. Important Warning: If you wait to start research until after the first major assignment is due, you won’t have the necessary background to make an informed choice of research topic and will be unable to do the important project design work very well, giving you a very poor start to your research project.</p>
<p>Th, 9/6</p> <p>Complaint, pitch, moment</p>	<p>Read <i>Writing Analytically</i> (hereafter WA), ch. 4. Use some of the readings techniques and reading marks (p. 131) discussed in WA to read, mark up, take notes on, and write a 150 word nutshell of Robert Alan Goldberg’s essential argument in “Mainstreaming Conspiracism” (most of the conspiracy readings are available in the “Required” readings folder under “Readings” on the course website). Be sure to identify “the pitch,” “the complaint,” and “the moment” of Goldberg’s chapter in your nutshell (see WA, p. 112 for definitions of these terms). Leave at least 75 words of your nutshell for your intellectual response to the piece. Post your nutshell in the appropriate thread in the “Post Reading Responses Here” Discussion Forum on the course website (be sure to follow the directions you find there). Bring your marked up copy of Goldberg to class.</p> <p>Important Definitions: A “nutshell” accurately paraphrases the essence of an argument, contextualizes it, and records what you think about the ideas, insights, claims, evidence, and/or significance of the reading. By “essential argument” I mean the most important claim supported by evidence. An “essential claim” is important because it leads to further questions and developing insights rather than bringing inquiry to an abrupt end. By “paraphrase,” I mean an accurate rendition of the argument that <i>does not use words found in the original</i>.</p>
<p>F, 9/7</p> <p>Discuss and practice “close reading”</p>	<p>Read WA, chs. 1-2. Use the five analytical moves discussed in WA to conduct a close analysis of John Baez, “The Crackpot Index.” Be sure to print it out, mark it up, write down its complaint and pitch, and bring everything to class. View the “Reading Conspiracy Theories” assignment available on the course website under “Projects and Tasks.” Be sure to read carefully the assignment handout. Print it out, mark it up, write down any questions you have, and bring it to class.</p>

<p>Tu, 9/11</p> <p>Choosing significant passages.</p>	<p>In light of the first major writing assignment, point your Web-browser to http://www.narconews.com/darkalliance/drugs/index.htm to find the three-part “Dark Alliance” series of newspaper articles written by Gary Webb and published in the San Jose Mercury News in August 18-20, 1996. Locate each day’s story and convert the resulting webpage into a “Web Archive” by choosing FILE—SAVE AS—WEB ARCHIVE, SINGLE FILE (*.mht). Print out the resulting files. Read each day’s story carefully, marking it up as you go. First you’re trying to determine the complaint and pitch of each story. While you’re reading, you’re also looking for anything that seems interesting, strange, revealing, or surprising. Keep track of your silent response to the pieces by recording your interior monologue. Take note of the passages where you find yourself thinking, “I could believe that…” or “No way, that’s BS!,” or any other response. Start a Quote Set file by transcribing at least 5 significant passages into a new word processor file (for each quote be sure to write down from which day’s story it comes) and write a few sentences explaining what specifically about the passage prompts your response. Henceforth, add at least 4 significant quotes (annotated) from each piece of reading that you do for this project.</p> <p>Write 100 words synthesizing the essential complaints and pitches of all three stories in a coherent long paragraph <i>not structured on a day-by-day basis</i>. Also, use your reading notes to write an additional 100 words explaining what you found interesting, strange, revealing, or surprising about this series of newspaper articles. Print out your notes, your annotated and transcribed quotes, your synthesis of the essential argument, and your 100 word response and bring them to class. Post the two 100 word paragraphs in the “Post Reading Responses Here” forum under “Discussions” on the course website. Be sure to bring your marked up copy of the “Dark Alliance” stories to class until we’re done with this assignment.</p>
<p>Th, 9/13</p> <p>Finding implications</p>	<p>Re-read the “Dark Alliance” series. This time, note any ideas, claims, insights, assumptions, or consequences that are implicit in the piece (whether or not you think Webb was aware of them; see WA, “Uncovering Assumptions,” pp. 97-100 for help). Keep adding annotated material to your Quote Set file. In addition, go back to the Dark Alliance website and take note of all the ancillary material published with each story (most of it is linked down the right side of the page). In list form, take note of all the different kinds of documents presented there. Follow the links and read what you find. Then write 50 words explaining why all this material is there, and another 50 words explaining the implications of your answer for the story. Also, write down any questions you’d like Webb to answer (at least 2), anything you’d like to argue with him about if he were there (at least 2 points), or anything else you’d like to say to him (at least one other thing). Print out your notes and your two 50 word paragraphs and bring them to class. Cut and paste your two 50 word paragraphs into a message and post it to the “Post Reading Responses Here” forum under “Discussions” on the course website (I’ll call this whole procedure cut-and-paste post from here on out).</p>
<p>F, 9/14</p> <p>Reading for the argument</p>	<p>Read WA, chs. 3 and 8. Read, mark up, and take notes on Davis, “The Hammer and the Rock.” Identify Davis’s implicit complaint and pitch. Keep adding annotated material to your Quote Set file. Write 150 words on the implications of Davis’s article for your analysis of the “Dark Alliance” series. Cut-and-paste post your 150 words in the proper forum. Print everything and bring it all to class.</p>
<p>Tu, 9/18</p>	<p>Read WA, chs. 5 and 6. Read, mark up, and take notes on Paterno, “The Sad Saga of Gary Webb.” Keep adding annotated material to your Quote Set file. In addition, take note of the various kinds of responses these articles garnered. Make a chart representing what kinds of people (grouped by demographics, occupation, affiliation, disposition, and whatever else makes sense) responded to the articles and explain each group’s essential complaint and pitch. Print out your notes; bring them and your chart to class. Review your notes on Kelly and Goldberg, and add to your Quote Set file at least two <i>significant</i> passages from each that seem significant to your understanding of the “Dark Alliance” series; be sure to annotate them.</p>

Th, 9/20	Read WA, ch. 7. Library Session I—Finding primary sources in newspapers and other sources. Using REFWORKS.
F, 9/21 Doing peer review Assign peer review days	Using the tools and strategies you learned in the library session, find at least three <i>significant</i> response articles published by the mainstream press, and at least three <i>significant</i> articles issued in media produced by at least one other group of respondents of your choice. (This means you must find at least 6 articles). Do whatever it takes to convert these articles into markable text, read them analytically, taking notes, and marking them up as you go , keeping track of your inner monologue. Keep adding annotated material to your Quote Set file. Write an annotated bibliography for these six sources. For each entry into your bibliography, provide full publication information (formatted using the MLA citation style sheet), a summary of the contents of the article including any implicit complaints and pitches, and a few sentences explaining the significance of the article for our current project.
Tu, 9/25 Full Annotated Bibliography Due; NSA Visit	Read, markup, and take notes on Peter Kornbluh. Keep adding annotated material to your Quote Set file. Find at least 10 more response articles, adding both to your collection of mainstream press sources and to one other group of your choice. Add to, and revise, your annotated bibliography. Print it out and bring it to class. Cut-and-paste post it to the proper discussion forum. Review your quote set file, your annotated bibliography, and your reading notes, and in 100 words, explain to recent GW graduates how to think about the “Dark Alliance” controversy, and making an argument about its continuing significance. Be sure to explain what is significant about your explanation. One <i>Important Rule</i> : Writing that this newspaper series is important because it’s a ground-breaking piece of investigative journalism that has revealed the TRUTH about crack, the CIA, and the US proxy-war in Nicaragua is <i>NOT</i> an acceptable explanation. Cut-and-paste post your explanation to the proper discussion forum.
Th., 9/27	Print out, read, and mark up Peter Knight, “Fear of a Black Planet.” Keep adding annotated material to your Quote Set file.
F, 9/28	Print out, read, and mark up Mary E. McCoy, “Dark Alliance: News Repair and Institutional Authority in the Age of the Internet.” Keep adding annotated material to your Quote Set file. Print out, read, and mark up the Society for Professional Journalists, “Code of Ethics.” Write 150 words using material from both readings to say something interesting about the function of the idea of “Journalists Professional Ethics” in the “Dark Alliance” controversy. Cut-and-paste post your results to the proper discussion forum. Print out, read, and mark up the “Peer Reviewing” assignment handout (find it by viewing the “Peer Review Letter 1” assignment under “Projects and Tasks” on the course website) and bring it to class. Print out a copy of the “Marking and Analyzing Early Drafts” handout (find it under “Handouts and Advice” on the course website) and bring it to class. Print out a copy of the “Audience Analysis” handout (find it under “Handouts and Advice” on the course website) and bring it to class. Write down any questions you might have. Bring everything to class.
M, 10/1	Draft Due. In order to write this draft, you may need to change the quotes you selected from the “Dark Alliance” series and published responses, as well as from Kelly, Goldberg, Davis, Knight, Kornbluh and McCoy. You must use at least one quote from each writer I’ve assigned so far in this version of your essay. Develop your draft so that its thesis and organization meet the standards outlined in <i>Writing Analytically</i> , namely that your thesis is contestable, has tension, requires evidence to support, evolves over the course of the essay, and responds to the questions and concerns of conspiracy theory scholarship. The body of your essay should make multiple points about each of a well-chosen series of representative examples and be in

	dialogue with secondary sources.
Tu, 10/2	<p>Peer Review 1—Day 1. Use word-processing software to electronically annotate a fellow writer’s draft essay. If your word-processor doesn’t have this function or cannot open .doc or .rtf documents, you must complete this assignment using a computer in a campus lab. Use email to send your annotated copy back to the author before class begins; Cc. me on the message. Reviewers should be sure to rename the file using this convention: AuthorLastName_CloseReadingDraft_ReviewerLastName. Write a formal peer review letter for the writer. Bring 2 copies of your review letter to your meeting.</p> <p>IMPORTANT NOTE: You are required to participate in a scheduled peer review session this week. Any author or reviewer who is absent can expect to have her or his final course grade lowered by half a grade point. On class days you are not scheduled to participate in a peer review session, you should use the time to rewrite your draft.</p>
W, 10/3	Peer Review 1—Day 2. See 10/2.
Th, 10/4	Peer Review 1—Day 3. See 10/2.
F, 10/5	Peer Review 1—Day 4. See 10/2.
M, 10/8	If you participated in peer review day 1, submit the published version of your first major essay using the “View/Complete Assignment” link under “Projects and Tasks.” Also, print out and bring the complete quote set file for this essay to class on Thursday. Complete the “Dark Alliance Wrapup” survey. Find it under “Surveys” on the course website
Tu, 10/9	No class meeting. If you participated in peer review day 2, submit the published version of your first major essay using the “View/Complete Assignment” link under “Projects and Tasks.” Also, print out and bring the complete quote set file for this essay to class on Thursday. Complete the “Dark Alliance Wrapup” survey. Find it under “Surveys” on the course website.
W, 10/10	If you participated in peer review day 3, submit the published version of your first major essay using the “View/Complete Assignment” link under “Projects and Tasks.” Also, print out and bring the complete quote set file for this essay to class on Thursday. Complete the “Thinking About Conspiracy Wrapup” survey. Find it under “Surveys” on the course website.
Th, 10/11	Everyone comes to class. If you participated in peer review day 4, submit the published version of your first major essay using the “View/Complete Assignment” link under “Projects and Tasks.” Also, print out and bring the complete quote set file for this essay to class. Complete the “Thinking About Conspiracy Wrapup” survey. Find it under “Surveys” on the course website.
F, 10/12	View the “Things People Believe (Research Report)” assignment available on the course website under “Projects and Tasks.” Be sure to read carefully the assignment handout. Print it out, mark it up, write down any questions you have, and bring it to class.
Tu, 10/16	Library Session II. Read WA ch. 13. Download the “Searching the Web Efficiently” handout from the “Research Tips” menu of the course website. Complete steps 1-3 before coming to class in Gelman Library.
Th, 10/18 Reviewing the literature. Reading by footnotes.	Keep gathering, reading, and analyzing primary sources for your research project (see note for 9/4). Read WA, ch. 12 (focus on pp. 295-309). Print out, read, mark up and take notes on Peter Knight, “Conspiracy/Theory.” Knight is one of the scholars who established the terms of the discussion in the current wave of conspiracy theory scholarship. This chapter of Knight’s <i>Conspiracy Culture</i> is essentially a review of the literature, the place where Knight looks at existing scholarship to find his place in it. Read this piece in two ways: 1) as Knight’s representation of discussion among a number of CT scholars, and 2) as the first statement of Knight’s own views about the questions and issues under discussion. Since this is an introductory chapter

	<p>in a lengthy book, you should not yet be looking for Knight to present lots of convincing evidence in support of his claims. Instead, look to see how well Knight represents other peoples' views (assessment standards include accurately, fairly, adequately, coherently, judiciously), and the plausibility (not persuasiveness) of his own claims. With this in mind, please produce a list of the major figures in conspiracy theory studies (I find at least 14 counting two co-author teams as two figures). For half of the figures, write down one sentence identifying their essential claim and note whether Knight supports their view, opposes their view, or has a mixed judgment of it (a +, -, or / mark will do). Then, please identify "the pitch," "the complaint," and "the moment" of Knight's work. Cut-and-paste post your list and your analysis of the pitch, complaint and moment of Knight's article to the appropriate thread in the Post Reading Responses Here Discussion Forum. Print out a copy of your posting, bring it and your marked up copy of the article to class.</p>
<p>F, 10/19</p> <p>Working with primary sources to generate questions and working theses.</p>	<p>Read, mark up, and take notes on "The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood" excerpts. Pay no attention to the explanatory text, but do study the pictures and stories carefully. Write working theses for three different essays using these primary sources.</p>
<p>Tu, 10/23</p> <p>Research topic and reviewing the literature. Putting sources in dialogue</p>	<p>Write a 250 word description of the conspiracy theory, theorist, or media on which you intend to conduct research. Include at least 75 words on why you think this is an "essential" topic for research. An "essential" topic is one that generates further questions and insights, requires analysis and interpretation to understand. Print out your research topic description and bring it to class. Cut-and-paste post your topic description in the forum called "Post Research Topic Descriptions Here" under "Discussion" on the class website.</p> <p>Print out, read, mark up and take notes on the "Preface" and chs. 1-2 of Michael Barkun, <i>A Culture of Conspiracy</i> (pp. ix-38). Take special note of what Barkun has to say about the common logic of conspiracist worldviews, the different evidentiary standards used in and beyond conspiracy cultures, the way circulation on the Internet and in popular culture shapes the functions and meanings of conspiracy theories. Be able to define and discuss "stigmatized knowledge claims," "cultic milieu," and "improvisational millennialism." Write a few sentences explaining how Barkun's view of conspiracy theory differs from Knight's. Write a few more explaining how they are similar. Write a few more identifying the scholars with whom both Knight and Barkun would fundamentally disagree. Cut-and-paste post these sentences to the appropriate thread in the Post Reading Responses Here Discussion Forum. Print out a copy of your posting, bring it and your marked up copy of the article to class.</p>
<p>Th, 10/25</p> <p>Research design</p>	<p>Keep gathering, reading, and analyzing primary sources for your research project (see note for Sept. 4). Print out, read, mark up and take notes on Jeffrey Victor, "Rumors, Claims, and Allegations of Satanic Cult Crimes." I'm not particularly interested in what Victor has to say about Satanic cult crimes. Instead, pay attention to the way his study evolved from his observation of a societal anomaly in a particular set of events. Also, and perhaps more importantly, note how he designed his study to answer specific questions that emerged from his initial observation. Look also at Victor's use of other scholars' work on a pretty abstract theoretical category ("rumor-panic") to frame initial, testable, hypotheses for his own research. Print out, read, and mark up the "Research Parameters" assignment file under "Projects and Tasks" on the course website. Complete the parameters, print them out and bring them to class. Cut-and-paste post them in the "Research Parameters" forum under "Discussions" on the course website.</p>
<p>F, 10/26</p>	<p>Design your research project. Print out, read, and mark up the "Initial Research Project Design" assignment file under "Projects and Tasks" on the course website. Complete the questions and post your answers in the Discussion forum named "Initial Research Project Design." Print out your research topic description and bring</p>

	it to class. Cut-and-paste post your topic description in the forum called “Post Research Topic Descriptions Here” under “Discussion” on the class website.
Tu, 10/30 Using analysis and interpretation of primary sources as evidence for claims.	Keep gathering, reading, and analyzing primary sources for your research project. Print out, read, mark up and take notes on Jodi Dean, “The Familiarity of Strangeness.” Identify and transcribe at least 3 versions of her working hypothesis. For each version, describe the kinds of primary sources she uses to support her hypothesis. Write a few sentences showing exactly how she links her analysis of those primary sources to the current version of her working hypothesis. List the types of primary sources she uses in her essays.
Th, 11/1 Creating a dialogue between sources	Keep gathering, reading, and analyzing primary sources for your research project. Print out, read, mark up and take notes on Michael Shermer, <i>Why People Believe Weird Things</i> (excerpts). Instead of treating Shermer as a secondary source—as someone with an answer to questions about conspiracy theory and pseudoscience—treat him as a primary source—as someone representative of a field of belief (rationalism/scientism/skepticism) very much like conspiracy theory. Write and post your answers to these questions: What is his complaint and pitch? What personal and societal imperatives drive his passionate and persistent debunking and criticism of conspiracy theory and pseudoscience? What claims can you make about how his skepticism functions to serve his personal and societal imperatives? In what ways is Shermer thinking like a conspiracy theorist? In what ways is he thinking differently? What would Shermer say about Dean’s analysis of alien belief? Print out, read, and mark up Joel Stein, “Requiem for Batboy.”
F, 11/2	Bring 3 copies of a primary source to class with you. Prepare a handout identifying the source’s moment, information about the people who circulate it, and a basic interpretation of its key motifs.
Tu, 11/6 Library session III. Finding secondary sources.	Library Session III. Analyze your research needs for your project. What will you need to learn in order to do your project. Think about what kind of information needs you have and what kind of intellectual/analytical needs you have. What kinds of primary and secondary sources can help you? Formulate, write down, and bring at least five specific questions to ask Paola to help you solve problems in your ongoing research project. Post them on the appropriate discussion board.
Th, 11/8 Using biographical and historical information	Keep gathering, reading, and analyzing primary and secondary sources for your research project. View the “Theorizing Conspiracy” assignment under “Projects and Tasks” on the course website. Be sure to open the assignment handout file. Print it out, mark it up, and write down any questions you might have. Print out, read, mark up and take notes on Robert Alan Goldberg, “Jewish Devils and the War on Black America.” Write and post your answers to these questions: What is Goldberg’s working hypothesis in this chapter (find and transcribe at least 2 versions)? How does Goldberg use the biographical information about Louis Farrakhan he presents to advance his argument? How does Goldberg use the historical information he presents to advance his argument?
F, 11/9	Bring 3 copies of a primary source to class with you. Prepare a handout identifying the source’s moment, information about the people who circulate it, and a basic interpretation of its key motifs.
M, 11/12	Research report due. Submit your research report in a .doc or .rtf file using the proper “View/Complete Assignment” link under “Projects and Tasks.”
Tu, 11/13 Using secondary sources	Print out, read, mark up and take notes on Michael Barkun, “New World Order Conspiracies I.” Write and post your answers to these questions: What is Barkun’s working hypothesis in this chapter (find and transcribe at least 2 versions)? What secondary fields of study did Barkun have to learn about in order to write this chapter? In what ways is he using secondary sources?
Th, 11/15	No Class. Keep gathering, reading, and analyzing primary and secondary sources for your research project. Read WA, ch. 13. (Optional) Visit Eric during class time or office hours for individual consultation.
F, 11/16	Bring 3 copies of a useful secondary source to class with you. Prepare a handout identifying the source’s thesis, what kind of primary sources it uses, and how you

Schedule final presentations	intend to use it in your project.
Tu, 11/20	Open lab research day.
Th-F, 11/22-3	Thanksgiving Recess
Tu, 11/27	Complete your draft of your essay. Send a copy of your draft to your peer reviewer and Cc. me and the guest instructor on the email. No class. Work on your presentation and research essay.
Th, 11/29	Presentation Day 1— Prepare a 12 minute presentation of your research. Continue working on your essay. When assigned, use word-processing software to electronically annotate a fellow writer’s draft essay. If your word-processor doesn’t have this function or cannot open .doc or .rtf documents, you must complete this assignment using a computer in a campus computer lab. Use email to send your annotated copy back to the author before class begins. Reviewers should be sure to rename the file using this convention: AuthorLastName_ResearchEssayDraft_ReviewerLastName. Write a formal peer review letter for the writer. Also, prepare some essential and supporting questions, as well as some Devil’s Advocate challenges to his or her argument, to ask the writer in class. Bring 2 copies of your review letter, questions, and challenges to class.
F, 11/30	Presentation Day 2
Tu, 12/4	Presentation Day 3
Th, 12/6	Presentations Day 4
F, 12/7	Presentations Day 5
Th, 12/13	Paper Due for Presenters on Day 1
F, 12/14	Paper Due for Presenters on Day 2. Portfolio Due for Presenters on Day 1.
Tu, 12/18	Paper Due for Presenters on Day 3. Portfolio Due for Presenters on Day 2
Th, 12/20	Paper Due for Presenters on Day 4. Portfolio Due for Presenters on Day 3
F, 12/21	Paper Due for Presenters on Day 5. Portfolio Due for Presenters on Day 4
Sa, 12/22	Portfolio Due for Presenters on Day 5.
	If you want to receive comments on your final essay, you <i>must</i> submit a 9x12 self-addressed stamped envelope to my office no later than 5 pm the day your paper is due.

Dear Writers:

Here is what you need to submit for the final Portfolio. Use the “View/Complete Dialogue” marked “Course Portfolio” on the Course Website to submit your portfolio.

The Portfolio in ***ONE*** .doc. or .rtf file named “[Lastname]_Final Portfolio” including:

- a. A Cover Letter reflecting on your portfolio (more below)
- b. Final Research Essay—including title, essay, references and a works cited page.
- c. Final Research Report—including title, report, references and a works cited page.
- d. Dark Alliance Assignment—including title, essay, references, and a works cited page.
- e. Peer Review Letter 2
- f. Peer Review Letter 1

The portfolio ***cover letter*** should help me understand how you see your progress this semester. The letter should chart your progression as a writer from the first day you entered the class to the day you hand in your final

project. Please make it an honest self-assessment, describe your strengths and what you still need to work on, and the few most important things you'll take away from this class. Please reflect on your progress in terms of the aims of the course. Instead of assessing your grammar, style, and punctuation, focus on your critical reading, writing, and thinking skills, ability to design and carry out a research project, ability to summarize, synthesize, and comment on other scholars' work, ability to assess your own and others' scholarly writing, ability to assess a writing situation, ability to construct a persuasive argument, and so on. A single-spaced page will be enough.