

First-Year Seminar (Wilson Section)

Short Paper Assignment #3

(Due at the start of class on Friday, October 9, 2015)

Choose your own conspiracy! We are about to enter the conspiracy theory phase of our course, using the Barkun text as our guide. By “conspiracy theory” I’m using the definition found on Wikipedia (9/24/15):

A **conspiracy theory** is an explanatory hypothesis that accuses two or more persons, a group, or an organization of having caused or covered up, through secret planning and deliberate action, an event or situation which is typically taken to be illegal or harmful.

Your assignment is to write a roughly 2000 word, double-spaced paper in which you choose a specific conspiracy theory, explain it, and then assess the evidence for and against its primary thesis. *You **cannot** choose the topic you are exploring for your research paper. Do this and your paper will be returned to you unread.* You may, however, choose someone else’s research paper topic if you like.

You will again use *in-text* citations keyed to a reference list. Here is our example paragraph (with the addition of an “et al.” for three or more authors) --

In 1889, Howard Cleary demonstrated for the first time that water not only seeks its own level, it tries to go even lower than that. Madison and Johnson (1897) made the observation that ice is a form of water that does not apparently seek its own level, although it does upon melting. Chalmers (1899, p. 53) replied, “There is little I can do to stop this nonsense.” The controversy continues to this day, even in places as remote as Australia, Newfoundland and western Pennsylvania (Hackett, 1978). Most scientists now accept these fundamental principles of hydrology (McLoughlin et al., 2015).

Every idea, observation or fact not from you (and not “general knowledge”) is attributed to an author or authors and dates. Each author or set of authors is then listed in the references at the end of your text by name and date. Note that direct quotations require the addition of a page number for the quote. This is sometimes called a “scientific style”, but it is by no means limited to the sciences. Note that in your other courses you likely will have different style requirements.

Your references at the end of your text will follow a **new format**, the one you will use for your research papers. The webpage citations are mostly the same, but citations for books and journal articles are slightly different. Here are examples --

Black Ops. July 25, 2015. Astronomer demonstrates why NASA Pluto images are a hoax. <http://chemtrailsplanet.net/2015/07/25/astronomer-demonstrates-why-nasa-pluto-images-are-a-hoax/> Accessed September 25, 2015.

Leigh, D.S., 1994, Roxana Silt of the Upper Mississippi Valley: Lithology, source, and paleoenvironment: Geological Society of America Bulletin, v. 106, p. 430–442.

Nogueira, F. 2015. Myths about nutrition. Skeptical Briefs 25.1.
http://www.csicop.org/sb/show/myths_about_nutrition/ Accessed September 25, 2015.

Twiss, R.J., and Moores, E.M., 1992, Structural geology: New York, W.H. Freeman and Company, 532 p.

This reference style is from the writing format page of the Geology Department; it is now required for you. The full document (<http://ismanual.voices.wooster.edu/>) is linked on your website. It is a professional style used throughout the scientific literature. Again, the goal of any reference system is for your reader to be able to easily find your source (the reference) with the information you provide. If I can't reasonably locate your source, you've done it wrong.

Other notes about this paper –

1. The **2000 words** or so do not include your reference list or any figures or captions. I'm not a big word-counter, so if your essay is 1850 words or 2200 words I'm not going to worry about it. If I think your paper is too long or too short in terms of content and ideas, then I may look at your word total. The text in this assignment sheet is approximately 750 words, so you'll be writing about three times as much.
2. **At least one illustration** must be included in your paper. All images, like other information not directly from you, must have a caption and citation. You can see the rules for captioning in the writing style page.
3. You must have **at least five references**, with one or more being “serious” (meaning “professional”, as with most journal or mainstream news articles).
4. The references must be listed **alphabetically** by first author's last name.
5. Please submit your **printed** essay by 8:00 a.m. on **Friday, October 9th**. (Please keep the electronic version of your paper in your files. We may need it later.) Remember: late papers are significantly penalized (one grade for every hour late; that first hour starts at 8:00 a.m.).