

First-Year Seminar (Wilson Section)

Short Paper Assignment #2

(Due at the start of class on Friday, September 18, 2015)

Pareidolia is a phenomenon well known to all of us, even if you don't recognize the word. It is why we can see the "Man in the Moon", pyramids on Mars, or hear ghost voices in electronic recordings. It gives us a fascinating glimpse into how the human brain works – how we assemble patterns from the stimuli around us.

Your assignment is to write a roughly 1000 word, double-spaced paper defining *pareidolia*, providing multiple examples of it from the web and other literature, and giving a summary statement of how pareidolia affects human perception and why it is important to understand it.

This will be your first paper in this class with citations to a reference list. Our required style is *in-text* (not footnotes). Here is an example paragraph --

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).

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 the format you are now using --

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 August 25, 2015.

Johnson, A.K. 1993. The use of hypnosis in gerbils. *The Animal Psychologist* 23: 12-24.

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

The goal 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 1000 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 950 words or 1200 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. This assignment sheet, minus the heading, is approximately 580 words, so you'll be writing about twice as much.

2. Illustrations can be included in your paper. They are not required, but this is a fine topic for pictures! All images, like other information not directly from you, must have a citation.

3. Some “Serious” references (meaning “professional” as with most journal or mainstream news articles) must be included. No minimum or maximum.

4. Please submit your paper as, well, *paper*, by 8:00 a.m. on Friday, September 18th. We will later work on electronic submissions of your assignments. Remember: late papers are significantly penalized (one grade for every hour late, and that first hour starts at 8:00 a.m.).