

## **First-Year Seminar (Wilson Section)**

### *Short Paper Assignment #4*

(Due by email at the start of class on Friday, November 13, 2015)

It is time to analyze and summarize the conceptual content of this course. We're in the midst of an interesting ride through conspiracy theories, pseudoscience, quack medicines and the like, but the course is nearing its end and we need to start assessing what it all means. Your task with this short paper is to answer this question:

### **Why do people believe weird things?**

Your paper is to be roughly 1000 words and written in the style of a magazine editorial or opinion post on a news website. This means **NO** in-text citations and **NO** reference list. (We use those in our research papers, not creative essays.) Your article is directed to the general public and should be interesting, persuasive and well supported. You may give evidence for your arguments in an informal way by describing conspiracy theories, crank ideas and the like, but without formal citations. Above all, this paper is **YOUR** opinion expressed to the public, so you want to take responsibility for its conclusions. You may interpret "weird things" in any way you choose. As with any editorial, your writing should be designed to persuade efficiently and with style.

This paper is due as an **email attachment in Microsoft Word** by 8:00 a.m. on Friday, November 13.

Other notes about this paper –

1. The **1000 words** or so is an estimate. Don't try to hit it exactly. The text in this assignment sheet is approximately 325 words, so you'll be writing about three times as much.
2. We will have a system of **peer review** of these papers after you turn them in. I will distribute the papers among you for mutual analysis and comments. You will then submit your final version to me for a grade on Friday, November 20. Your review of another essay is counted as part of your grade.
3. Remember: late papers are significantly penalized (one grade for every hour late; that first hour starts at 8:00 a.m.).