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

*Short Paper Assignment #3*

(Due by 8:00 am on Wednesday, October 23, 2019; email it to mwilson@wooster.edu )

*Choose your own conspiracy!* We are about to enter the conspiracy theory phase of our course. By “conspiracy theory” I’m using the definition found on Wikipedia:

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 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, nor a topic covered by any other student (see:* <https://nonsense.voices.wooster.edu/research-topics/> ). Also avoid topics we have already covered in class.

You will 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 our required format, the one you will use for your research papers. Here are our examples --

Webpages --

Howell, E., 2019, Moon-landing hoax still lives on, 50 years after Apollo 11. But why?. URL: <https://www.space.com/apollo-11-moon-landing-hoax-believers.html>. Accessed October 1, 2019. [Not the embedded link. This is required.]

Paper in a Multiauthor Volume --

Kane, J.S., and Neuzil, S.G., 1993, Geochemical and analytical implications of extensive sulfur retention in ash from Indonesian peats, *in* Cobb, J.C., and Cecil, C.B., eds., Modern and ancient coal-forming environments: Geological Society of America Special Paper 286, p. 97–106.

Book --

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

Vogt, P., and Tucholke, B., editors, 1986, The western North Atlantic region: Boulder, Colorado, Geological Society of America, Geology of North America, v. M, 696 p.

Journal or Magazine --

Doglioni, C., 1994, Foredeeps versus subduction zones: Geology, v. 22, p. 271–274.

Walter, L.M., Bischof, S.A., Patterson, W.P., and Lyons, T.L., 1993, Dissolution and recrystallization in modern shelf carbonates: Evidence from pore water and solid phase chemistry: Royal Society of London Philosophical Transactions, ser. A, v. 344, p. 27–36.

This reference style is from the writing format page of the Earth Sciences 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 locate your source, you’ve done it wrong. Links must be embedded in your Word document (as before).

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 850 words.

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). These are not included in your word count.

4. The references must be listed **alphabetically** by first author’s last name.

5. Please email me your essay as a Word document by 8:00 a.m. on **Wednesday, October 23**. (mwilson@wooster.edu) Remember: late papers are significantly penalized (one grade for every hour late; that first hour starts at 8:00 a.m.).



