

Psychology 301 The Psychology of Extraordinary Beliefs

Fall 2004

TR 12:00 - 1:18, JE 100

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Students with Disabilities

This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. In addition, if you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the instructor immediately. Students with special needs should contact the **Office of Disability Services (ODS)** at 292-3307 for certification if they have not already done so. Upon such certification, the ODS and the instructor will make every effort to accommodate special needs. However, to ensure that evaluation of student performance in the course is conducted in a manner that is fair to all students, special accommodations will not be granted in the absence of ODS certification.

Academic Misconduct

All students at the Ohio State University are bound by the Code of Student Conduct (see http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp). Suspected violations of the code in this class will be dealt with according to the procedures detailed in that code. Specifically, any alleged cases of misconduct will be referred to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Overview of the course

People commonly believe in many extraordinary things. For example, Animal Planet airs a program entitled "**Pet Psychic**," featuring a woman who tells pet owners what is troubling their animals and how to remedy behavioral problems. Many people believe that **John Edward** can speak to their dead loved ones and psychologist **Gary E. Schwartz** claims to have evidence showing that Edward really can contact the dead. Toxicologist **Edward Calobrese** claims that a little nuclear radiation not only won't hurt you, it will make you healthier. The **United States Psychotronics Association** holds their national convention in Columbus, Ohio every summer, where psychics, dowzers, and free-energy aficionados come together to learn about remote viewing, healing energies, telekinesis, and so forth. **John Lott** says that scientific research shows that crime rates go down as the number of guns in society goes up. **Dr. Andrew Weil** argues that we can think ourselves well.

If correct, some of these ideas may have great value. But if they are wrong, some can do equally great harm. So how can a person discriminate between bunkum and fact, between valuable innovation and wacky waste of time? Moreover, why do so many people continue to believe in ideas that have no apparent basis in reality? How do people come to believe in extraordinary things? This course is intended to provide answers to such questions and more generally, to provide the skills and knowledge necessary to evaluate extraordinary claims and beliefs. You might find yourself having to question beliefs that you have held as factual for a long time. Some topics that we will cover include alternative medicine, psychic phenomena, hypnosis and the nature of the brain. Many of the topics and controversies that we'll consider reflect the influence of an uncritical perspective, fallacious reasoning,

and flawed research methodology. These are the hallmarks of pseudoscience. In this course, you will learn to distinguish between science and pseudoscience, to evaluate arguments and sources of evidence.

Examinations and Quizzes

There will be two examinations in the course and two shorter quizzes. Each exam is worth 35% of the total points available in the course and each quiz is worth 15%. The final exam is cumulative only in the sense that skills and concepts discussed in the first half of the course will be applied to topics considered in the second half. Items on the exams and quizzes will be a mix of formats. However, typically at least half of the items are short essay format. Other formats, such as multiple choice and fill in the blank, will also be used where appropriate. Questions will generally require you to show that you understand the scientific principles and critical thinking skills that will be discussed in the first half of the course and that you can apply them to understand and critique the various sides of the controversial issues discussed in the remaining portion of the course. This amounts to more than simply memorizing principles or facts. Instead, it requires flexible understanding of those principles and the ability to apply them. Sample exam questions will be provided in the first few days of class to give you a better idea of what exams and quizzes will be like. Exams and quizzes are designed to draw on material covered in lecture, readings, and videos. Please note that if you miss a video you should be sure to arrange with me to view it at another time or you will be at a disadvantage on the exams and quizzes.

Policy on missing exams and quizzes

You must get approval prior to missing an examination or quiz except in the case of a true emergency. In the event of a last-minute emergency, you **MUST** call me or my secretary, Angie Bassett (2-4131), **ON THE SAME DAY AS THE EXAM**, preferably before the exam begins. Acceptable excuses for missing an exam are a death in your family, personal illness or the illness of your child or spouse, and unforeseen accidents like your car breaking down or getting stuck in a elevator on the way to the exam. I will need documented proof of these events should they occur, so get a funeral card, a note from your physician (on letterhead or a form designed for this purpose), and/or an invoice from the towing company with the date on it. Makeup exams will only be given in cases of documented emergency or when prior approval has been given to miss an exam. Note that if you aren't sick enough to go to the doctor, you aren't sick enough to miss the exam.

Under certain circumstances, you may arrange to take an exam early. Discuss rescheduling an exam with me well in advance of the exam.

Grading

For a variety of reasons, I do not grade on a curve. For example, when a curve is used, no matter how well everyone in the class does on an exam, only a small percentage of students can receive an A. Instead, I prefer to give everyone a chance to get an A. Therefore, I apply the following preset cutpoints:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D
93%	90%	87%	83%	80%	77%	73%	70%	67%	60%

Exams are designed to reflect what I think is an appropriate level of mastery of the material covered. So if everyone gets an A, that's great! I'll assume such performance reflects your hard work and intelligence (and, of course, my excellent teaching). If everyone does poorly, I'll assume it was my fault, and define an A by the top scores on the test: 100% will be given as the second highest test score. So, if the top two scores were 67% and 62%, and you scored 54%, your test grade would be 54 points out of 62, or 87%.

Books (Required texts are marked with asterisks)

Park, R. (2000). *Voodoo Science: The Road from Foolishness to Fraud*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Robert Park has been following pseudoscience and its consequences in our society for many years now, in his role as the director of the American Physical Society. This book chronicles his experiences as a "professional skeptic" and gives a unique perspective on how our society and our government often facilitates the proliferation of "voodoo science."

*Ruscio, J. (2002). *Clear thinking with psychology: Separating sense from nonsense*. Pacific Grove, CA: Wadsworth.

This book is an excellent introduction to the tools of critical thinking. The author does a very good job of explaining difficult and slippery concepts and there is no doubt that this book will hone your ability to think critically - about psychology and about life in general.

Sagan, C. (1996). *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. New York, NY: Random House.

Carl Sagan's legacy will probably be this book, of all his publications. As a popularizer of science, he did more to help nonscientists to understand the scientific method than perhaps any other person in the 20th century. This book describes not only how pseudoscience differs from science, using many common examples, but also captures the sheer joy of discovery that (true) scientists experience. Do we risk losing our technological advances to ignorance and superstition?

Shermer, M. (1997). *Why People Believe Weird Things*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman.

In this book, Shermer not only presents several examples of bizarre belief, he discusses why such beliefs are held and provides point-by-point counter-arguments. Reading this book is a great way to gear up for an argument with your neighbor about her abduction by aliens.

Schick, T. & Vaughn, L. (2002). *How to Think About Weird Things: Critical Thinking for a New Age*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

A more typical psychology textbook, devoted specifically to reasoning, logical fallacies, good and bad arguments, and the interpretation of probabilities and statistics. Thankfully, it is entirely atypical in that these concepts are introduced in the context of ESP, alien visitations, fairies, and so on. An excellent book.

Stanovich, K. E. (2004). *How to Think Straight about Psychology* (7th Edition). Boston: Pearson.

Perhaps more than other sciences, social sciences in particular, psychology suffers from a lot of pseudoscience traveling under its umbrella. This book attempts to distinguish scientific from pseudoscientific psychology, and along the way presents a number of concepts important for the critical thinker.

Vyse, S. A. (1997). *Believing in magic: The psychology of superstition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Much of what we observe in bizarre belief systems can be described as "magical thinking," leading to superstitious behavior. As Vyse shows, superstitious behavior is entirely natural and normal. Vyse shows how superstitious beliefs are acquired and maintained, and discusses how critical thinking provides an alternative way of dealing with life's uncertainties.

Additional Readings: Some readings come from sources other than these books. These will be made available online at <http://maigret.psy.ohio-state.edu/~trish/Teaching/Beliefs/Readings>. I have also provided the references to them so that you can find them on your own if you wish.

Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
1	Sep 23	<p><i>Introduction to the Course</i></p> <p>Why do we need a course like this? A brief guided tour of some popular but extraordinary beliefs.</p> <p>Explore some of the following web sites. While surfing, try and answer for yourself some of the following questions: What are these people selling? How do they benefit from maintaining their bizarre beliefs? What are their qualifications, e.g., are they doctors or Ph.Ds? Where is their data coming from? How could you test their ideas? Can you find other web sites that give an opposing or critical view?</p> <p>http://www.daniken.com: The site of Erich von Daniken, who claims that ancient archeological sites contain evidence of early human contact with extraterrestrial beings.</p> <p>http://www.lovely.clara.net: A crop circle information site. Crop circles, sometimes elaborate circular patterns appearing in fields of grain crops, have been attributed to pranksters, landing extraterrestrial spacecraft, conjunctions of force field meridians, and secret laser technology from orbiting satellites.</p> <p>http://nostradamususa.com: Nostradamus was a 16th century physician who wrote a large number of prophetic "quatrains" that many believe have predicted some of the major events of the 20th (and 21st?) centuries.</p> <p>http://iufomrc.org: The International UFO Museum and Research Center site, which is devoted to investigating a famous crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico. Many of our technological advances have been attributed to reverse engineering from the crash debris, which is purportedly held (along with the bodies of the alien pilots) at Area 51, a top-secret air base in Nevada.</p> <p>http://www.angelfire.com/stars3/breathe_light/breatharianism.html: A Breatharian web site. Breatharians claim that the human body was designed to subsist on light alone, and that the need for food and drink is simply an addiction, similar to an addiction to cocaine or heroin.</p>

Section I: The Scientific Toolbox

2	Sep 28	<p><i>Hallmarks of Science and Pseudoscience</i></p> <p>What makes a claim "scientific"? What is science and what does it do for us? What distinguishes science from pseudoscience? We will discuss several features that distinguish scientific from pseudoscientific thinking. We will also explore the distinction between science and scientism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required Readings:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ruscio, Preface. [6 pp.]– Ruscio, Chapter 1. Introduction: Pseudoscience and the Need for Clear Thinking [15 pp.]– Ruscio, Chapter 8. Science: Evaluating Claims to Knowledge [13 pp.]• Supplementary Readings:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Sagan, Chapter 12. The Fine Art of Baloney Detection– Schick and Vaughn, Chapter 7. Science and Its Pretenders– Shermer, Chapter 2. The Most Precious Thing We Have
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Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
2	Sep 30	<p><i>Falsifiability and Plausibility</i></p> <p>One of the surest ways to ferret out pseudoscience is by examining whether or not a claim is falsifiable. Also, many bizarre beliefs are, on their face, implausible. What does "plausibility" really mean? At what point does a belief become "magical" or superstitious?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ruscio, Chapter 6. Plausibility: All Beliefs Are Not Created Equal. [11 pp.] – Stanovich, Chapter 2. Falsifiability: How to Foil Little Green Men in the Head [15 pp.] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Park, Chapter 7. Currents of Fear: In Which Power Lines are Suspected of Causing Cancer – Sagan, Chapter 10. The Dragon in My Garage – Tedesco, P. & Cicchetti, J. (2001). Like cures like: homeopathy. <i>The American Journal of Nursing</i>, 101, 43-49 • Video: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Segment from NOVA (1993) "Secrets of the Psychics." – Segment from Scientific American Frontiers (1997) "Beyond Science: Healing Touch"
3	Oct 5	<p><i>The Psychology of Persuasion: Evaluating Sources of Information</i></p> <p>If it appears in print, it must be true, right? How do we know when a publication is reputable? How do we know whether someone is an expert? What does it mean for a study to have been "peer reviewed"? Is peer review important? How strong is a testimonial?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ruscio, Evaluating Sources Whether in Print or on the World Wide Web (pp. xix-xxv) [7 pp.] – Ruscio, Chapter 5. Experience: The Limitations of Testimonials as Evidence [11 pp.] – Sdorow, L. (1990). The Art of Persuasion. In <i>Psychology</i> (pp. 607-611). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown. [4 pp.] • Supplementary Reading: Park, Chapter 3. Placebos Have Side Effects

Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
3	Oct 7	<p><i>Case Study: Deepak Chopra</i> Think yourself well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chopra, D. (1990). The Mystery of the Gap. In <i>Quantum Healing</i>. New York, NY: Bantam Books. [14 pp] – Wheeler, T. J. (1997). Deepak Chopra and Maharishi Ayurvedic Medicine. <i>Shameless Mind</i>, http://www.trancenet.org/chopra/news/ncahf.shtml [15 pp] – Skolnick, A. A. (1992). The Maharishi Caper. <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 16, 254-259 [5 pp] • Supplementary Readings : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Greenwood, M. T. et al. (1991). Letters to the Editor. <i>Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)</i>, 266, 1769-1774. – Sharma, H., Triguna, B.D. & Chopra, D. (1991). Maharishi Ayur-Veda: Modern Insights into Ancient Medicine. <i>JAMA</i>, 265, 2633-2637. – Sharma, H. & Chopra, D. (1991). Response to Letters. <i>JAMA</i>, 266, 1774. – Singer, M. et al. (1992). Letters to the Editor. <i>JAMA</i>, 267, 1337-1340. – Skolnick, A. A. (1991). Maharishi Ayur-Veda: Guru's Marketing Scheme Promises the World Eternal 'Perfect Health.' <i>JAMA</i>, 266, 1741-1750 – Turner, J.A. et al. (1994). The importance of placebo effects in pain treatment and research. <i>JAMA</i>, 271, 1609-1614. • Video: Segment from Deepak Chopra's "Quantum Healing"
4	Oct 12	<p><i>Self-deception: How Scientists Fool Themselves</i> Even experts can fool themselves, sometimes with embarrassing or devastating consequences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Asimov, I. (1988). The Radiation that Wasn't. <i>The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction</i>, March 1988, 131-141. [10 pp] – Ruscio, Chapter 10. Belief: Confirmation Bias, Post-Hockery, and Overconfidence [14 pp] – Shermer, Chapter 3. How Thinking Goes Wrong [17 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Targ, R. & Puthoff, H. (1974). Information transmission under conditions of sensory shielding. <i>Nature</i>, 251, 602-607 [5 pp.] – Randi, J. (1988). The Laurel and Hardy of Psi. In <i>Flim Flam!</i> Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. • Video: Segment from NOVA (1993) "Secrets of the Psychics."

Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
4	Oct 14	<p><i>Quiz 1: Science and the Scientific Method</i> <i>Case Study: Gary Schwartz and John Edward</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Hyman, R. (2003). How Not to Test Mediums: Critiquing the Afterlife Experiments. <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 27, 20-30. [10 pp] – Schwartz, G. E. (2002). The Canyon Ranch Experiment. In <i>The Afterlife Experiments</i>. New York, NY: Pocket Books. [xx pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Greasley, P. (2000). Management of Positive and Negative Responses in a Spiritualist Medium Consultation. <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 24, 45-49. – Hyman, R. (1977). "Cold Reading": How to Convince Strangers that You Know All About Them. <i>The Zetetic</i>, 1(2), 18-37. – Marks, D. & Kamman, R.. (1980). Kreskin's Riddle (Ch. 4) and Solving Kreskin's Riddle (Ch. 5). In <i>The Psychology of the Psychic</i> (pp. 42-72). Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books. – Wiseman, R. & O'Keefe, C. (2001). Accuracy and Replicability of Anomalous After-death Communication Across Highly Skilled Mediums: A Critique. <i>The Paranormal Review</i>, 19, 3-6. • Video: Segment from John Edward's "Crossing Over"

Section II: Facts and Misconceptions about the Brain and Behavior

5	Oct 19	<p><i>Neural processes</i> How does the brain really work? What are the functions of the brain that produce hallucinations? What is a near-death experience and can it be explained as a natural result of neural processing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sdorow, L. (1990). Psychobiological Processes. In <i>Psychology</i> (pp. 54-95). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown. [41 pp.] – Blackmore, S. (1992). Near-death Experiences. <i>The Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 16, 34-45. [9 pp.] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sacks, O.L. (1985). Reminiscence. In <i>The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat</i> (pp. 134-149). New York, NY: Summit Books. – Shermer, Chapter 5. Through the Invisible: Near Death Experiences and the Quest for Immortality
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5	Oct 21	<p><i>Perceptual Illusions</i></p> <p>Seeing is believing. It is hard to be objective about the things we see. But our perceptual system can be easily fooled. Today we talk about visual perception and the way it works. These workings can lead to interesting visual illusions, some small and some large.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fineman, M. B. (1998). Sightings: UFOs and Visual Perception. <i>The New England Journal of Skepticism</i>, 1(3). [5 pp.] – Rock, I. (1984). Constancy. In <i>Perception</i> (pp. 15-51). New York, NY: Scientific American Books. [35 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gardner, M. (1957). Flying Saucers. In <i>Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science</i> (pp. 55-68). Toronto: Dover Press. – Rock, I. (1984). The Perception of Motion. In <i>Perception</i> (pp. 177-201). New York NY: Scientific American Books.
6	Oct 26	<p><i>Memory</i></p> <p>Why is it that some memories seem so strong, and others are so hard to reconstruct? Is memory like a video recorder, storing all of our experiences in a wet, gray filing cabinet, or is it something else? How reliable are our memories, anyway?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Schacter, D. L. (1995). Memory Distortion: History and Current Status. In D. L. Schacter (Ed.) <i>Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brain, and Societies Reconstruct the Past</i> (1-43). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [43 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frederickson, R. (1992). Warning Signs. In <i>Repressed Memories: A Journey to Recovery from Sexual Abuse</i> (pp. 33-51). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. – Loftus, E. F. (1975). Leading questions and the eyewitness report. <i>Cognitive Psychology</i>, 7, 560-572. – Loftus, E. F. & Ketcham, K. (1994). Lost in a Shopping Mall. In <i>The Myth of Repressed Memory</i> (pp. 73-101). New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin. – Sagan, Chapter 9: Therapy
6	Oct 28	<i>Exam I (in class), material through Week 5</i>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
7	Nov 2	<p><i>Judgment and Decision Making</i></p> <p>Sometimes people make stupid choices, even very smart people. Why does this happen, and how can our decision-making mechanisms reinforce bizarre beliefs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ruscio, Chapter 13. Classical Decision Theory [12 pp] – Schick and Vaughn, Chapter 6: Evidence and Interference [25 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arkes, H. (1989). Principles in Judgment/Decision Making Research Pertinent to Legal Proceedings. <i>Behavioral Sciences and the Law</i>, 7, 429-456. – Park, Chapter 8: Judgment Day: In Which the Courts Confront Junk Science
7	Nov 4	<p><i>Learning: Superstition</i></p> <p>What we have learned, past experiences, have strong effects on our decision-making processes. Often, superstitious behavior can result from past experiences. Today we discuss the development of superstition and how it relates to judgment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Vyse, Chapter 3. Superstition and Coincidence [34 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Kruger, J., Savitsky, K. & Gilovich, T. (1999). Superstition and the Regression Effect. <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 23, 24-29. – Ruscio, Chapter 3. Magic: The Allure of Exotic Rituals, Fantasy and Mysticism.
8	Nov 9	<p><i>Quiz 2: Brain and Cognition</i></p> <p><i>Case Study: Alien Abductions</i></p> <p>Why do extraterrestrials need to kidnap certain people and subject them to humiliating physical examinations aboard their spacecraft? If these little gray folk are trying to be discrete, why kidnap prominent authors and artists, who seem to make lots of money writing books and selling alien portraits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sagan, Chapter 6: Hallucinations [12 pp] – Shermer, Chapter 6: Abducted! [11 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Blackmore, S. (1998). Abduction by Aliens or Sleep Paralysis? <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 22, 23-28. – Neimark, J. (1994). The Harvard professor and the UFO's. <i>Psychology Today</i>, 44-48, 74-90. – Strieber, W. (1987). First Memories: December 26, 1985. In <i>Communion</i> (pp. 9-33). New York, NY: Avon Books. • Video: Segments from NOVA, "Kidnapped by UFOs?"

Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
8	Nov 11	Veterans Day

Section III: Social Influence

9	Nov 16	<p><i>Hypnosis</i></p> <p>Skilled hypnotists can put a person in a trance. In this trance-like state, a person will commit crimes, remember license plate numbers, revert to a past life, demonstrate superhuman strength or resistance to pain, or act like a chicken, all at the request of the hypnotist. Or maybe not.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nash, Michael, R. (2001). The Truth and the Hype of Hypnosis. <i>Scientific American</i>, 285, 46-55. [9 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Baker, R. A. (1990). Popular Misconceptions of Hypnosis. In <i>They Call It Hypnosis</i> (pp. 23-50). Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. – Goldberg, B. (1982). Documented Proof of Reincarnation(Ch. 4) and On a Clear Day You Can See Yesterday: Age Regression With Hypnosis (Ch. 5).. In <i>Past Lives, Future Lives</i>. North Hollywood, CA: Newcastle Publishing.
9	Nov 18	<p><i>Group Dynamics</i></p> <p>Being part of a group can form an important part of a person's identity. For example, some people define themselves as devout Catholics. Others belong to gangs, militias, or the Masonic Lodge. How does group membership foster bizarre beliefs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frederickson, R. (1992). A Dawning Reality. In <i>Repressed Memories: A Journey to Recovery from Sexual Abuse</i> (pp. 21-32). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. [11 pp] – Sdorow, L. (1990). Social Influence. In <i>Psychology</i> (pp. 624-637). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown. [13 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bearak, B. (1997). Eyes on Glory: Pied Pipers of Heaven's Gate. <i>The New York Times</i>, April 28, 1997. – Heaven's Representatives (1996). Do's Intro: Our Purpose – The Simple Bottom Line. In <i>Heaven's Gate: How and When Heaven's Gate May Be Entered</i> (pp. iii-iv). New Mexico: Heaven's Representatives. – Myers, D. G. & Bishop, G. D. (1970). Discussion effects on racial attitudes. <i>Science</i>, 169, 778-779. – Vallone, R. P., Ross, L. & Lepper, M. R. (1985). The hostile media phenomenon: Biased perception and perceptions of media bias in coverage of the Beirut massacre. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 49, 577-585.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
10	Nov 23	<p><i>The Role of the Media</i></p> <p>Larry King is a notable, respected television journalist. His program, "Larry King Live," routinely hosts self-proclaimed psychic Sylvia Browne, during which she takes calls from the television audience and provides personalized psychic readings. Does the fact that a major news network (CNN) "endorses" these programs have any implications for the way people perceive Sylvia Browne? You betcha...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Park, Chapter 1. It's Not News, It's Entertainment: In Which the Media Cover Voodoo Science. [24 pp] – Ruscio, Chapter 9. Risk: Biased Perceptions and the Media Paradox. [9 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Murray, D., Schwartz, J., & Lichter, S. R. (2001). In <i>It Ain't Necessarily So: How Media Make and Unmake the Scientific Picture of Reality</i>. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. • Video: Assorted news clips and videos
10	Nov 25	<p><i>Thanksgiving Day</i></p>
11	Nov 30	<p><i>Conspiracy Theories</i></p> <p>The CIA murdered John F. Kennedy. No Jews were murdered in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center because they were all warned to stay home. HIV was engineered to achieve the genocide of African people. Conspiracies are all around us, evident in the most mundane of everyday events. What is the appeal of such theories and how are they perpetuated? Do they actually serve a purpose?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Harrington, E. (1996). Conspiracy Theories and Paranoia. <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 20, 35-42 [7 pp] – Pipes, D. (1997). Unmasking the Conspiracy Theory. In <i>Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From</i>, (pp. 37-51). New York, NY: Free Press. [15 pp] – Sagan, Chapter 5. Spoofing and Secrecy [18 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Goldberg, R. A. (2001). In <i>Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America</i>. Yale University Press. – Vankin, J. & Whalen, J. (1998). Apolloscam. In <i>The Seventy Greatest Conspiracies of All Time: History's Biggest Mysteries, Coverups, and Cabals</i>. Citadel Trade.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings and Videos
11	Dec 2	<p><i>Case Study: Satanic Ritual Abuse</i></p> <p>Some victims of sexual abuse claim that their abusers forced them to take part in grotesque rituals. They testify that they were forced to bear the children of their abusers, and then forced to murder and cannibalize their own babies. The Satanic Cult conspiracy is vast and sophisticated, involving law enforcement, day care, teachers, big business, and funeral directors (who dispose of the incriminating remains).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ofshe, R. & Waters, E. (1994). Reason and Darkness: The Strange Stories of Satanic Abuse. In <i>Making Monsters</i> (pp. 177-204). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. [27 pp] • Supplementary Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lorena, J. M. & Levy, P. (1996). Selected chapters from <i>Breaking Ritual Silence: An Anthology of Ritual Abuse Survivors' Stories</i>. Trout and Sons. (Warning: The material in this reading is sexually explicit and violent. Don't read it if you don't want to.) – Smith, M. (1981). In <i>Michelle Remembers</i>. Pocket Books. (Warning: The material in this reading is sexually explicit and violent. Don't read it if you don't want to.) – Trott, J. (1991). Satanic panic. <i>Cornerstone</i>, 20, 9-12. – Victor, J. S. 1991. Satanic cult survivor stories. <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i>, 15, 274-280. • Video: Segments from Frontline's "The Search for Satan"

Exam II (during Finals Week), material from Week 6 through Week 11
