

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

GE-007-190

IGE 3600: UFOs, Illuminati, and Other Conspiracy Theories (D4 New Course)

General Education Committee

Date: 10/31/2019

Executive Committee
Received and Forwarded

Date: 02/12/2020

Academic Senate

Date: 02/19/2020
First Reading
03/18/2020
Second Reading

TITLE OF REFERRAL: IGE 3600: UFOs, Illuminati, and Other Conspiracy Theories

BACKGROUND:

This is a new general education course proposed for GE Sub-Area D4.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

Office of Academic Programs, Dennis Quinn-Chair of the IGE Department

DISCUSSION:

This is a new GE course proposed for Area D4. In its evaluation of the course, the GE Committee found that it meets the requirements of GE Area D4 SLOs.

RECOMMENDATION:

The GE Committee recommends approval of GE-007-190: IGE 3600: UFOs, Illuminati, and Other Conspiracy Theories (D4)

Curriculog printout provided for reference only. For latest information refer to Curriculog database

IGE - 3600 - UFOs, Illuminati, and Other Conspiracy Theories

C. Course - New/Modify General Education

General Catalog Information

Department*

Interdisciplinary General Education

Proposal Type*

New GE Course Modify GE Course

Modification Summary

Establish or Modify Articulation Agreement*

Yes No

Subject Area*

IGE

Catalog Number* 3600

Formal Course Title* UFOs, Illuminati, and Other Conspiracy Theories

Abbreviated Course Title* UFOs, Illum, Conspiracy Theory

Unit(s)*

(3)

C/S Classification*

C-02 (Lecture Discussion)

To view C/S Classification Long Description click: http://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/scheduling/Documents/Curriculum%20Guide/Appendix_C_CS_Classification.pdf

Component*

Lecture

Contact Hour(s)

Instruction Mode(s)*

Web-Assisted

Grading Basis*

Graded Only

May be taken only once

**Repeat for Credit
Limit**

**If course may be
repeated for
credit, total units
applicable to
degree and max
units per
semester.**

When Offered

**Cross Listed
Course Subject
Area and Catalog
Nbr**

**Dual Listed
Course Subject
Area and Catalog
Nbr**

**Course Category
(select all that
apply)***

- Major Course
- Service Course (used in other programs)
- GE Course
- None of the above

GE Area/Subarea*

D4

To view the General Education SubArea definitions, click <http://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/scheduling/Documents/Ch.3-GeneralEducationProposals.pdf>.

I. Catalog Description

Catalog Description* This course explores the meaning, attraction, proliferation, and potential dangers of conspiratorial thinking within historical context. Topics will include: conspiracy narratives as expressions of anxieties about the relationship between the individual and the state; cross-cultural examinations of conspiracy narratives; and the historical, social, and cultural discourse around conspiracy theories about UFOs and Area 51, the JFK assassination, 9/11, the moon landing, the sphericity of the earth, and the Illuminati.

II. Required Coursework and Background (i.e. Enrollment Requirements)

**Prerequisite(s)
(leave blank if
none)** Completion of lower division GE requirements A1, A2, A3, B4, D1, D2, and D3.

Corequisite(s)

**Pre or
Corequisite(s)
(leave blank if
none)**

**Concurrent (leave
blank if none)**

III. Course Note(s) (OPTIONAL)

Note(s)

IV. Expected Outcomes

**A. List the
knowledge, skills,
or abilities which
students should
possess upon
completing the
course.***

By completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the proliferation of conspiratorial thinking within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts;
2. Analyze the political, religious, and racial ideologies that inform various conspiracy theories;
3. Analyze the pseudoscientific basis and rationale for conspiratorial thinking;
4. Demonstrate how conspiracy theories can express social anxieties about the relationship between the individual and the state;
5. Assess the reasons why individuals and political/social groups identify with conspiratorial worldviews through the perspectives of historical, political, sociological, and cultural disciplines and methodologies.

| Course and Program Outcomes | PO #1 - Effective Communication | PO #2 - Critical Thinking | PO #3 - Historical, Social, and Multicultural Understanding | PO #4 - Articulation of Values | PO Un an Ap of Ex |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| SLO 1 | x | x | x | x | x |
| SLO 2 | x | x | | x | |
| SLO3 | x | x | | | |
| | | | | | |
| SLO 5 | x | x | x | | |

B. If this is a course for the major, describe how these outcomes relate to the mission, goals and objectives of the major program.

C. Explain how the course meets the description of the GE SubArea(s). Please select appropriate outcomes according to the GE Area/SLO mapping.*

D4: Social Science Synthesis

“Courses in this area shall focus on either a deeper or broader understanding of a set of concepts and their application in the solution of a variety of specific social problems. Courses shall take a more integrative approach and examine the historical development and cross-cultural distribution of patterns of social behavior as well as different theories and approaches in the field.”

This course will examine the proliferation of conspiracies theories about: the Illuminati; government knowledge of aliens and UFOs; 9/11 as government-planned; and the CIA’s role in the JFK assassination as well as conspiracy theories denying the Holocaust, the moon landings, and the sphericity of the earth. Students will analyze readings and integrate methods form multiple disciplines such as history, political theory, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies in order to understand how such views are perpetuated and utilized by

various
groups.

1) Include readings from original primary/historical sources, as opposed to only secondary sources.

1. Students will critically evaluate the conspiracy theories in monographs, documentaries and other films, and websites. They will learn to use methodologies from multiple social science disciplines and present original ideas and personal connections. To offer two examples, students will examine Holocaust deniers' theories from the perspective of the history of Jewish-Christian relations and ethnic studies. They will also examine the deniers of the spherical nature of the earth by studying the history of the conflict between history and science as well as the sociology of religion.

1)

Promote original and critical thinking in writing and/or discussion

social science disciplines and present original ideas and personal connections. They will use critical thinking skills to evaluate the evidence used in science and pseudoscience as well as sociology to understand the social underpinnings of conspiratorial thinking.

2) Focus attention on understanding the interrelationships among the disciplines and their applications.

- Students will study conspiracy theories through historical, sociological, and cultural lenses to understand what disciplines provide for answering questions presented in class. For example, students will see how sociology, science, and the history of science education can be integrated to get a clearer understanding of UFO conspiracy theories.

3) Examine ideas and issues covered in this area in deeper and/or broader more integrative ways.

- Students will examine conspiracy theories from a multidisciplinary perspective and identify how the various methodologies help broaden their ability to understand the causes and implications of conspiratorial thinking. For example, students will integrate US history, American politics, and psychology to understand why JFK assassination conspiracy theories arose in the late sixties and have proliferated to the present.

4) Encourage synthetic-creative thinking in order to identify problems, understand broader implications and construct original ideas:

- Students will be assigned synthesis papers that require integrating two or more secondary sources with one primary source to come up with their own conclusions. They will also be asked to reflect on previous courses taken in college and reflect on how they connect to the material covered. Students will acquire tools from multiple disciplines and methodologies and apply them to the course's primary, literary, film, and secondary sources, synthesizing ideas to come up with their own approaches to the course content.

5) Identify and evaluate assumptions and limitations of ideas and models:

- Students will examine the controversies surrounding the labeling of "actual conspiracies" and "conspiracy theories" in course texts and other materials to better evaluate the basis for truth claims. For example, students will examine the conspiracy behind the 9/11 airline attack and contrast facts about the event with conspiracy

division course:

- Students will develop their oral and written communication skills through various writing assignments, in class presentations, and oral presentations that synthesize social science disciplines and methodologies from course readings and previous social science classes.

7) Provide student work for assessment of the student's understanding of the required educational objectives in this subarea or in this course.

- Instructors will assign a signature assignment that is thesis-driven and requires the synthesis of two or more disciplines to construct original ideas. This assignment will be assessed by the department assessment committee using a writing rubric.

D. Describe how these outcomes relate to the associated GE Learning Outcomes listed below.*

GE Area D4:

1a: Write effectively for various audiences.

Students will complete several formal and informal reading responses and essays, textual and art analyses, creative writings, in-class writings, and other assignments.

1b: Speak effectively to various audiences.

Student will participate in small and large group discussions and presentations that require the ability to synthesize and present information in various formats.

1c: Find, evaluate, use, and share information effectively and ethically.

Students will conduct research for their group projects, complete an annotated bibliography, and present to class using various media as appropriate, while learning to respect the complex arguments involved in conspiracy theories and learning the potential negative impact those theories have on certain individuals and groups.

1d: Construct arguments based on sound evidence and reasoning to support an opinion or conclusion.

After reading works by conspiracy theorists, students will evaluate and organize evidence from the primary and secondary materials to examine methodologies,

2d: Integrate concepts, examples, and theories from more than one discipline to identify problems, construct original ideas, and draw conclusions.

Students will integrate readings and methods from multiple disciplines including history, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies in order to understand why such views are perpetuated and utilized by those possessing certain ideologies, racial views, and political orientations. For example, students will examine the political and historical development of theories regarding the Illuminati, while also reflecting on the symbolism associated with this group. They may also examine the history of the "Jewish conspiracy" or fear of "Sharia Law in the US" in modern political discourse from the perspective of ethnic studies, US history, and visual and material culture.

3a. Analyze the historical development of diverse cultures and the role they play in shaping core institutions and practices of individuals and societies.

Students will research and learn to problematize various racial/cultural stereotypes rooted in binary American political and cultural narratives about "us vs. them" and will analyze how they inform many conspiracy theories. They will also read/hear voices from those groups who have been targeted by conspiracy theories as a result and how many have been able to overcome these challenges.

3b: Analyze principles, methods, value systems, and ethics of social issues confronting local and global communities.

Students will analyze and evaluate the conspiracy theories in the secondary and primary literature from multiple perspectives to understand some of the negative consequences, such as the perpetuation of false stereotypes, that such theories can have. For example, students will examine how politicians have used conspiracy theories about racial and ethnic minorities to marginalize and exclude groups from the political process and gain political and economic power.

**General Education
Outcomes***

Ia. Write effectively for various audiences

Ib. Speak effectively to various audiences.

Ic. Find, evaluate, use, and share information effectively and ethically.

Id. Construct arguments based on sound evidence and reasoning to support an opinion or conclusion.

IId. Integrate concepts, examples, and theories from more than one discipline to identify problems, construct original ideas, and draw conclusions.

IIIa. Analyze the historical development of diverse cultures and the role they play in shaping core institutions and practices of individuals and societies.

IIIb. Analyze principles, methods, value systems, and ethics of social issues confronting local and global communities.

To view the mapping, click <https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/Documents/GE%20SLO%20Mapping.pdf>

V. Instructional Materials

Provide bibliography that includes texts that may be used as the primary source for instruction, and other appropriate reference materials to be used in instruction. The reference list should be current, arranged alphabetically by author and the materials should be listed in accepted bibliographic form.

Instructional Materials*

Books and Articles

Aaronovitch, David. *Voodoo Histories: The Role of the Conspiracy Theory in Shaping Modern History*. Jonathan Cape, 2009.

Al-Azm, Sadik J. "Orientalism and Conspiracy." *Orientalism and Conspiracy: Politics and Conspiracy Theory in the Islamic World: Essays in Honour of Sadik J. Al-Azm*, edited by Arndt Graf, Shirin Fatih, and Ludwig Paul, I. B. Tauris, 2011, 3-28.

Arnold, Gordon B. *Conspiracy Theory in Film, Television, and Politics*. Praeger, 2008.

Barkun, Michael. *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*. 2nd ed. University of California Press, 2013.

Bergmann, Eiríkur. *Conspiracy and Populism: The Politics of Misinformation*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Butter, Michael and Maurus Reinkowski, eds. *Conspiracy Theories in the United States and the Middle East: A Comparative Approach*. De Gruyter, 2014.

Cairns, Rose. "Climates of Suspicion: 'Chemtrail' Conspiracy Narratives and the International Politics of Geoengineering" *The Geographical Journal* vol 182

Fenster, Mark. *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis, 2008.

Garwood, Christine. *Flat Earth: The History of an Infamous Idea*. Macmillan, 2007

Jamil, Uzma, and Cécile Rousseau. "Challenging the 'Official' Story of 9/11: Community Narratives and Conspiracy Theories." *Ethnicities*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2011, pp. 245-61.

Jolley, Daniel, and Karen M. Douglas. "The Effects of Anti-Vaccine Conspiracy Theories on Vaccination Intentions." *PLOS ONE*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2014, pp. 1-9.

Kurtz, Michael. *The JFK Assassination Debates: Lone Gunman versus Conspiracy*. University Press of Kansas, 2006.

Marcus, Brian A. "Freemasonry and the Illuminati as Archetypes of Fear in America." *Fear Itself: Enemies Real and Imagined in American Culture*, edited by Nancy Lusignan Schultz, Purdue UP, 1999, pp. 391-410.

McCright, Aaron M. "Cool Dudes: The Denial of Climate Change among Conservative White Males in the United States." *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2011, pp. 1163-72.

Melley, Timothy. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Cornell University Press, 2000.

Numbers, Ronald L. *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*. Harvard University Press, 2006.

Robertson, David G. *UFOs, Conspiracy Theories and the New Age*. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Shermer, Michael. *Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time*. Henry Holt and Co, 1997.

Tumminia, Diana G., ed. *Alien Worlds: Social and Religious Dimensions of Extraterrestrial Contact*. Syracuse UP, 2007.

Zimmerman, John C. *Holocaust Denial: Demographics, Testimonies, and Ideologies*. University Press of America, 2000.

Primary Sources: Books

Brian, William L. *Moongate: Suppressed Findings of the U.S. Space Program, The NASA-Military Cover-Up*. Portland, OR: Future Science Research Publishing Co., 1982.

Butz, Arthur. *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the*

Hendrie, Edward. *The Greatest Lie on Earth: Proof That Our World Is Not a Moving Globe*. Great Mountain Publishing, 2016.

Meysan, Theiery. *9/11: The Big Lie*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2002.

Summers, Anthony. *Not in Your Lifetime: The JFK Assassination*. New York: Marlowe & Company, 1998.

Weishaupt, Isaac. *The Dark Path: Conspiracy Theories of Illuminati and Occult Symbolism in Pop Culture, the New Age Alien Agenda & Satanic Transhumanism*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

Primary Sources: Websites

https://wiki.tfes.org/The_Flat_Earth_Wiki

<https://www.mufon.com> (Mutual UFO Network)

<https://jfkfacts.org>

<https://www.illuminatiofficial.org>

Literature

Dan Brown, *De Vinci Code*

Eco, Umberto. *Foucault's Pendulum*

Heller, Joseph. *Catch-22*

Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*

Pynchon, Thomas, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Vonnegut, Kurt, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Films

The Da Vinci Code

Rocket Man

The Mothman Prophecies

Inception

The Matrix

Loose Change 9/11: An American Coup

Room 237

The Truman Show

The X-Files

Faculty are encouraged to make all materials accessible. Indicate with an asterisk those items that have had accessibility (ATI/Section 508) reviewed. For more information, <http://www.cpp.edu/~accessibility>

VI. Minimum Student Materials

List any materials, supplies, equipment, etc., which students must provide, such as notebooks, computers, internet access, special clothing or uniforms, safety equipment, lockers, sports equipment, etc. Note that materials that require the assessment of a fee may not be included unless the fee has been approved according to University procedures.

Minimum Student Materials* Assigned texts, notepaper, and other usual student materials.

VII. Minimum College Facilities

List the university facilities/equipment that will be required in order to offer this class, such as gymnastic equipment, special classroom, technological equipment, laboratories, etc.

Minimum College Facilities* A classroom with moveable desks and ability to access visual aids, VCR and DVD equipment, PC and projector.

VIII. Course Outline

Describe specifically what will be included in the course content. This should not be a repetition of the course description but an expansion that provides information on specific material to be included in the class, e.g. lecture topics, skills to be taught, etc. This should not be a week-by-week guide unless all instructors are expected to follow that schedule.

Course Outline*

1. What are "conspiracy theories" and why do people believe in them?
2. Why is it important to understand conspiracy theories as expressions of social anxieties?
3. The history of conspiracy theories
4. What are the potential dangers of conspiracy theories?

1. UFOs and Area 51
2. 911
3. JFK assassination
4. A flat earth
5. The moon landing
6. The Illuminati

6. What do the various conspiracy theories tell us about fear and anxiety in current society?
7. How has the digital age contributed to the proliferation of conspiratorial thinking?

IX. Instructional Methods

Describe the type(s) of method(s) that are required or recommended for the instruction of this course (lectures, demonstrations, etc.). Include any method that is essential to the course, such as the use of particular tools or software.

Instructional Methods*

Interactive approaches which require student responsibility for learning, including small group discussion, group and individual projects, and independent activities.

X. Evaluation of Outcomes

A. Describe the methods to be used to evaluate students' learning, i.e. written exams, term papers, projects, participation, quizzes, attendance, etc.*

1. In class participation (small and large group discussions and activities).
2. Written responses to assigned readings.
3. 2 Essays (5-6 pages)
4. A small-group, collaborative research project including an annotated bibliography and in-class presentation.

B. Describe the required meaningful writing assignments to be included.*

- 1. In-class participation (small and large group discussions and activities).
- 2. Written responses to assigned readings.
- 3. 2 Essays (5-6 pages)
- 4. A small-group, collaborative research project including an annotated bibliography and in-class presentation.

- Students will be assigned in-class writings and written group assignments that require synthesis of two or more readings from class.
- Students are required to write analytical and interpretive essays that synthesize two or more disciplines, works of literature, and/or films.
- Students are also required to write two 5-6 page formal essays which develop skills learned in the shorter synthesis assignments and will be evaluated by the instructor who will follow a rubric that will require integrative learning, critical thinking, historical and social consciousness, and the other IGE Learning Outcomes.
- Students are required to complete a reflective essay on their group projects that will require synthesis and critical interpretation of primary and secondary texts.
- Describe how these evaluation methods align with the course and program Learning Outcomes, as appropriate. Alternatively, you may use a matrix to align the methods to the outcomes.

IGE 3600 course outcomes and evaluation methods

| | SLO 1 | SLO 2 | SLO 3 | SLO 4 | SLO 5 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| In class participation (small and large group discussions and activities) | x | x | x | x | x |
| Written responses to assigned readings. | x | x | x | x | x |
| Group Project | x | x | x | x | x |
| Essays | x | x | x | x | x |

may be used to address the course and program outcomes, as appropriate. Include or attach a matrix to align the evaluation methods to the outcomes.*

IGE program outcomes and evaluation methods

| | PO #1 - Effective Communication | PO #2 - Critical Thinking | PO #3 - Historical, Social, and Multicultural Understanding | PO #4 - Articulation of Values | PO #5 - Understanding and Appreciation of Aesthetic Experiences |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| In class participation (small and large group discussions and activities) | x | x | x | x | x |
| Written responses to assigned readings. | x | x | x | x | x |
| Group project and presentation | x | x | x | x | x |
| Essays | x | x | x | x | x |

D. If this is a general education course, discuss how these methods may be used to address the associated GE Learning Outcomes listed below. Include or attach a matrix to align the evaluation methods to the outcomes.*

GE Area D4:

Students will advance their skills in learning to:

1a: Write effectively for various audiences.

1b: Speak effectively to various audiences.

1c: Find, evaluate, use, and share information effectively and ethically.

1d: Construct arguments based on sound evidence and reasoning to support an opinion or conclusion.

2d: Integrate concepts, examples, and theories from more than one discipline to

3a. Analyze the historical development of diverse cultures and the role they play in shaping core institutions and practices of individuals and societies.

3b: Analyze principles, methods, value systems, and ethics of social issues confronting local and global communities.

IGE 3400 evaluation methods and GE SLOs

| | 1a Write effectively for various audiences | 1b Speak effectively to various audiences | 1c Find, evaluate, use, and share information effectively and ethically. | 2b Analyze major literary, philosophical, historical or artistic works and explain their significance in society | 3a Analyze the historical development of diverse cultures and the role they play in shaping core institutions and practices of individuals and societies |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| In class participation (small and large group discussions and activities) | | x | x | x | x |
| Written responses to assigned readings. | x | | x | x | x |
| Group Project and presentation | x | x | x | x | x |
| Essays | x | | x | x | x |

**Department/
College Required
ECO Information
(Optional)**

FOR OFFICE OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS USE ONLY

**AY Proposal
Submitted** 2019-2020

**AY Proposal
Implemented**

**PS Academic
Group** 50-CEIS

**PS Academic
Organization** 376-IGE

Course Type Interdisciplinary General Education

**PS Course ID (for
modified courses
only)**

**Impact Report
(for modified
courses only)** Attached

FOR ACADEMIC SENATE OFFICE USE ONLY

Senate Referral GE-007-190
Number

**Senate Report
Number**