

## Syllabus

### **Fringe History, Pseudoscience, and Popular Culture**

HIST 443: Summer 2011

**Credit:** Three semester hours

**Instructor:** Dr. Ronald Fritze

**Office:** Founders 231

**Office Hours:** Unless I am in class or a meeting, I will be working in my office Monday through Friday from 8:00-4:30.

**Telephone:** 233-6524

**email:** ron.fritze@athens.edu

*(Feel free to contact me either by phone or email. Email will probably get you a prompter response.)*

**Website:** at Planet Clio, go to:

[http://www.corndancer.com/fritze/invntdknwdg/invknw\\_home.html](http://www.corndancer.com/fritze/invntdknwdg/invknw_home.html)

This site has the syllabus posted along with instructions for assignments and other useful material.

### **Required Texts:**

Michael Shermer, *Why People Believe Weird Things*

Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*

Ronald Fritze, *Invented Knowledge*

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes*

Heather Pringle, *The Master Plan*

**Course Description:** This class will survey the phenomenon of fringe knowledge in modern culture. It will show how history and science are misused and twisted so that they appear to support highly speculative and often fantastical theories about the past. Examples from American, European, and World history will be investigated.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Students will gain a working knowledge of the main theories related to fringe knowledge about the human past.
2. Students will become familiar with the individuals who played an important role in promoting fringe theories about the human past.

3. Students will become acquainted the secondary literature and the reference materials dealing with Pseudo-history and Pseudoscience and write a critical book review.

4. Students will sample and evaluate a work of Pseudo-history or Pseudoscience and write an analytical book review about it.

5. Students will use their knowledge to evaluate and to critique films and documentaries related to Pseudo-history and Pseudoscience and write critical analyses of such documentaries.

**Class Attendance:** Coming to classes is an integral part of the learning experience. Students need to try to make every class meeting. If they cannot make it to class they need to inform the instructor ahead of time, if possible. They definitely need to explain their absence, after the fact, if they did not explain it beforehand. Four absences, both excused and unexcused, will result in the student being dropped from the class.

**Academic Misconduct:** For definitions and procedures regarding academic dishonesty and plagiarism, see the Student Handbook.

**Examinations and Quizzes:** The tests in this class will consist of five reading quizzes on the Shermer, Barkun, Fritze, Benite, and Pringle books and a final exam. The reading quizzes will be objective and/or short answer questions. The final will be essay and some objective questions. It will be based on the lectures and the five textbooks.

**Grading:**

This class will consist of 750 total points.

200 : five reading quizzes at 40 points each.

200 : final

80 : book review of a scholarly book about pseudohistory

80 : book review of a work of pseudohistory

180 : six critiques of documentaries at 30 points each

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750 total

675-750 = A

600-674 = B

525-599 = C

450-524 = D

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to come to class and be prepared to discuss the various topics at the appropriate times.

**Book Reviews and Critiques of Documentaries:** See separate handouts or instructional documents on the course website.

## Schedule

M A Y	
<b>25</b>	DAY ONE: Orientation to the Class: exams, papers, and projects Defining Fringe History and Pseudo-Science Definitions and concepts of myth and legend Methodologies of Fringe History and Pseudo-Science <i>Vikings</i> dvds
J U N E	
<b>1</b>	DAY TWO: <i>Why People Believe Weird Things</i> , book quiz Egyptomania Pyramid video Sphinx video <i>Atlantis</i> dvd
<b>8</b>	DAY THREE <i>A Culture of Conspiracy</i> , book quiz Kennedy Assassination Theories Moon Landing Hoaxes Ancient Aliens <i>Ancient Aliens</i> dvd
<b>15</b>	DAY FOUR <i>Invented Knowledge</i> , book quiz Myth of the Moundbuilders Moundbuilder video Madoc Lecture <i>Templars in America</i> dvd
<b>22</b>	DAY FIVE <i>Ten Lost Tribes</i> , book quiz Ark of the Covenant Afrocentricism <i>1421</i> dvd
<b>29</b>	DAY SIX <i>The Master Plan</i> , book quiz Protocols of the Elders of Zion Holocaust Denial <i>Nazis and the Occult</i> dvd
J U L Y	
<b>27</b>	DAY SEVEN Presentations of Book Reviews with Q and A
A U G U S T	
<b>3</b>	DAY EIGHT Final Exam

**Due dates for written assignments  
(submissions to be done through Safe Assign):**

**1 June**, Viking documentaries

**8 June**, Atlantis documentary

**15 June**, Ancient Aliens documentary

**22 June**, Templars in America documentary

**29 June**, 1421 documentary

**6 July**, Nazis and the Occult documentary

**20 July**, book review of a scholarly work

**27 July**, book review of a work of pseudo-scholarship



**To find this syllabus on the web:**

[http://www.corndancer.com/fritze/invntdknwldg/invknw\\_sylsum11.html](http://www.corndancer.com/fritze/invntdknwldg/invknw_sylsum11.html)