

**University of North Texas at Dallas**  
**Spring 2016**  
**SYLLABUS for Distance Learning**

**CJUS 4870: Special Projects: Conspiracy Theories**

<b>Department of</b>	<b>Criminal Justice</b>	<b>Division of</b>	<b>Liberal Arts and Sciences</b>
<b>Instructor Name:</b>	Richard N. Holden, Ph.D.		
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<b>Office Hours:</b>	Virtual or by appointment		
<b>Classroom Location:</b>	Online		
<b>Class Meeting Days &amp; Times:</b>	Online		
<b>Course Catalog Description:</b>	This course investigates the phenomenon associated with conspiracy theories. Using a variety of critical thinking techniques, specific conspiracy theories will be evaluated. Moreover, the belief patterns underlying conspiracy theories will be examined.		
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	None		
<b>Required Text:</b>	Mark Fenster (2008). <i>Conspiracy Theories, Rev.</i> Katherine S. Olmstead (2009) <i>Real Enemies</i>		
<b>Access to Learning Resources:</b>	UNT Dallas Library: phone: (972) 780-3625; web: <a href="http://www.unt.edu/unt-dallas/library.htm">http://www.unt.edu/unt-dallas/library.htm</a> UNT Dallas Bookstore: phone: (972) 780-3652; e-mail: <a href="mailto:1012mgr@fheg.follett.com">1012mgr@fheg.follett.com</a>		
<b>Course Goals or Overview:</b>	The goals of this course are as follows -		
	An examination of conspiracy theories; their origins, validity, and impact on the socio/political environment of the U.S. Moreover, the course will help students enhance critical thinking skills through the evaluation of information upon which conspiracy theories are based.		
<b>Learning Objectives/Outcomes:</b>	At the end of this course, students will be able to:		
1	Evaluate sources of information based on rules of validity and reliability.		
2	Identify flawed thinking and spurious reasoning in assessing theoretical assertions.		
3	Identify factors separating true conspiracies from spurious theories.		
4	Describe the significant features found in most global conspiracy theories.		
5	Describe the psychology of conspiracy theorists.		
6	Identify government activities that provide the foundations and fuel for conspiracy theory creation and maintenance.		

**Online/Hybrid Course Outline**

This schedule is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes to this schedule will be communicated in class or via class email or Blackboard announcement. Additional readings and activities may be added; these will be noted in the Readings and Assignments sections.

Module TOPICS	TIMELINE
1. Conspiracy as Politics (Hofstadter's "Paranoid Style" & Fenster – pp. 1-92)	Jan 19 – Feb 7
2. Conspiracy as Cultural practice (Fenster pp. 93 - 197)	Feb 8 - Feb 21
3. Conspiracy Communities (Fenster pp. 197 -290)	Feb 21– March 13
SPRING BREAK	March 14 – 21
4. Government Secrecy and Conspiracies (Olmstead pp. 1-110)	March 21 – April 10
5. The Growth of Conspiracy Theories (Olmstead pp. 111-240)	April 11 – May 6
6. Final Exam (comprehensive multiple choice/true-false)	May 7 - 13

## Course Evaluation Methods

This course will utilize the following instruments to determine student grades and proficiency of the learning outcomes for the course.

### Discussion Posts

Each student will be required to post to (5) different discussion board postings during the semester. The discussion board topics will correspond with information from each selected readings. Each student will be required to post to the discussion question asked and then reply to (2) other student's posts. **Postings will be graded according to the Content and Grammatical Value in each posting.** Completion date will be posted on each discussion question located inside the Discussion Board link.

### Discussion Board Grading:

- 0 - 100 points for posting to each discussion question.
- 0 - 500 total points for the (5) discussion questions can be earned.
- 0 - 15 total points for posting to 2 other student's posts.

### Exercises - case studies, critiques, etc.

Exercises will consist of a variety of video critiques. Grading guidelines are the same as for discussion board postings.

### Exams

#### Grading Matrix:

Activities/Assignments	Value (percentages)
5 Exams (8% each)	40%
5 Discussions (5% each)	25%
5 Critiques (5% each)	25%
1 Final Exam (10%)	10%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Blackboard Posting Grading Rubric</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Minimal</b>
<b>Quality and Thoroughness of response (40%)</b>	<b>40 points</b>	<b>30 points</b>	<b>20 points</b>	<b>10 points</b>
<b>Grammar and structure (30%)</b>	<b>30 points</b>	<b>25 points</b>	<b>20 points</b>	<b>15 points</b>
<b>Quality of response to other student's posts (2 responses) (15% each; 30% of total)</b>	<b>30 points</b>	<b>25 points</b>	<b>20 points</b>	<b>15 points</b>

### **Grade Determination**

**A = 90% or better**

**B = 80 – 89 %**

**C = 70 – 79 %**

**D = 60 – 69 %**

**F = less than 60%**

## **University Policies and Procedures**

### **Students with Disabilities (ADA Compliance):**

Chapter 7(7.004) Disability Accommodations for Students

The University of North Texas at Dallas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations must first register with the Disability Services Office (DSO) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the DSO will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, DSO notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet/communicate with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Disability Services Office website at <http://www.untDallas.edu/disability>. You may also contact them by phone at 972-338-1777; by email at [UNTDDisability@untDallas.edu](mailto:UNTDDisability@untDallas.edu) or at Building 2, room 204.

### **Blackboard Learn Accessibility Statement:**

The University of North Texas at Dallas is committed to ensuring the online and hybrid courses are usable by all students and faculty, including those with disabilities. If you encounter any difficulties with technologies, please contact our ITSS Department. To better assist them, you would want to have the operating system, web browser and information on any assistive technology being used. Blackboard Learn course management system's accessibility statement is also provided: <http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Learn/Resources/Accessibility.aspx>

**NOTE:** Additional instructional technology tools, such as Turnitin, Respondus, Panopto, and publisher cartridge content (i.e. MyLab, Pearson, etc.) may NOT be fully ADA compliant. Please contact our Disability Office should you require additional assistance utilizing any of these tools.

### **Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness Policy:**

Student evaluation of teaching effectiveness is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT Dallas. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this

class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider students' evaluations to be an important part of your participation in this class.

**Assignment Policy:** (According to the instructor's discretion while working in concert with the division/program's guidelines).

**Exam Policy:** (Online exams and the ability to retake is solely at the instructor's discretion). NOTE: Online exams may be proctored on campus per instructor's discretion.

**Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is a hallmark of higher education. You are expected to abide by the University's code of Academic Integrity policy. Any person suspected of academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating or plagiarism) will be handled in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. Refer to the Student Code of Academic Integrity at

[http://www.untDallas.edu/sites/default/files/page\\_level2/pdf/policy/7.002%20Code%20of%20Academic\\_Integrity.pdf](http://www.untDallas.edu/sites/default/files/page_level2/pdf/policy/7.002%20Code%20of%20Academic_Integrity.pdf) for complete provisions of this code.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.

Web-based Plagiarism Detection: Please be aware in some online or hybrid courses, students may be required to submit written assignments to Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism detection service, or another method. If submitting to Turnitin, please remove your title page and other personal information.

**Classroom Policies**

**Online Attendance and Participation:**

The University attendance policy is in effect for this course. Class attendance in the Blackboard classroom and participation is expected because the class is designed as a shared learning experience, and because essential information not in the textbook will be discussed in the discussion board. Online presence and participation in all class discussions is essential to the integration of course material and your ability to demonstrate proficiency. .

Attendance for this online or hybrid course is considered when you are logged in and active in Blackboard, i.e., posting assignments, taking quizzes, or completing Discussion Boards. To maintain financial aid award eligibility, activity must occur before the census date of the session or term of the course. Refer to

<http://www.untDallas.edu/registrar> for specific dates. If you are absent/not active in the course shell, it is YOUR responsibility to let the instructor know immediately, upon your return, the reason for your absence if it is to be excused. All instructors must follow university policy 7.005 covering excused absences; however, it is the instructor's discretion, as outlined in the course syllabus, of how unexcused absences may or may not count against successful completion of the course

**Inclement Weather and Online Classes:** Online classes may or may not be effected by campus closures due to inclement weather. Unless otherwise notified by your instructor via e-mail, online messaging, or online announcement, students should assume that assignments are due as scheduled.

**Online "Netiquette":**

In any social interaction, certain rules of etiquette are expected and contribute to more enjoyable and productive communication. Emails, Discussion Board messages and/or any other forms of written communication in the online environment should use proper "netiquette" (i.e., no writing in all caps (usually denotes yelling), no curse words, and no "flaming" messages (angry, personal attacks).

Racial, ethnic, or gender slurs will not be tolerated, nor will pornography of any kind.

Any violation of online netiquette may result in a loss of points or removal from the course and referral to the Dean of Students, including warnings and other sanctions in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. Refer to the Student Code of Student Rights Responsibilities and Conduct at <http://www.untDallas.edu/osa/policies>. Respect is a given principle in all online communication. Therefore, please be sure to proofread all of your written communication prior to submission.

**Diversity/Tolerance Policy:**

Students are encouraged to contribute their perspectives and insights to class discussions in the online environment. However, offensive & inappropriate language (swearing) and remarks offensive to others of particular nationalities, ethnic groups, sexual preferences, religious groups, genders, or other ascribed statuses will not be tolerated. Disruptions that violate the Code of Student Conduct will be referred to the Dean of Students as the instructor deems appropriate.

**Technology Requirements:** In order to successfully access the materials in an online or hybrid course, UNT Dallas advises that your computer be equipped with the minimum system requirements.

Blackboard Learn 9.1 is the platform software for this course. Blackboard Learn supports major web browsers such as Windows Internet Explorer, Apple Safari, Mozilla Firefox, and Google Chrome. However, since the latter two are updated continually, some recent versions may not be compatible. If you experience difficulty accessing or using components of the course, try using Internet Explorer. Also, no matter what browser you use, always enable pop-ups. For more information see:

- <http://www.untDallas.edu/dlit/ecampus/requirements>
- [https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_SP\\_12\\_and\\_SP\\_13/Student/040\\_Browser\\_Support\\_for\\_SP\\_13](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_12_and_SP_13/Student/040_Browser_Support_for_SP_13)
- [https://learn.unt.edu/bbcswebdav/institution/BrowserCheck/check\\_full.html](https://learn.unt.edu/bbcswebdav/institution/BrowserCheck/check_full.html)