Course Description: Conspiracy theories and extremist ideologies tend to share a concept that reality is not exactly as it appears on the surface, that there are hidden forces and agendas that actually govern human affairs. This course will examine extremist ideologies and theories of conspiracy as a part of American culture. Students will examine a number of radical ideas about American society and conspiracy theories, not in attempt to prove or disprove them, but to seek a greater understanding of what the existence and influence of such theories can tell us about the culture and society that produced such explanations. The course will feature examinations of greater and lesser conspiracy theories with an emphasis on the period 1890-2015, including the JFK assassination, the 9/11 conspiracy theories, McCarthyism, the “international banking conspiracy” ideas associated with some Populist leaders, Anti-Masons, various incarnations of the New World Order conspiracy, the Ku Klux Klan, and regional conspiracy theories, among others. The course will also examine cultural productions influenced by the theme of conspiracy, including films such as JFK and The Manchurian Candidate.

Course Objectives:
Students will

• be able to demonstrate knowledge of and trace the origins and development of extreme ideologies and conspiracy theories.

• be able to compare various conspiracy theories in terms of their production, dissemination, audience, ideology, and other factors.

• be able to explain the relationship between specific theories and American culture within specific historical contexts.

• develop their own interpretation, based on evidence and investigation, of the general role of conspiratorial thinking and secrecy in American culture and society.

• examine and evaluate primary and secondary sources.

Role of the instructor: The instructor will select common readings for the class; organize discussions; lecture on selected topics; advise students on paper topics; help students select appropriate sources for papers.
Role of the student: Students will engage in and discuss common readings; develop paper topics and write a research paper.

Assignments and grading:
Grades will be assigned on the traditional 100 point scale (i.e., A=90-100, B=80-89, etc.)

Consult the D2L calendar for reading assignments and due dates. Look ahead; readings and papers will be listed on the day they are due.

Major assignments:
Consult D2L calendar for due dates for assignments.

Weekly readings, readings quizzes, & class discussion 10%
Mid-term Historiographical Essay 20%
Paper proposal 20%
(Students will turn in a 1-2 page description of a research paper topic. In the proposal, students will identify a primary source or group of sources for research, identify 3 appropriate secondary sources, and briefly explain the goals and strategy of the paper.)
Presentation 10%
Final Paper 40%
(Students will complete a 12-15 page paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor within the general boundaries of the course. The paper will examine an aspect of a particular conspiracy theory, extremist movement, or aspect of secrecy in US culture and/or politics through close examination of primary sources. The paper will place topic within the appropriate historical context using relevant secondary sources.)

Required Readings
See the calendar in D2L for specific reading schedule.


In addition, secondary and primary source readings will be assigned through the D2L website, including PDF files and web links. Consult D2L calendar for daily reading schedule.

**Primary Sources**
Students will search for appropriate primary sources as part of the research project. Just to take one example, primary sources could include the wealth of documents that can be found at conspiracy websites, such as the [Mary Ferrell Foundation](http://www.maryferrell.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page) site on the JFK assassination. Here, students can find the Warren Commission report in its entirety, along with a number of declassified government documents bearing on the assassination, alongside conspiracy-oriented analyses of these sources. The analyses themselves, of course, become primary sources for this course. Conspiracy-debunking sources will also be assigned, including the wealth of resources found at John McAdams’s JFK Assassination website, which offers a sort of mirror image of the Ferrell site, including official documents interpreted in a non-conspiratorial fashion.

**Course Policies**

Rules of conduct for discussion boards and email: All posts and correspondence on discussion boards and email should be composed in standard English. Discussion posts in D2L are restricted to relevant course material and questions. All communications must be respectful at all times of other students and the professor. Profanity or derogatory comments are not
Communication Policy: Electronic Communications: The University provides all KSU students with an “official” email account with the address “students.kennesaw.edu.” As a result of federal laws protecting educational information and other data, this is the sole email account you should use to communicate with your instructor or other University officials. D2L e-mail is linked to your KSU e-mail and should be used for course-specific matters. Expect a reply from the professor within 24 hours Monday-Friday; within 48 hours if your e-mail arrives after 5 PM Friday.

Academic Integrity: Academic Integrity Statement:
Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section 5. C of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the university’s policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to university materials, misrepresentation/falsification of university records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SCAI), which includes either an “informal” resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct’s minimum one semester suspension requirement. See also https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/content/ksu-student-code-conduct.

ADA Statement: Students with qualifying disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who require “reasonable accommodation(s)” to complete the course may request
those from Office of Student Disability Services. Students requiring such accommodations are required to work with the University’s Office of Student Disability Services rather than engaging in this discussion with individual faculty members or academic departments. If, after reviewing the course syllabus, a student anticipates or should have anticipated a need for accommodation, he or she must submit documentation requesting an accommodation and permitting time for a determination prior to submitting assignments or taking quizzes or exams. Students may not request retroactive accommodation for needs that were or should have been foreseeable. Students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Student Disability Services is located in the Carmichael Student Center in Suite 267. Please visit the Student Disabilities Services website at www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/sds for more information, or call the office at 470-578-6443.

**Technology Requirements:** For this class, you will need regular and reliable access to the internet and to D2L. For class assignments, you will need access to Microsoft Word and Powerpoint, Voice Thread, Windows Media Player (free download for Mac and PC) and Adobe Reader (free download here). You must be able to send email with attachments, and upload documents. If you have any questions about D2L, please refer to the HELP link at the top of the D2L page or contact the Online Learning Services office at 770-423-6670.