



HISTORY 3308E (570)
CONSPIRACIES, DENIERS AND TRUTHERS: CONSPIRACY THEORIES IN
AMERICAN HISTORY
Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027

Instructor: Dr. Alison Meek

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Course Information

Mode of Instruction: in-person

Calendar Description:

This course will explore, in lectures and seminars, a number of major conspiracy theories in American history. Lectures will provide an overview of the theories and theorists, while seminars will delve into the primary sources in print and online.

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 History essay course at the 2200 level or above, or permission of the Department.

Antirequisite(s): [History 2193A/B](#).

Extra Information: 2.0 lecture/seminar hours.

Course Weight: 1.00

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: History

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

HIS3308E: *Conspiracies, Deniers, and Truthers: Conspiracy Theories in American History*

Dr. Alison Meek

King's University College, 2026-2027

This course will explore, in lectures and seminars, a number of major conspiracy theories in American history. Lectures will provide an overview of the theories and theorists, while seminars will delve into the primary sources in print and on-line.

Course Information

- Class Lectures and Seminars: Please see Brightspace for location and time.
 - ° Please note that you must attend the previous lecture in order to attend the following seminar.
- Mode of Instruction: In-Person
- OWL Brightspace
 - ° Course outlines and additional information are posted and updated regularly.

Course Requirements

- (1) Research Project ... 50%
- Project proposal and bibliography ... 5%
 - Due Date: Tuesday October 27th, 2026. This is due in class.
 - Project Draft ... 10%
 - Due Date: Tuesday February 9th, 2027. This is due in class.
 - Final Project ... 35%
 - Due Date: Tuesday March 30th, 2027. This is due by 5pm. Please note that formal documentation will be required for academic consideration.
- Late Penalty: As per department policy, 5% the first day and 1% per day after this. After 7 days, the assignment will not be accepted.
 - Extensions: Extensions will only be granted for medical or unavoidable situations. Extensions will not be granted on the due date or any time after the due date.

- (2) Seminars ... 50%

Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

Additional Information

- (1) Please Note: Unless something beyond my control arises, all assignments handed in on the due date will be graded and returned to you the following week of class.
- (2) Please Note: It is policy of the History Department that in order to pass the course students must submit and pass all written assignments.
- (3) Please note: King's is committed to fostering a culture of professionalism, honesty, and academic integrity, and all members of our community—faculty, staff, and students—have a role to play in promoting an ethical learning environment. Furthermore, through the work they submit for academic evaluation, students develop important habits of critical thinking, independent inquiry,

and creativity. Thus, it is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Within this course, use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools [such as Chat GPT] is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation nor for seminar discussions. The discovery of any work using external assistance (including AI) will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment.

(4) For all written assignments, the information contained in the hand-out "Writing Tips" applies. This is posted to Brightspace.

(5) It is your responsibility to ensure that you have all handouts for this course.

(6) It is your responsibility to read the UWO calendar for rules and regulations governing academic behavior.

(7) Please be aware that "students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage, from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by quotation marks and in footnotes [or endnotes]. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

° Plagiarism checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking."

<i>Seminars ... 50% General Information</i>

- The purpose of these seminars is to allow class discussions and debates in smaller groups.
- Given the nature of seminar discussions, it is best if you have your printed notes in front of you, rather than trying to flip through the readings to find the information you want to discuss.
- Each student will sign up for either Group A or Group B.
- **Please note** -- you must attend the seminar that you signed up for.
- Readings are posted to Brightspace or (hopefully) accessible via links noted above.

Readings: (These questions are posted to Brightspace in a word document.)

For each of the seminar readings, look into the following. This will include doing some background research and following the various links provided with some web sources:

1. Who is the author/s of this book/website/video? What information you can find out about the author/s?

2. What arguments are they making? Who is behind the conspiracy? How is this conspiracy being carried out?

3. What evidence do they provide? What sources do they rely upon? Experts cited? Links provided?

4. What language do they employ to describe the theory, the conspiracists, and themselves?

What images do they choose to include?

5. What do you see as the appeal of theory/evidence?

6. Critical analysis of the website: Obvious errors? Questions to ask of the site/author? Link choices? Products for sale?

Seminar Grading:

Expectations

Students will be graded on the basis of regular attendance in seminars, and more importantly on the quality and consistency of their participation in class discussions.

Grading

- Students who do not attend will receive a mark of ZERO.
 - Students in attendance who do not participate in the discussion will receive a mark of FORTY.
 - All other marks are based on my evaluation of the *quality* of your participation. Here are some general guidelines I follow when defining and assigning participation grades.
- A student who receives an **A/A+ (88/100)** for participation in discussion is one who comes to class with insightful reflections about the readings in mind. This student will come prepared with a list of questions he or she wants the class to discuss, and is prepared to steer the class discussion in one direction or another.
- A student who receives an **A- (83)** for participation is typically one who demonstrates an above average grasp of the material. An A- participant engages other students about ideas, asks questions about the material, respects the opinion of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion.
- A student who receives a **B-/B/B+ (72/75/78)** for participation in seminars typically demonstrates an understanding of the material, and does engage somewhat with the class as a whole.
- A student who receives a **C-/C/C+ (62/65/68)** for participation speaks in class albeit infrequently and often without the ability to delve further into the points and comments they are raising.
- A student who is not adequately prepared for discussion risks the grade of **D-/D/D+ (52/55/58)** for participation. A D participant hardly ever participates in class discussion, and when they do, reveal a superficial grasp of the material.

<i>Major Project ... 50%: General Information</i>
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(1) Because of the wide range of options surrounding this assignment, what follows below is a brief overview of expectations. How specifically your individual project will develop can best be discussed one on one during office hours.

(2) Regardless of medium used, these projects are to be rooted in solid research and critical analysis.

(3) You are able to work in pairs or in a group. However, I must talk with you prior to October 20th, 2026 to lay out, in writing, who will be responsible for what part of your project.

Project Proposal and Bibliography ... 5%

- ° Due Date: Tuesday October 27th, 2026. This is due in class.
- ° Length: Proposal should be about 2 pages + bibliographical sources. Yes, you may go beyond this.

Part I: Proposal. Your proposal should be quite in-depth. There are three areas to be covered.

(1) what is your topic:

~ what is the conspiracy theory that you are going to critically analyze?

Please note: subjects such as 9/11 or Pearl Harbor or Holocaust Denial are too big to tackle in their entirety. You must focus on **one part** of these CTs (e.g. Tower 7 and 9/11; Auschwitz and Holocaust Denial; codebreaking and Pearl Harbor).

(2) what is the medium you will use to present your research, analysis and conclusions:

~ some options:

- documentary film
- podcast
- research essay
- high school teaching unit
- web page (similar to SPLC or ADL)
- magazine edition
- study guide (similar to guides created by the King's library)

(3) major areas to be covered and questions to be explored:

- How do you plan on approaching primary material and the bias inherent in primary sources and historiographical arguments found in the secondary literature?
- For high school teaching unit: what grade are you teaching? What is the subject of your unit being taught?

Part II: Sources. You must include both primary and secondary sources in your bibliography.

(1) Primary Sources:

- these are the actual conspiracy theory sources you will be analyzing. These conspiracy theories can come from books, online postings, interviews, podcasts, videos... This section does not include those talking about your conspiracy theory. This is the theory itself, which may appear in various mediums.

(2) Secondary Sources:

-these are the contextual sources you will use to critically analyze your conspiracy theory and to place your CT into the broader historical context. For example, if you are looking into an element of Holocaust Denial you need sources on the Holocaust.

- biographies of your conspiracist/s
- academic books and journal articles not related to the CT itself

PLEASE NOTE: it is acceptable to use my lectures (from this course or other courses) for one or two citations **max** but my lectures are **not** to form the basis of your research. I don't want you to either regurgitate what I've talked about or to simply trust what I say.

SUBMISSION

You may submit your assignment either in person (hardcopy) during class or uploaded by the end of class to the folder each of you will have on Brightspace.

You will submit:

(1) your proposal. If you are submitting this via Brightspace **DO NOT SUBMIT AS A PDF.**

(2) a list of your primary and secondary sources **ALONG WITH** screenshots of these sources.

Project Draft ... 10%

° Due Date: Tuesday February 9th, 2027. This is due in class.

° This is your **full draft** of your final project. The draft is not to be presented in point form.

- script for video/podcast

- essay

- teaching unit (note: in the past, students developing a teaching unit have submitted a hard copy/electronic binder that includes a statement of learning outcomes, a page for power point slides which then provides your lecture notes underneath, as well as photocopies of readings, layouts of assignments, and a grading rubric).

- web page/study guide

° This portion of the assignment, regardless of medium, must be cited with footnotes or endnotes, and include your bibliography of sources used.

° Length of final projects:

- Please note – if you are working in pairs or a group then you multiply the below length requirements by the number of people involved in your project.

- Research Essays: 20 pages minimum and 25 pages maximum. This excludes any images or appendixes you might want to include as well as footnotes/endnotes and bibliography.

- Podcasts and Documentaries: 20 minutes minimum and 25 minutes maximum.

You must submit footnotes/endnotes and bibliography separately.

- Teaching Units: ~ 10 days of teaching, plus learning outcomes, assignments, readings, and grading rubric. Each class should be thought of in 50 minute chunks.

- Web Pages or Study Guide: ~ 20 pages though length will depend on you're the number of subjects you choose to focus on. We will together work out a length based upon your proposal.

- Magazines: 40 pages including images but excluding footnotes/endnotes and bibliography.

° Draft Requirements

- your research and analysis must concluded by February 9th. Thus, you will be presenting your evidence and conclusions, not what you are going to examine and hope to find.

Except for your notes for the teaching unit, none of this should be in point form. **I cannot provide feedback on information not provided.**

SUBMISSION

- You are required to submit along with your draft your **GRADED** proposal and original list of sources.

Final Project ... 35%

° Due Date: Tuesday March 30th, 2027. Please note that formal documentation is required for academic consideration. This is due by 5pm.

° Length:

- Research Essays: 20 pages minimum and 25 pages maximum. This excludes any images or appendixes you might want to include as well as footnotes/endnotes and bibliography.
- Podcasts and Documentaries: 20 minutes minimum and 25 minutes maximum. You must submit footnotes/endnotes and bibliography separately.
- Teaching Units: ~ 10 days of teaching, plus learning outcomes, assignments, readings, and grading rubric.
- Web Pages or Study Guide: ~ 20 pages though length will depend on you're the number of subjects you choose to focus on. We will together work out a length based upon your proposal.
- Magazines: 40 pages including images but excluding footnotes/endnotes and bibliography.

If you require the help of the IT department, you must have contacted them to set up an appointment well before the March 30th deadline.

SUBMISSION

- You are required to submit along with your final project your **GRADED** draft assignment.

Project Assignment Grading

Defining and Assigning Grades for written assignments: Below is a list of university-wide grade descriptors. Below each descriptor, you will find descriptive remarks about what each grade means. These remarks are meant as a sort of "road map" to help assess the degree to which a student's essay fulfills the requirements and expectations of the assignment. These guidelines should give students a clearer sense of what is behind the grades they are assigned. [Credit: thanks to Dr. Ventresca for compiling this information]

A+ (90-100%): One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level. An A+ paper is exceptional. It is sound in every respect - analysis, and presentation. It is much more than competent - it is highly original, creative, and insightful and leaves the reader with fresh perspectives and new insights on the topic under review. In addition, it is well written, eloquent, clear and concise. In short, as the university descriptor indicates, I simply could not ask for better from a student at this level.

A (80-89%): Superior work, which is clearly above average. An A paper is outstanding. The assignment demonstrates an solid grasp of the research material. It contains fresh insights, and expresses these clearly and concisely. It is written in a fluent style that stands out for its clarity and even eloquence. It contains few, if any, grammatical or other stylistic problems. The arguments are sound, penetrating, organized.

B (70-79%): Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory. A B paper is a solid piece of work. Like an A paper, it is often above average. The student demonstrates a good grasp of the information. The paper is well written, with no serious flaws. The essay is above average in organization and analysis, and is convincing in its use of the data to support the thesis or explain a given topic. The conclusions are sound, but not original. In short, the paper is competent, but not exceptional.

C (60-69%): Competent work, meeting requirements. A C paper is considered competent work. The student demonstrates an acceptable grasp of their research's argument and evidence. The paper is more or less well organized, following a logical progression, although there are sometimes lapses in this area. The

paper is best described as "descriptive" rather than "analytical" because it tends to avoid in-depth analysis, preferring to narrate facts. The reader comes away with the impression that the author does not fully understand the topic. Nor does the reader feel he/she has learned anything new from the book under review. In general, the ideas, while they be interesting, tend to be somewhat superficial, and the analysis tends to be "thin" and often wanders.

D (50-59%): Fair work, minimally acceptable. A D paper is "ok" work, and is therefore "acceptable" but cuts it close to being unacceptable at this level. The author shows some familiarity with the subject under review, but no real understanding of it. The author lacks the writing or communication skills to relate in a clear, intelligible way, the knowledge acquired from his/her analysis. The paper is disorganized; lacks structure and the ideas are not fully developed. The writing is unclear, confused, and the paper is riddled with problems of grammar and the basics of writing. There is no evidence of serious thought about the book at hand.

F (below 50%): FAIL. An F paper, obviously enough, is unacceptable work for the university-level. The author has serious problems writing and communicating ideas. The analysis is thin; the ideas are vague and show no understanding, or a total misunderstanding of the book being reviewed. Grammar and spelling problems abound, and there is no meaningful organization.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the “Special Examination” (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a multiple exam situation (i.e., you are scheduled to write more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College:
<https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Social Worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

7. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

8. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

9. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.