

Roland Végső
ENG 102: Inquiry into Conspiracy Theory

Course Description:

We are all fascinated by conspiracies and conspiracy theories. Whence this fascination? Why are we all enthralled by the suggestion that “behind it all” there is an unknown world of secret forces that makes much more sense than our everyday lives? In this class, we will consider some of the best known conspiracy theories of American history from a rhetorical perspective. We will examine a wide range of cultural texts (historical documents as well as products of popular culture) in order to ask questions about the cultural significance of conspiracy theories. We will try to identify the recurrent rhetorical strategies that are constitutive of conspiracy theories and we will evaluate their psychological, social, and political functions. Students will be asked to do research on a conspiracy theory of their own choice and explain the ways in which it participates in different forms of community formation.