



**Psyc 412 – Exploring Strange Things:
ESP, UFOs, Bigfoot, & More
(Asynchronous Online)**



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Term: Summer 2025
Course Dates: 6/2/25 to 7/2/25
Drop-In Hour: Wednesdays 10:30am-11:30am
 or schedule a Zoom anytime

GET THIS BOOK FROM TEXTBOOK RENTAL ASAP...

The Skeptics' Guide to The Universe: How to Know What's Really Real in a World Increasingly Full of Fake. By Steven Novella, Cara Santa Maria, and others (2018).

Schedule	Book Readings (and watch the related videos)	Due Dates for Discussion & Assignments (do the work prior to the following times)
LIVE TALK PAPER OPTION (May 17 th) Saturday	You can <u>EITHER</u> attend this Live Talk (and write about it) <u>OR</u> you can choose the Skeptical Research Paper option below (see June 27 th)	If you are able to attend part of the St. Louis SkeptiCamp on Saturday, May 17th , your attendance can be used as an <i>alternative to submitting the Skeptical Research Paper assignment</i> . For this to count, you will attend Dr. Hupp's talk at 9:30 am . <u>See the next page and the last page of this syllabus for more.</u>
Module 1 (June 3 rd) Tuesday	<i>The Skeptics' Guide</i> book Intro and part of SECTION I: Chapters 1 – 18	June 3 rd , Tuesday (5:00pm) Post <i>Commenting Paragraphs</i> (or use the 48-hour grace period that applies to all assignments except the exams)
Module 2 (June 10 th) Tuesday	<i>The Skeptics' Guide</i> book Continue SECTION I: Chapters 19 – 28	June 10 th , Tuesday (5:00pm) Post <i>Commenting Paragraphs</i>
EXAM (June 16 th) Monday	Exam on Modules 1 & 2	June 16th, Monday (5:00 pm) Attend EXAM in AH-0304 (or schedule a Phone Interview Exam)
Module 3 (June 17 th) Tuesday	<i>The Skeptics' Guide</i> book Finish SECTION I: Chapters 29 – 39	June 17 th , Tuesday (5:00pm) Post <i>Commenting Paragraphs</i>
Module 4 (June 24 th) Tuesday	<i>The Skeptics' Guide</i> book SECTIONS II & III: Chapters 40 – 51	June 24 th , Tuesday (5:00pm) Post <i>Commenting Paragraphs</i>
SKEPTICAL RESEARCH PAPER OPTION (June 27 th) Friday	You can <u>EITHER</u> choose this Skeptical Research Paper option <u>OR</u> you can do the Live Talk Paper option	June 27th, Friday (5:00 pm) turn in either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skeptical Research Paper <u>OR</u> the Live Talk Paper (see the top of this table for more)
Module 5 (July 1 st) Tuesday	<i>The Skeptics' Guide</i> book SECTIONS IV & V: Chapters 52 – 56	July 1 st , Tuesday (5:00pm) Post <i>Commenting Paragraphs</i>
EXAM (July 2 nd) Wednesday	Exam on Modules 3, 4, & 5	July 2nd, Wednesday (5:00 pm) Attend EXAM in AH-0304 (or schedule a Phone Interview Exam)

Choose Your Own Adventures! You have two big choices to make in this course...

- 1st choice: Write about attending a Live Talk **or** write a Skeptical Research Paper.
- 2nd choice: Take Written Exams (in person) **or** take Phone Interview Exams.

WRITING CHOICE: Write about a Live Talk or write a Skeptical Research Paper.

Option A: Write about Attending a Live Talk

- Talk: “Psychology, Fringe Science, and *Skeptical Inquirer* Magazine”
- Who: Stephen Hupp
- When: **Saturday, May 17th from 9:30 am to 10:15 am** (paper due on June 27th)
- Where: **Holiday Inn in Creve Coeur, Missouri (about 45 minutes from SIUE)**
- Sign Up: **See the last page of this syllabus for how to sign up (it’s a free event, but it’s helpful to register)**
- What to Write: **Write at least 1400 words on your impressions about the talk. You can write about whatever you want as long as it is related to the talk.**

Option B: Write a Skeptical Research Paper. For this option you will write about a skeptical topic (**at least 1400 words**) by summarizing several research studies. More details are described in *Appendix A of this syllabus*.

EXAM CHOICE: Written Exams (In Person) or Phone Interview Exams

Option A: Written Exams. This option will take place on the **SIUE campus**. Most, if not all, questions will be in the true/false format. This will be a closed book and closed notes exam. Most students will be done within about 20 minutes. About 70% of students typically choose this option. *See schedule on the first page for day, time, and location.*

Option B: Phone Interview Exam. This version of the exams will take place on the same days as the written exams (see schedule). We will schedule the specific times of these exams on an individual basis to work around your individual schedules. For this version of the exam, I will call you at your scheduled time and ask you questions. Most, if not all, questions will be in the true/false format. This will be an open book and open notes exam; however, ***you will only be given 20 seconds to answer each question*** (so there will be very little time to thumb through your materials during the exam). Students may **NOT**: a) audio record the exam, b) have anyone else in the room during the exam, or c) use speaker phone during the exam. Most students will be done within about 20 minutes. About 30% of students typically choose this option.

Choosing Your Exam Version on Blackboard. Once you decide which version of the first exam you would like to take, you will need to identify it on Blackboard. Go to “Discussions” on the left tab, and then choose your exam by clicking on **“Choose your EXAM #1 version here!”** After, Exam #1 is done, I will add another place on Blackboard for you to choose which version of Exam #2 you would like to take.

General Study Guide for Dr. Hupp’s Exams

1. **Take good notes on the video presentations.** You don’t need to write down everything, but make sure you write down all of the key points. Try to anticipate what good test questions might be. For example, what was the overall point of the

talk? Also, what were some of the key topics discussed? It's also helpful to know the speakers names to some degree because I often mention them in the questions as a cue to which talk I'm asking about.

2. **Take good notes on the book chapters.** You don't need to know everything, but make sure you learn all of the key points. Try to anticipate what good test questions might be. For example, you should know all 50 myths in the book, but I might reword some of them to turn them into research-supported statements. Also, what are some of the key terms identified in the book?
3. **Study your notes very closely.** Break the notes into little chunks of information and *make flash cards* (or choose some other strategy that works best for you). You may want to try an online flashcard maker like www.studyblue.com (which also has a phone app).

Post "Commenting Paragraphs" on the Discussion Board

You will be using the Discussion Board in the Course Content section of Blackboard for this course. **You should reply to both of the question prompts** for each module. Some of the question prompts were written by me, while others were sent in by students in previous semesters. Your **Commenting Paragraphs should be at least 5 sentences long**. See the grading rubric below...

Rubric for Grading Commenting Paragraphs

	'A' work	'B' work	'C' work	'D' work and below
Content	Useful info that relates to the topic & is clearly written.	Good info with good writing	Somewhat confusing ideas that need clarification	Unclear content & confusing writing
Length	At least 5 sentences, tackling many sub-questions.	One of the commenting paragraphs is too brief.	Two of the commenting paragraphs are too brief.	All of the commenting paragraphs are too brief.
Critical Thinking	Frequent <i>connections</i> with readings & other material	Fair amount of <i>connections</i> with readings & other course material	Occasional <i>connections</i> with readings & other course material	Rare <i>connections</i> with readings & other course material
Stylistics	Free from typos & other mistakes	Some typos or other mistake	Several typos or other mistakes	Lots of typos & other mistakes
Tone	The tone is positive <u>and</u> constructive	The tone is either positive <u>or</u> constructive	The tone is <u>neither</u> positive or constructive	The tone is offensive

Grading System (for undergraduates)

1. **Discussion Board Work (100 points)**
2. **Paper (200 points)**
3. **Exam #1 (100 points)**
4. **Exam #2 (100 points)**

Final grades are as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| 450-500 points (90-100%) | = A |
| 400-449 points (80-89%) | = B |
| 350-399 points (70-79%) | = C |
| 300-349 points (60-69%) | = D |

Grading Note for Graduate Students Only:

When graduate students take a 400-level course, SIUE requires that they do more work. Thus, graduate students will write two skeptical papers instead of one. In this case each paper will be worth 100 points instead of 200 points. The second paper is due on the last day of class.

Course Overview and Prerequisites

This course covers critical thinking and scientific investigations about parapsychology (e.g., extrasensory perception, telekinesis) and the psychology of belief about paranormal topics (e.g., alien abductions, cryptozoology). There are no prerequisites.

Learning Objectives

Goal 1: Demonstrate knowledge by relating previously learned information to critical thinking and skepticism.

Objective 1.1: Identify previously learned examples of pseudoscience

Objective 1.2: Connect previous examples with novel examples of pseudoscience.

Goal 2: Enhance comprehension by separating research from theory.

Objective 2.1: Classify logical thinking errors.

Objective 2.2: Discuss logical thinking errors in relation to research studies.

Goal 3: Apply knowledge to new ideas in science and pseudoscience.

Objective 3.1: Choose methods for evaluating claims.

Objective 3.2: Discover published attempts at evaluating claims.

Goal 4: Develop competency in analysis by breaking down components of fallacies.

Objective 4.1: Examine common red flags in pseudoscience.

Objective 4.2: Distinguish the scientific method from pseudoscientific methods.

Goal 5: Synthesize ideas to create broad indicators of science and pseudoscience.

Objective 5.1: Synthesize evidence to reach conclusions about ideas in science.

Objective 5.2: Effectively communicate synthesized ideas in writing.

Goal 6: Evaluate arguments by self and others.

Objective 6.1: Provide self-critique of own ideas.

Objective 6.2: Appraise ideas of peers and professionals.

Technical Support, Requirements, and Capabilities

You can receive technical support for this course by contacting Information Technology Services at 618-650-5500 or help@siue.edu (www.siue.edu/its). At a minimum, you will need the following software/hardware to participate in this course:

- Computer with an updated operating system (e.g. Windows, Mac, Linux)
- Updated Internet browsers (Apple Safari, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox)
- DSL or Cable Internet connection or a connection speed no less than 6 Mbps.
- Media player such as, QuickTime or Windows Media Player.
- Adobe Reader or alternative PDF reader (free):
<http://get.adobe.com/reader/?promoid=HRZAC>
- Java plugin (free): <http://java.com/en/download/index.jsp>
- Any other specialized software or basic software (e.g., MS Office, etc.). Students can download MS Office at no charge here: <http://office365.siue.edu>

Students in an online course should be able to:

- Use a word processor, such as MS Word, to compose assignments & communicate
- Attach files, navigate websites, and reach out to tech support when issues arise and troubleshoot to resolve problems

Course and Department Policies

Assignment Due Dates: Because this class occurs over such a shortened time period, **I will give a 48-hour grace period for late papers and discussion board work.** If any part of the assignment is turned in after the grace period, the grade for the entire assignment will **drop by an additional 15%** each business day until the completed assignment is turned in.

Department of Psychology Policy on Incomplete Grades and Withdrawal: All withdrawals must be completed by the end of the 13th week of classes during fall and spring, and by a similarly late date (i.e., before 82% of class meetings have occurred) in any summer term. Grades that apply to students who initiate a withdrawal and grades that apply when a student fails to officially withdraw within established deadlines are determined by university policy (see [Grading System \(1J1\)](#)). The granting of a grade of I (Incomplete) is not automatic. It is available only in cases when a student has completed most of the work required for a class but is prevented by a medical or similar emergency from completing a small portion of the coursework before the deadline for grade submission. An I must be approved by the instructor with appropriate documentation provided by the student. If an instructor agrees to give a student an I, the instructor will fill out a Memorandum of Incomplete Grade to be kept with the student's records. If the work is not completed by the time specified on the Memorandum, the student's grade will be changed from I to F.

Academic Honesty: I trust you will be honest in this course. ***Cheating on exams, plagiarism on class assignments, and other forms of cheating will result in a grade of "F" in the course, a letter to the provost, probable disciplinary probation or expulsion, and other sanctions will be provided to the fullest possible extent.*** Included below are descriptions of plagiarism as outlined by the Department of Psychology and the Undergraduate Catalog.

The Psychology Department's Policy on Plagiarism: ***"Plagiarism includes presenting someone else's words without quotation marks (even if you cite the source), presenting someone else's ideas without citing that source, or presenting one's own previous work as though it were new. When paraphrasing from another source or your own work, at the very least, the student should change the wording, sentence syntax, and order of ideas presented in the paper. Additionally, you should not submit a paper, or parts of a paper, written to fulfill the requirements of one class for the requirements in another class without prior approval of the current instructor and appropriate citation.*** Ideally, the student will integrate ideas from multiple sources while providing critical commentary on the topic in a way that clearly identifies whether words and ideas are those of the student or are from another source. Plagiarism is one type of academic misconduct described in SIUE's [Student Academic Code \(3C2\)](#). University policy states that ***'Normally a student who plagiarizes shall receive a grade of F in the course in which the act occurs. A plagiarism offense shall be reported to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs'*** ([Plagiarism \(1I6\)](#)). The University policy discusses additional academic sanctions including suspension and expulsion from the University. To ensure that you understand how to avoid plagiarism, we encourage you to review the linked information on plagiarism."

The Undergraduate Catalog provides the following statement on **plagiarism**: "The University gives high priority to matters of academic ethics and abhors all types of cheating, including plagiarism. ***Plagiarism is the act of representing the work of another as one's own and may consist of copying, paraphrasing, or otherwise using written or oral work of another without proper acknowledgement of the source or presenting oral or written material prepared by another as one's own.*** Instructors may impose sanctions for academic cheating in accordance

with the Student Academic Code. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct beyond failure for an assignment and/or for a course is disciplinary probation.”

Department Writing Policy. “As a student in this course, you will be expected to display university-level writing, which includes completing course assignments that meet the following basic writing criteria. Specifically, all written assignments completed for this course should include:

- clear transitions from sentence to sentence and idea to idea (e.g., paper flows well);
- verb tense consistency;
- clear and unambiguous sentences and ideas;
- writing that is free of typos, spelling errors, and major grammatical errors;
- properly formatted citations and references (if relevant).

This is by no means an exhaustive list of basic writing skills, but will give you an idea of what we are looking for in our papers. If you feel you need help with your writing, you are encouraged to seek assistance from the writing center on campus (<http://www.siue.edu/is/writing>) or utilize one of the many online resources they have identified to help students (<http://www.siue.edu/is/writing/resources.shtml>). If your graded written assignments fail to meet the basic writing requirements listed above (and any others found to be appropriate by your instructor), the instructor will stop the grading process and return the paper to you (see below for the specific policy for this class).

Policies Suggested by the University

Recordings of Class Content. Faculty recordings of lectures and/or other course materials are meant to facilitate student learning and to help facilitate a student catching up who has missed class due to illness or quarantine. As such, students are reminded that the recording, as well as replicating or sharing of any course content and/or course materials without the express permission of the instructor of record, is not permitted, and may be considered a violation of the University’s Student Conduct Code (3C1), linked here: <https://www.siue.edu/policies/3c1.shtml>.

Diversity and Inclusion. SIUE is committed to respecting everyone’s dignity at all times. In order to learn, exchange ideas, and support one another, our virtual and physical classrooms must be places where students and teachers feel safe and supported. Systems of oppression permeate our institutions and our classrooms. All students and faculty have the responsibility to co-create a classroom that affirms inclusion, equity, and social justice, where racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, xenophobia, and other social pathologies are not tolerated. Violations of this policy will be enforced in line with the SIUE Student Conduct Code. The Hub <https://www.siue.edu/csdi> is an excellent resource for students for support and community. Any person who believes they have experienced or witnessed discrimination or harassment can contact Ms. Jamie Ball, Director in the Office of Equal Opportunity, Access and Title IX Coordination at (618) 650-2333 or jball@siue.edu. There is also an online form for reporting bias incidents at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?SIUEdwardsville&layout_id=10.

Pregnancy and Newly Parenting Policy. This policy and procedure are established to ensure the protection and equal treatment of pregnant students, students with pregnancy-related medical conditions including as a result of the termination of pregnancy, and students who become new parents including parents adopting or fostering to adopt for the first 12 weeks a child is in the home, in accordance with Federal and State guidelines and regulations. "New Parents" refers to a parent who has recently welcomed a newborn or adopted a child or is fostering to adopt a child and needs support to mitigate the disruption in academic progress within the first 12 weeks of parenting or a parent that needs support due to medical necessity attributed to pregnancy or delivery of a child; care of newborn; or lactation within the first year of child's life or legal adoption/fostering. Visit [Policies & Procedures - Student Rights and Conduct - Newly Parenting Policy - 3C15](#) to view the full policy and learn how to request accommodations through the Office of Equal Opportunity, Access, and Title IX Coordination (EOA).

Technology Privacy Information. We will be using Blackboard in this course. View the [Anthology Blackboard Privacy Statement](#) to review how your data is being used and stored.

Services for Students Needing Accommodations. Students needing accommodations because of medical diagnosis or major life impairment will need to register with Accessible Campus Community & Equitable Student Support (ACCESS) and complete an intake process before accommodations will be given. Students who believe they have a diagnosis, but do not have documentation, should contact ACCESS for assistance and/or appropriate referral. The ACCESS office is located in the Student Success Center, Room 1203. You can also reach the office by emailing us at myaccess@siue.edu or by calling [618-650-3726](tel:618-650-3726). If you feel you would need additional help in the event of an emergency situation, please notify your instructor to be shown the evacuation route and discuss specific needs for assistance.

Cougar Care. Dealing with the fast-paced life of a college student can be challenging, and I always support a student's decisions to prioritize mental health. Students have access to counseling services on campus (Student Success Center, 0222). Make an appointment by visiting cougarcare.siu.edu or by calling [618-650-2842](tel:618-650-2842).

Student Success Coaches. [Student success coaches](#) work across campus to serve the SIUE student population with the tools and resources to adjust to and meet the demands of the college experience. Success coaches provide direct services such as time management support and referrals to campus resources. If you find yourself in need of academic or personal support, or in a situation that is preventing you from being successful in the classroom, please utilize [Starfish](#) to connect with a coach as soon as possible. The sooner you engage, the sooner you can access the information or tools you need that may help you get back on track.

Technical Support. Since this is an online course, you are expected to have reliable Internet access. It is your responsibility to address any computer problems that might occur. Such problems are not an excuse for delays in meeting expectations or for missing course deadlines. Contact ITS at [618-650-5500](tel:618-650-5500) or at help@siue.edu with any technical concerns. You can also check the functionality of University systems, including Blackboard, at the [ITS System Status page](#), or search the [ITS Knowledge Base](#) for various how-to and troubleshooting guides.

Academic and Other Student Services

- [Lovejoy Library Resources](#)
- [Academic Success Sessions](#)
- [Tutoring Resource Center](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)
- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [Campus Events](#)
- [Counseling Services](#)

Reasons to Become a PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR (or MINOR) at SIUE.

Meet Other Students: Social Events, Presentations, Volunteerism, Leadership

- Two Psychology Clubs (open to all students interested in psychology)
- Psi Chi Honors Society for majors with notable academic success

Conduct Research Studies (Psyc 491): Example topics...

- behavior problems, school difficulties, autism spectrum, parenting, delinquency
- weight management, physical health, stress, ethical issues, mental illness, aging
- consumer behavior, employee selection, prejudice, gender bias
- decision making, memory, teaching of psychology, pseudoscience

Experience Field Study (Psyc 493): Example sites...

- SIUE Counseling; SIUE Human Resources; Local schools
- Juvenile Detention; Center for Autism; Madison County Probation

Find Great Jobs! Examples with a Bachelor's degree from SIUE...

- Facebook Recruiter; Case Manager at Centerstone; Human Resources
- Probation Officer at St. Clair County; Research Technician at Barnes Hospital
- Crisis Worker at Children's Home + Aide; Residential Counselor

Get Your Masters at SIUE:

- Industrial/Organizational Psychology (consult for businesses)
- Clinical Psychology (provide assessment & therapy)
- Clinical Child & School Psychology (help children & adolescents)

Get into PhD Programs: Examples admitting our students...

- DePaul University (industrial/organizational psychology)
- Florida State University (social psychology)
- Illinois State University (school psychology)
- St. Louis University (clinical psychology & family therapy)
- University of Nevada - Las Vegas (experimental psychology)

Find Great Jobs (PART 2): Examples with graduate degrees...

- Professor at SIUE; Researcher at Washington University
- Nestle Manager; VP of Human Resources at Ameren
- Clinician at Foundations for Change; Neuropsychologist at St. John's Mercy
- St. Jude Hospital Research Associate; School Psychologist at Edwardsville High

If not the Psychology MAJOR, consider the Psychology MINOR:

- All you need is: Introduction to Psychology (Psyc 111) and 6 more psych courses
- Most jobs are greatly enhanced by psychology knowledge and related skills!

Stay in Touch:

- siue.edu/education/psychology
- Facebook: SIUE Psychology

APPLY TO ONE OF OUR PSYCHOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAMS!

The SIUE Department of Psychology has three graduate programs:

- The **Clinical Child and School Psychology** graduate program has two tracks:
 - Clinical Child Psychology Track. Students in this track receive a Master's degree in Clinical Child and School Psychology. About half of these students choose to then apply to a Doctoral program, and the other half choose to find a job right away. Students are prepared to work with families in private practice, hospitals, or community organizations. Our students have a very high success rate of getting into doctoral programs and finding jobs.
 - School Psychology Track. Students in this track receive a Master's degree in Clinical Child and School Psychology, and then they typically stay at SIUE to receive a Specialist Degree in School Psychology. These students have a very high success rate of finding employment as school psychologists. In fact, there is a national shortage of school psychologists. Some students later choose to also pursue a Doctoral degree.
 - **See the VIDEO:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQyRMRTYEDQ>
- The **Clinical Psychology** master's program "is one of the strongest clinical training programs in the St. Louis region. It prepares students for careers in mental health organizations or further graduate education in a clinical PsyD or PhD program, a counseling PhD program, or related doctoral study. Many graduates obtain positions in community mental health centers, state hospitals, research institutions, private hospitals, and other agencies that provide psychological services."
 - **See the VIDEO:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQ3n6O7xaIE>
- The **Industrial/Organizational Psychology** master's program "offers a rare blend of the scientist-practitioner model, requiring students to complete both a research-based thesis and required field hours of practicum...Research experience is directed at conceptualizing and solving applied organizational problems. Required practica, which are available throughout the St. Louis area, are oriented toward giving students applied, realistic skills and experiences to develop viable and effective performance in an organizational context."
 - **See the VIDEO:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5NfzF-b3K4>

You can learn more about all of these programs here:

<https://www.siue.edu/education/psychology/graduate/>

Appendix A: Skeptical Research Paper

Important Note: I have failed several students recently for *plagiarism*. Let me tell you what they did. They took a quote from a source and put it word-for-word in their paper, but they did not use quotation marks for the quote. They cited the source, so they thought they were okay, but they were not okay. When you take words from another source, it is plagiarism unless you put those words in quotes (even if you cite the source). Also, you may not use artificial intelligence to write the papers (e.g., ChatGPT). Turnitin now has a way to screen for papers written with artificial intelligence.

First, select a topic from the list below. Once you have selected a topic, you will need to claim it on Blackboard. (Note: I will be sending the syllabus out early, but you won't be able to claim a topic on Blackboard until the official first day of class). Go to "Discussions" on the left tab and claim your topic by clicking on "Claim your Skeptical Paper topic here!" *If your topic has already been claimed, you will need to pick a new topic.*

Possible Topics

- UFO sightings and the U.S. Air Force
- The history of bloodletting as a medical treatment
- The history of lobotomies
- Freudian dream interpretation
- Homeopathy
- Naturopathy
- The power of crystals to heal the body
- "Cupping" as used in alternative medicine
- Acupuncture as compared to "sham" acupuncture
- Reflexology
- The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
- The Lochness Monster
- The Chupacabra
- The rapid prompting method as a form of communication
- Snake oil products of the late 1800s and/or early 1900s
- Quack medical devices from the late 1800s and/or early 1900s
- Infant simulator dolls for preventing pregnancy
- Thought field therapy
- Neurolinguistic programming
- Insulin coma therapy
- Past life regression therapy
- Essential oils and aromatherapy
- Primal scream therapy
- Astrology
- Telekinesis
- Zener cards
- Remote viewing
- Ouija boards

Outline of the Paper:

1. Description of the Claims
 - Start with a clear primary claim.
 - State the claim in a way that fairly represents the beliefs of the believers.
 - Example: “People experience trauma from alien abductions.”
 - Discuss other related claims.
 - Examples: “Some people have been abducted by aliens.”
 - “Air Force Pilots see UFO’s flown by aliens.”
 - “UFOs make crop circles.”
2. Pop Culture and Public Perception
 - Describe the relation to pop culture (e.g., movies, TV shows, news)
 - If possible, include evidence that people believe the claims (e.g., public polls).
3. The Evidence
 - Evidence supporting the claims (be critical).
 - Evidence against the claims (be critical).
 - Evidence for the most likely alternative explanations regarding the claims.
4. Understanding the Psychology Behind the Beliefs
 - Why do people believe the claims? (e.g., biases, fallacies, motivations)
 - What’s the harm? (e.g., physical, emotional, credibility, time, money, effort)
5. Summary and Conclusion
 - Summarize the key points.
 - Emphasize the relation to the broader science of psychology.

Goals of Papers:

- Develop skills in **using PsycINFO and/or Google Scholar.**
- Develop critical thinking skills.
- **Apply research** to new topics.
- Follow **professional writing** guidelines and **instructions for this paper.**

Format of Papers:

- Use **Microsoft WORD.**
- **BETWEEN 1400-1800 WORDS IN LENGTH (this includes References).**
- **SINGLE-SPACED AND DO NOT INCLUDE SEPARATE TITLE PAGE.**
- On the **FIRST PAGE**, include name, date, title of the paper.
- **Use 8 or more RESEARCH STUDIES (list them in a References section). You must cite the actual research studies. If it doesn’t have a Methods/Procedures section and a Results section, then it is not a research study.**
- Use **12-POINT, TIMES NEW ROMAN FONT** with **1-INCH MARGINS.**

Getting Articles for the Skeptical Research Paper

You may use either of these resources for getting articles for your paper:

- Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>)
- PsycINFO (see below)

Google Scholar is easier to use, but PsycINFO is more specific to psychology. Because, PsycINFO is more complicated, I'll describe how to use it. **Here's how to find research study abstracts on PsycINFO** (*as of the time I wrote this syllabus*):

1. go the SIUE Library webpage (<http://www.siue.edu/lovejoylibrary/>)
2. click on this tab: **"Databases (A-Z)"**
3. click on this button: **"Search List of Online Databases"**
4. click on this letter: **"P"**
5. scroll to bottom, and then click on: **"PsycINFO"**
6. before you search a term, under "Select a Field" click on "TI Title"
(this makes for a more precise search, in my opinion)
7. type in a search word (such as "aggression") and then click the "Search" button
8. click on a study's title so you can read the abstract
9. read a bunch of abstracts and decide which studies you want to get
10. go get the actual research studies (see next section)

Here's how to get the actual research studies: After you use PsycINFO to read the abstracts and choose which sources you would like to get. The abstract was just a brief, paragraph-long summary of the source, but it does not have enough information for you to write about the source in the paper. There are many ways to get your hands on a source:

1. On PsycINFO...after you read the abstract, you can click on *"Find Full Text"* or *"Linked Full Text"* to see if our library has the journal and for other options.
2. For some studies on PsycINFO you have the option to click *"Ovid Full Text"* and/or *"PDF Full Text."* Then you can directly view the article from the internet (and it is your lucky day).
3. You can also use the online Inter-Library Loan (ILL) through SIUE (but it can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks).

Turning in Papers (see the Course Schedule on this syllabus for due dates):

- The Word file should be **saved like this:** "Skeptical Paper for Jane Doe"
- Use the **Coursework tab** of Blackboard to turn in your paper.
- Turnitin will be used to **screen for plagiarism** and **artificial intelligence**.
- See Course Policies (toward end of syllabus) about **grace period & late papers**.

Appendix B: Attending a Live Talk

Note: This free event is optional, and you don't need to donate anything. I have already made a donation to them for our class. Make sure to get there n time to see the second speak (Stephen Hupp), and feel free to stay for the entire event.



SkeptiCamp
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 **Saturday May, 17, 2025**

 **8:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

 **HOLIDAY INN, CREVE COEUR, 1030
WOODCREST TERRACE DR, ST. LOUIS,
MO 63141**

COST: FREE
DONATIONS APPRECIATED
LUNCH: SUGGESTED DONATION
OF \$20

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<https://tinyurl.com/SkeptiCampSSSL>

THE SPEAKER LINEUP



SPEAKER 1 8:45AM-9:30AM
Chuck Collis
Sequences: Our evolving understanding of evolution



SPEAKER 2 9:30AM-10:15AM
Stephen Hupp
Psychology, Fringe Science, and Skeptical Inquirer Magazine



SPEAKER 3 10:30AM-11:15AM
Taner Edis
Beyond checklists: distinguishing between real and fake science.



SPEAKER 4 11:15AM-12:00PM
Kyle Polich
A Staircase to the Moon?



SPEAKER 5 1:00PM -1:45PM
Susan Gerbic
Grief Vampires and GSoW



SPEAKER 6 1:45PM-2:30PM
Leonard Tramiel
Drones? Really?



SPEAKER 7 2:45PM -3:30PM
Adrienne Hill
Law of Attraction Lunacy and OCD Ordeals

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