

## PAPER #2: MYTHBUSTERS! (15%)

*Due Friday 11/19*

For your second paper, you will write a 1000 word (minimum) informative research essay about a topic that is frequently misunderstood, such as an inaccurate stereotype, a misrepresented historical event, or any other issue that is poorly understood by the public.

Your topic should be something that interests you personally. Some ideas that would work well for this paper would be things like:

- Racial stereotypes
- Religious stereotypes
- Gender stereotypes
- Political stereotypes
- Stereotypes about a country, region or culture
- Misconceptions about certain animals
- Misconceptions about certain foods or drinks
- Historical events that are not very well known by most people
- Historical events that are often represented inaccurately in pop culture
- A historical figure or celebrity who is often misrepresented in pop culture
- Current events that aren't talked about much in the mainstream media
- "Common sense" facts & statistics that are actually misleading or inaccurate
- A work or genre of art (e.g. books, movies, TV shows, music) that is often misunderstood
- A scientific question or field that isn't well understood by the public
- Misconceptions about new technologies or discoveries
- Misconceptions about certain industries
- Misconceptions about a certain law or legal issue
- Misconceptions about healthcare & fitness

You are not limited only to these topics, of course. Any topic that the general American public has a poor or limited understanding of would be appropriate for this paper. If you think of an idea and you're not sure it would work, just ask me!

Once you have chosen your topic, you will need to start researching it. Then, in your paper, you're going to teach me what you learned from your research, with a particular focus on correcting common misconceptions about the topic. Your paper should include two important parts:

- 1. Explain what people usually misunderstand about the topic.** For example, if you're writing about pitbulls, talk about the way that people often characterize them as mean and aggressive dogs. If you're writing about Emperor Caligula of Rome, talk about how he's often thought of as completely insane. Include information about *why* people have these misconceptions: Where did they come from? Who first spread the misinformation?
- 2. Teach me the truth about the topic.** Give me the real facts that you learned from your research. Explain that pitbulls actually aren't as mean and aggressive as they're made out to be, or that Caligula was actually much more cunning than people give him credit for. Back up all of your points with thorough research taken from authoritative, trustworthy sources.

**You should be arguing *against* the original misconception, not for it!** However, you should also be honest. If you choose a topic and find that many of the facts *do* actually support the common understanding of it, then you might want to choose a new topic.

You also don't have to take a purely black & white stance on the subject. You can take a more nuanced position and concede that there is *some* truth to the common understanding of the subject, but what most people know about it is incomplete or misleading.

This is a **research essay**, so the focus here is mainly on gathering good resources, understanding what they tell you, and then conveying all the most important information to me in your own unique way. Look for things like official statistics, news reports, scientific studies, and articles from academic journals. Make sure the sources you use are professional, authoritative and trustworthy.

Essentially, for this paper, you are going to be the teacher, and I'll be the student: educate yourself about the subject, and then teach it to me. If you end up teaching me something new, I will be very happy! ☺

NOTE: You are not allowed to do the same topic as someone else in the class. This is a "first come, first serve" deal. As soon as you know which topic you'd like to research, you need to let me know. I will make a list of all the topics and post it on Canvas. If you come to me and find someone else has already taken your idea, then you'll have to pick a new one.

## **BUSTING YOUR MYTH**

You may not rely only on personal anecdotes to bust your myth.

For example, say you want to disprove the stereotype that "women are bad drivers"---you cannot refute it by simply saying, "Well, my mother's a woman, and she's a great driver! Case closed!"

While it's okay to include *some* personal anecdotes, especially in the introduction or conclusion, you cannot rely on personal experience alone to make your argument. You must research broad social trends and official studies or statistics . A single individual's personal experience, while valid, is nevertheless not enough on its own to disprove a widespread stereotype.

## **GATHERING SOURCES**

For this paper you will be required to have a total of **6 sources (minimum)**.

While your sources may come from anywhere, I would strongly encourage you to use the HCC Library's extensive online databases to find at least some of your resources: <https://library.hccs.edu/home>

The HCC Library online database is actually a collection of several external databases (accessible from most university libraries), which store thousands of academic journal articles, ebooks, and newspaper excerpts. Many of the databases can be searched by subject, so if you are looking for sources specifically focused on "Medicine," for instance, you can narrow down the scope of your search to databases that only focus on publishing medical journals and books.

For any questions or concerns, please email me: [klotzem@gmail.com](mailto:klotzem@gmail.com) or [emily.klotz@hccs.edu](mailto:emily.klotz@hccs.edu)

There are several benefits to using the HCC online databases to find your sources. For one thing, they are more likely to be credible, authoritative sources that have been well researched and peer reviewed by professionals. For another thing, the HCC library conveniently provides you with all the citation information you'll need to make your **Works Cited Page**, which is an important element of this paper. (More on that later.)

However, not all of your 6 sources necessarily have to come from the HCC Library Database. You may find very useful sources just by searching on Google, although you should be careful: make sure any sources you use are **credible** and **professional**. Don't use some random person's blog as a source! Examples of good credible sources may be things that have been published by government organizations or by reputable news outlets (the keyword here being "reputable"). You may also interview someone and use them as a source, if you want!

You are NOT allowed to use Wikipedia as a source. I personally don't have any problem with Wikipedia for general use, but it's not typically considered a "professional" source in academic contexts. However, you can use Wikipedia to find other sources.

This is a neat trick that I have done myself for years. Say you were writing about space exploration, for example, and you wandered onto the Wikipedia page for "Alpha Centauri." You might find some interesting information on that page that you think could use in your paper. Hover over the **footnotes**, and Wikipedia will show you which source that information originally came from. In a lot of cases it will provide you with a nice convenient link to the source.

Future exploration [\[edit\]](#)

See also: [2069 Alpha Centauri mission](#)

Alpha Centauri is a likely first target for crewed or robotic interstellar exploration. Using current spacecraft technology between the Sun and Alpha Centauri would take several millennia, though the possibility of nuclear pulse propulsion technology, as considered in the Breakthrough Starshot program, could reduce the journey time to decades.<sup>[115][116][117]</sup> An objective of such a mission would be to make a fly-by of, and possibly photograph, planets that might exist in the system.<sup>[118][119]</sup> The existence of Proxima



In the above picture, you can see that the footnote leads to an article published by NPR. NPR is generally considered a credible news source, so that would be a perfectly acceptable article for you to use yourself. Just follow that link to the original NPR article, and there you go!

After you have gathered at least 6 sources, you are required to do two things with them:

1. You must use *all* of your sources at least once, somewhere in your paper. This can be either direct quotes taken from the source, or information that you paraphrased into your own words. Anything you use from a source, whether quoted or paraphrased, should be properly cited in MLA format.
2. You must list *all* of the sources you used in an MLA style Works Cited page, which should come at the end of your paper.

## MLA CITATIONS & WORKS CITED PAGE

It's important to cite your sources for several reasons. First, of course, it's your way of giving credit to the original author and saying, "This isn't my original idea or information; I'm borrowing it from someone

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else.” Second, citing source is helpful to the reader, especially in a research paper. Say I’m reading your paper and feel like I want to learn more about a certain topic; I can go track down the sources you used and read more about it on my own.

With these two purposes in mind, there are 2 steps to citing your sources in a paper:

1. Include an **in-text citation** (or “parenthetical citation”) in the paper anytime you use something from one of your sources in your paper. This applies to both *direct quotes* as well as *paraphrased information* (i.e. information that you took from a source but rewrote in your own words).
  - a. In MLA, the in-text citation is the parentheses you put at the end of your quote or paraphrase, which has the author’s last name and page number (if available), as well as any other information it might be necessary to include to make it clear which source you’re referring to.

According to NASA scientists, the aliens of Alpha Centauri are actually quite friendly, contrary to popular belief (Green 23).

2. Include a **Works Cited Page** at the end of your paper. The Works Cited page is exactly what it sounds like: it’s a list of *works* that you *cited* in your paper. Anything that was mentioned anywhere in the paper needs to be on this list; likewise, anything that was *not* mentioned in the paper should *not* be included on the list.
  - a. The Works Cited page includes all the information a reader might need to track down your original source for themselves. This includes: the author’s full name, the full title of the original source, the place where the original source was found, and the publisher and date of publication (if available). Depending on what kind of source it is, you may also need to include other information as well.

Green, Jasmine H. “Alien A-holes or Awesome Space Friends?” *National Geographic*, National Geographic Society, July 2017.

All of your in-text citations in the paper should point to one of the sources listed on the Works Cited page, and all of the sources on your Works Cited page should have enough information that I could go find the original source myself. This way, if I read an interesting quote in your paper, I know exactly where it came from *and* I could go look it up on my own if I wanted to.

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:**

- Your essay should be well-planned out and organized.
- Include an interesting introduction paragraph. Your introduction should include both a **hook** (i.e. something to catch the reader’s attention with, like a shocking statement or an interesting story), and also a clear **thesis statement** which tells me what your main topic is.

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- Use both **direct quotes** as well as **paraphrased information** in your essay. Paraphrased information should be written in your own words (otherwise it's plagiarism), and should be followed by an *in-text citation* so that I know where you got the information from.
- Include a **conclusion** that wraps everything up at the end. There's no strict form you have to follow for the conclusion; it can be either long or short. Wrap things up, but try not to be too repetitive.
- You are not limited to how many body paragraphs you include or what order you put them in. All that matters is that your points are *thorough, organized* and *easy to follow*. Just like in Papers 1 and 2, each paragraph should build on the one before it in a logical progression.
- Use of first-person "I" is totally fine for this paper, but try not to go overboard. Keep your focus on the texts, not on yourself.

## USING QUOTES

- You should have at least a few direct quotes in your paper as well as paraphrased info. There's not a magic number for how many quotes to include, but at least one / no more than three quotes per page is a good general guideline.
- All quotes should be woven into your sentences & paragraphs, not simply plopped in there.

BAD: New evidence indicates that people in this area may have interacted with Neanderthals. "The bones seem to be of Neanderthal origin" (Jackson 34).

GOOD: New evidence indicates that people in this area may have interacted with Neanderthals, as many of the uncovered bones "seem to be of Neanderthal origin" (Jackson 34).

- If you want to alter a quote slightly to make it flow better in your sentence, you may do so using [brackets] or ellipses (...). Brackets are used if you slightly change the wording, and ellipses are used to indicate that you omitted part of the quote.
- **BLOCK QUOTES:** in MLA, if a quote is longer than 4 lines, you must put it in a **block quote**. Start the quote on a new line and indent *the entire quote* once from the left side. Omit the quotation marks. The whole quote should still be double-spaced, and the citation should be in parentheses at the end. Please only include 1-2 block quotes maximum in your paper.

## PURPOSES OF THIS ASSIGNMENT

- **Research:** This paper will require you to learn how to seek out strong, authoritative sources on your own, to read & understand those sources, to be able to put the information you learned from those sources into your own words & narrow down the most important points, to clearly explain that information in a structured, easy-to-follow essay, and to properly cite & document all of your sources in MLA format.

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- **Critical Thinking:** Don't just read your sources, but examine them thoughtfully. Think about how your research compares (or doesn't compare) with the common misconceptions about the topic. Think about what facts are most important for the reader to know. *You* are the teacher now. You have to try to teach *me* something. Go out there and inform yourself a little more about the world, so that you can then inform me.
- **Communication:** Since you are trying to teach me something in this paper, you have to put your communication skills to the test. It's not just about explaining the information, but about presenting it in a way that is clear and easy to understand, even for someone who is unfamiliar with the topic. Just like Paper #1, you will have to think about your audience!

## FORMAT REQUIREMENTS

- 1000 words minimum (note: I don't mind if you go over the word count, but don't go under it)
- Font: Times New Roman, 12 pt.
- Double-spaced; indented paragraphs; no extra spaces between paragraphs, please.
- MLA style heading and page numbers

## ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES:

- **6 Sources & Notes** = due Mon 11/1 (*online/index cards*)
  - You will be required to submit a list of your 6 sources as well as a certain amount of notes taken from your sources, just to make sure you're making progress in your research. The notes should be done on index cards (minimum 15 cards) and should be turned in either in person or by uploading pictures on Canvas.
- **Outline & Thesis** = due Monday 11/8 (*online*)
  - Before writing your rough draft, you must create a formal outline where you plan out all the major points you intend to cover, in the order you intend to cover them. This is basically like the blueprints for your essay. At the beginning of your outline, you must also include a **thesis statement** which establishes the main idea of the essay
- **Rough Draft** = due Friday 11/11 (*online*)
  - Submit your rough draft version of Paper #2 by no later than midnight on Friday night. It should be at least 500 words, though it doesn't have to have an ending yet.
- **Peer Review** = due Monday 11/15 (*online*)
  - You will be randomly assigned someone else's rough draft to peer review. Look over it and leave feedback for how they might improve. I will provide a rubric for you to fill out.
  - Someone else will also be looking over your own rough draft, so keep an eye out for it and use their feedback when you are typing up your final draft!
- **Final Draft** = due Friday 11/19 (*online*)
  - Submit the final 1000-word (minimum) version of Paper #2 by no later than midnight on Friday. Make sure you look over the Paper #2 checklist beforehand to be sure you have

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met all the requirements! Remember, I do not accept late work when it comes to the three big papers. Once midnight hits, if I don't have your paper, it's a zero—no exceptions.

- **Revision** (optional) = *due anytime before Sunday 12/12*
  - After I have graded your paper and given you feedback, you have the option to revise the paper again and turn in a new version in order to raise your grade. How much your grade changes depends on how much work you put into it and how much you take my feedback into consideration. You may submit a revision anytime throughout the semester. All revisions should be sent to me either through Canvas inbox or email, with the subject line clearly stating what it is.
    - NOTE: Since this is the last paper of the semester, you may submit a revised version of the paper even before I finish giving you your feedback.

### **OTHER OPTIONAL HELP:**

- I will be giving everyone basic feedback on your rough drafts, but if you'd like me to give you more detailed feedback (helping with grammar, organization, etc.), then you can email your rough drafts to me early and I will look over them when I have time. However, I will not look over any rough drafts sent to me the day before the final draft is due, so make sure you send it before then—the earlier, the better!
- You may also have an HCC tutor look over your rough draft ahead of time. You can contact an online tutor by going to <https://hccs.upswing.io/>. Provide me with evidence that a tutor looked at your paper, and I will give you extra credit points. 😊

*For any questions or concerns, please email me: [klotzem@gmail.com](mailto:klotzem@gmail.com) or [emily.klotz@hccs.edu](mailto:emily.klotz@hccs.edu)*