

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 401 (L03): Paranormal Communication
Winter 2023: Jan. 9 to April 12, 2023 (excluding Feb. 19-25 and April 07)
Lecture: MW: 9:30-10:45 a.m.

Course is In-Person

Instructor:	Ronald Glasberg
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Office Hours:	Tuesday 10:00-12:00

Course Description

The course is an exploration of communicative modalities beyond what is thought, by mainstream culture, to be 'normal'. These paranormal forms of communication will be examined to see what light they shed on the more normal ones and to consider the possibility that they might be the harbingers of a 'new age' where their 'paranormality' might become more 'normalized'. Major themes are mediumship, channeling, communications from a post-mortem existence, extra-terrestrial encounters, ESP (extra-sensory perception), and psychic technologies (e.g., Tarot).

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L

Students are expected to download the Kindle app (it is free) in order to get online versions of the course texts.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course

- (1) understand different forms of paranormality and the role they play in culture;
- (2) develop research and presentation skills pertaining to phenomena outside the realm or normal science;
- (3) confront and challenge one's personal and cultural assumptions about what is normal and what might lie beyond that sphere of being.

Textbooks and Readings

Kindle download:

Terje G. Simonson, *A Short History of (Nearly) Everything Paranormal* (London: Watkins Media, Ltd. 2020).

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone.

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

Students can use whatever electronic devices (including phones) they wish provided they do not disturb other students.

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
25 %	Presentation (10-20 minutes)	As scheduled
25 %	1st essay	Feb. 15
35 %	2 nd essay	Apr. 12
15 %	Mark Brief	Apr. 14

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You must complete all assignments and exams or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments in class or by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (edit as needed). Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors.

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course letter grades will be used for all assignments.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%

1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Students are expected to apply for ethics approval themselves if their research takes them in the direction of working with human subjects.

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

All readings are from the required text: Terje G. Simonson, *A Short History of (Nearly) Everything Paranormal* [available through Kindle for \$11.99]

Jan.9 Intro to Course: Basic Principles

Jan. 11 Simonsen, Introduction

Jan. 16 Simonson, Chapter One

Jan. 18 Simonson, Chapter One

Jan. 23 Simonson, Chapter Two

Jan. 25 Simonson, Chapter Two

Jan. 30 Simonson, Chapter Three

Feb. 1 Simonson, Chapter Three

Feb. 6 Simonson, Chapter Four

Feb. 8 Simonson, Chapter Four

Feb. 13 Simonson, Chapter Five

Feb. 15 Simonson, Chapter Five

Feb. 19-25 Reading Break – No classes

Feb. 27 Simonson, Chapter Six

Mar. 1 Simonson, Chapter Six

Mar. 6 Simonson, Chapter Six

Mar. 8 Simonson, Chapter Seven

Mar. 13 Simonson, Chapter Seven

Mar. 15 Simonson, Chapter Seven

Mar. 20 Simonson, Chapter Eight

Mar. 22 Simonson, Chapter Eight

Mar. 27 Simonson, Chapter Eight

Mar. 29 Simonson, Chapter Nine

Apr. 3 Simonson, Chapter Nine

Apr. 5 Simonson, Chapter Nine

Apr. 10 Easter Monday – No Classes

Apr. 12 Conclusion

Assignment Guide

Class Presentations (25%)

Everyone is expected to do a 5-10 minute presentation to the class (2/lecture) on a topic pertaining to the paranormal that interests them. The two can work together or apart on the presentation. The presentation may also touch on a personal experience of the paranormal. All students are expected to attend to give feedback and collect material for inclusion in their assignments. The presentation maybe connected to the assignments being done by the presenting students.

Two Essays (25% and 35%)

Aside from the class presentation, there are two written essay assignments: the first being worth 25% (approx. 7 pages double-spaced; due Feb. 15) and the second being worth 35% (approx. 10 pages double-spaced; due Apr. 12).

The assignment topics are given below under the heading 'Course Questions'.

Course Questions

- (1) Is the paranormal a road to our future (i.e., a New Age) or is it but a form of infantile escapism from the challenges of our world or is it both or is it neither?
- (2) Which forms of the paranormal have you or someone you know experienced and what was their effect in terms of changing the course of your life?
- (3) Explain the most important things you learned in this course and base it on the readings and presentations you have engaged with.
- (4) Report on your encounter with a medium or psychic and assess their accuracy. Please make use of course readings or other texts you have found.
- (5) Using course or other readings write an essay on how Indigenous cultures may have been characterized by 'paranormality' from the perspective of the colonizing culture and how that quasi-conscious characterization may have led to the imposition of residential schools.
- (6) Using the categories of internal and external along with a set of course texts develop a theory of how paranormal phenomena may be integrated with the normal ones as understood by mainstream science.
- (7) Submit a diary or journal describing your personal growth during this course.

Mark Brief (15%) due: April 14

This written submission is marked out of 15 which you assign to yourself on the basis of an accompanying statement (or brief) with the following elements:

- (1) a statement of how much of the course material you have read;
- (2) number of classes attended;
- (3) a statement of how much you might have discussed the course outside of class;
- (4) an honest assessment of what you have learned and/or gotten out of the course.