

Uni 101 Hoax/Misconception Talk

In this project, you will present a 15-minute informative talk about a current hoax or misconception. (Henceforth, I'll just call it a "hoax" for simplicity.) Your job is to

- Explain the background of the hoax: what it is, how it came about, etc.
- Explain *why* people might believe it.
- Explain why it's wrong.
- Explain how you might have become suspicious of the hoax even without specialist knowledge.

You are allowed to pick your own topic, but I will approve each of them. The topics will be approved on a first-come basis, although for some broader topics, we might be able to negotiate two or more people splitting aspects of the topic up.

The main point of this talk is not simply to present a hoax and given a technical explanation about why it's wrong, but rather to help your audience see what tools they have already to spot probable hoaxes. So try to figure out what things a regular person (not an expert) would know that would reveal the hoax. (For example, if almost all of the world experts are on one side of the issue or something seems too good to be true.)

You will have up to 15 minutes for the presentation. You may not exceed this limit. However, if you find your talk significantly shorter than this – say under 12 to 13 minutes when you practice – then you probably need to say more. This means you really should practice this talk, by the way.

You'll also want to use some graphics. PowerPoint is a fairly good option, although there are others, like Prezi. In any case, the best talk is one that uses more visuals from the display and in which the speaker speaks any textual information. (Otherwise, your audience is reading your slides and ignoring you.)

Peer Review

As part of this assignment, you will have to do a peer review of two classmates' talks. The goal of this is to provide useful (friendly) feedback to your classmates on their talks. Do not just say, "Nice job," help them find things that you think they could work on to make their talk better. Even a good talk can always be improved!

The other purpose of the peer reviews is for *you* to reflect on other people's talks and to think about ways you could improve yours. So be keeping that in mind as well. The way to learn writing and speaking is to steal good ideas from other people!

Peer reviews will need to be turned in to me by the start of the next class period. I'll hand out peer review sheets for you to fill out.

Rubric

Aspect	Points	Poor	Good	Excellent
Background	15	Nature of the hoax and why people believe it are unclear	Some clarity of what the hoax is, but it's still a bit confused	Good explanation of the hoax and why people subscribe to it.
Why it's Wrong	25	Little or no explanation why it's wrong or what clues tell us to watch out	Adequate explanation of why it's wrong or what the warning flags are, but not both	Both are explained clearly and accurately.
Style	30	Talk is stilted, unclear, or difficult to follow	Talk is clear and easy to follow	Talk is clear and exciting; as a listener, I'm eager to hear more
Peer Review	10	Effectively no peer reviews done	Peer reviews done, but they aren't very helpful	Peer reviews are done on time and provide helpful, friendly feedback

1 Topic Ideas

Some topic ideas include (but are certainly not limited to!):

- Anthropogenic Climate change is a conspiracy
- Moon Landing hoax
- 9/11 Truther movement
- Birther movement
- Homeopathy
- End of the world predictions
- Smoking doesn't cause cancer
- Anti-Vax movement
- Anti-GMO movement