

Dr. Richardson
COMP 101
Spring 2012
Everyday Science Research Paper

Science writing serves many purposes. It usually acts to inform people about the world around them, and oftentimes people trust whatever scientific claims they hear. This assignment asks you to notice how much “science” the average American experiences on a daily basis in the form of science claims, and to assess the reliability of such claims.

To start this paper, fill out the left side of the Expectation Guide below. You need to complete it at the end, making sure to correct any statements that were ultimately false.

Expectation Guide

Complete Prior to Reading

Complete After Reading

True/False		True/False
_____	Cheerios can reduce your cholesterol and save 24,000 lives per year if everybody in America ate Cheerios as recommended.	_____
_____	More than two-thirds of Americans can explain what it means to study something scientifically.	_____
_____	The author of the piece encountered one science claim every ten minutes, on average, during one day.	_____
_____	Coconut oil can increase your calorie-burning power by up to 50%.	_____
_____	Disclaimers on products signal that you have no reason to believe a product will do what it says it can.	_____
_____	CortiSlim successfully helps people lose weight by reducing the stress hormone cortisol.	_____

Now read the article “106 Science Claims and a Truckful of Baloney” by William Speed Weed in *Popular Science* magazine: <http://www.popsoci.com/archive-viewer?id=VQAAAAAAMBAJ&pg=106>

For the next several days, *compile a list of the science claims you encounter*. They can be from anywhere! Some common places for these kinds of claims are on food packaging, the internet, billboards, television commercials, shampoo bottles, etc.

Once you have your list of claims, choose one and write a paper of around 5 – 7 pages that offers a description of the claim, gives the source, provides an evaluation using methods from *How to Think About Weird Things: Critical Thinking for a New Age*, and declares the claim to be true, false, incomplete, misleading, or whatever is an appropriate assessment (as is done in the article).

This assignment requires that you do research and engage in analysis in order to evaluate the claim. Be sure to use reliable sources, e.g. journal articles, fine print, text books, doctors, scientists, and trustworthy internet sources. A *Troubleshooting Guide for Writers* along with the Information Literacy Tutorials will help you start finding and assessing sources, and we will work on research for this assignment during in-class library sessions.

You will complete a Research Log as part of the process for this assignment. Details will be discussed in class.

The General Guidelines for Composition Assignments apply to this paper.

A draft of this paper is due in class on Monday, April 16th

This paper is due with process materials at the beginning of class on Thursday, April 26th