

## HISTORICAL HOAXES

### Robert C. Williams

Hoaxes are common in politics, advertising, cyberspace and daily life. This six-week course examines a number of hoaxes looking for suckers in a historical context: the *marketable hoaxes* of P.T. Barnum and Orson Welles “War of the Worlds”; *forgeries* such as the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the “Italian letter” on yellowcake uranium from Niger that helped precipitate the war in Iraq; *ruses of war* from the Trojan Horse to the “Man Who never Was” and Patton’s nonexistent First U.S. Army Group in England before D-Day; *conspiracy theories* involving the Illuminati, Jews, Freemasons, Catholics, immigrants and “others”; *pretenders* to the throne of Imperial Russia, Stuart England, and Merovingian France; and *science frauds* from the Cardiff Giant and “Piltdown Man” to Cold Fusion and beyond. Deception and truthiness rule here, so bring your skepticism.

Students are encouraged to read Michael Farquhar, *A Treasury of Deception. Liars, Misleaders, Hoodwinkers, and the Extraordinary True Stories of History’s Greatest Hoaxes, Fakes and Frauds* (Penguin Books, 2005). Also check out the Museum of Hoaxes on line. Believe it or not!



The Trojan Horse as a classic wartime deception ruse and hoax.

## 1. MARKETABLE HOAXES AND ARTFUL DECEPTION (September 30).

Doing history. Art and science. Narrative and argument. Finding evidence for an approximately true account of the past. The challenge of doing a history of lying, deception and hoaxes. Hoaxes are all around us in the news.

Artful Deception. Hocus-pocus. Illusion. Magic. Tricks. Forgery. Counterfeiting. Stock certificates. Fake art objects. Lies in politics and advertising. Scams on the telephone or computer. (Nigerian princes; lost in London...) Fake Internet death notices. Unwanted pizza deliveries.

Fraud. Land deeds. Florida swampland. Brooklyn Bridge and Eiffel Tower sales. Con artists (grifters) and marks. Stings. The Big Store.

Stock scams: John Law (Scot) and his phony stock Mississippi Company bubble in France (1720s). Daniel Drew's phony stock watering and manipulations (1860s). Jim Fisk and Jay Gould corner the gold market (1869).

Marriage cons for money. Lovelorn clubs. Magical machines. Internet dating. Mail order brides maybe.

Robbing Peter to Pay Paul. Affinity fraud and black widow scams on the elderly. Charles Ponzi and Bernie Madoff. It's all about timing.

Impersonation. Pretenders. Identity theft. Obituaries. Inheritance claims. Suckers/pigeons. Frank Abagnale and film *Catch Me if you Can*.

College pranks. Hugh Troy, Van Gogh's ear (1935), the rhinoceros of Ithaca (1925), and the CIA. Johnny Tsal runner. 1943 Flypaper Reports. The "hackers" of MIT. Volkswagens in the PO. Fake titles in the card catalogue. The 1961 Rose Bowl hoax with "Caltech" flash cards.

Rigged games: NY Lottery (1818). Riverboats and saloons. Banco, faro, roulette, three-card monte. Marked cards. Card sharps.

Hoaxers: Nostradamus predictions. Wizard of Oz. Harold Hill in the "Music Man." Paul Newman in *The Sting*. Dr. Armand Hammer's wheelchair. Con artists as psychopaths, narcissists and Machiavellians. The grifter and the mark.



P.T. Barnum's Fiji Mermaid (1842)

Selling indulgences in the Middle Ages. Scottish kilts, plaids and tartans for the London market. The Berners Street deliveries hoax of Mrs. Tottenham (London, 1810). P.T. Barnum in the age of fraud. The Master of Humbug, Big Con. Entrepreneur, Universalist, mayor of Bridgeport CT. Universalist. 1835: Joice Heth, age 161, George Washington's nurse? 1842, The Fiji Mermaid. The chess-playing automaton. The nondescript What Is It? The Fox sisters and séance communication with the dead (1848). Tom Thumb.

Barnumisms: "There's a sucker born every minute"; "Every crowd has a silver lining"; "Nobody ever lost a dollar by underestimating the taste of the American public"; "The better the Humbug, the better people will like it". Lying as public spectacle for a paying audience that knows it is being fleeced. The rising urban middle-class audience as eager consumers of hoaxes and curiosities. We all know it's a hoax but we pay (attention) anyway.

Spiritual frauds: Madame Zingara (Elizabeth Fitzgerald), the "clairvoyant of Harlem" (1890s), prison for fraud 1900; Aimee Semple McPherson, evangelist (1917-26); Jim and Tammy Baker. Selling salvation.

Arthur Conan Doyle and the 1917 "Cottingley Fairies." Oscar Harzell and the Drake inheritance fraud. Orson Welles and the "War of the Worlds" radio-broadcast of 1938. Vernal, Utah Dinosaurs Hunting Licenses.

Prices as per schedule for 1938  
 Daily—1,800,000  
 Sunday—3,150,000  
 Published by the Associated Press  
 Vol. 55, No. 138  
 New York, Monday, October 31, 1938  
 47 Pages  
 E. Costa 11011, N.Y.

# FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.

—Story on Page 2



**"War" Victim**

Caroline Carlson, WPA worker, listening to his radio in West 20th St., heard announcement of "war" in "Blue Heaven." Believed to have been the first to hear the news.





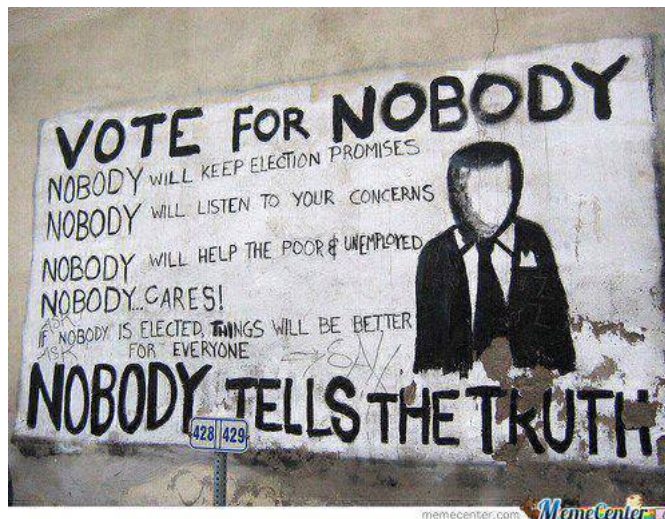
**"I Didn't Know"**

Orson Welles, after announcing to public members of the War of the Worlds for radio and shown in photo. Left: a machine connected for another H. H. Wells story. Dramatic description of landing of "war" machine from Mars' started last night's panic.

Subliminal advertising and the “hidden persuaders.” Reality TV and the rise of “truthiness.” Lies as truths. Postmodern relativism.

Political hoaxes. Lying, cheating and stealing as a way of life. John Adams as a hermaphrodite. Flip-flopping. Election campaign promises. Sticky labels. Insults. Guilt by association. Celebrity as an end in itself: being famous for being famous. Goebbels’ Big Lie and the power of repetition. Roy Cohn: “Attack, attack, attack. Never apologize!” *Forbes* mag offers Lenin’s body for sale (1991); \$15 million starting bid. TV news reports as fact.

Presidential campaign hoaxes: Fake charges, quotes, headlines, photos. James Callender: Hamilton and Mary Reynolds (1797); “Dusky” Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson (1804). “Nobody for President” (1940--). Yetta Bronstein for president (1964/8); Best Party wants to “Put a mother in the White House.” Pat Paulson. Lee Atwater and the Dukakis attack ads (1988); the tank, Willie Horton and mental health rumors. The Romney Christmas card (2008); God has many wives. Birthers. Trump is a Hillary plant. Hillary has Parkinson’s. Negative ads and opponent insults.



What is a hoax? Have you hoaxed or been hoaxed? What historical hoaxes can you think of? Why do some hoaxes work and others fail? Are we all suckers? Hoaxers? Do we fall for a hoax even when we know we are being hoaxed? Do we all tell “white lies” all the time?

Suggested: Jay Robert Nash, *Hustlers and Con Men* (1976); Richard Rayner Drake’s *Fortune. The Fabulous True Story of the World’s Greatest Confidence Artist* (2002); James W. Cook. *The Arts of Deception. Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (2001); Edward Steers, *Hoax. Hitler’s Diaries, Lincoln’s Assassins, and other famous Frauds* (2013); Maria Konnikova, *The Confidence Game* (2016).

Project: Try to find a historical hoax that intrigues you, then find out as much as you can about it over the next six weeks. Surf the internet.

## 2. FORGERIES AND FAKES. (October 7)

*Copying* an authentic document or art work is not forgery. False claims of authorship create *Forgery* by signing a document or painting with another's name. Also, fiction disguised as nonfiction. Counterfeiting the authentic. Plagiarism as literary theft. Forgery as deception and creation. Misattribution.



Konrad Kujau and a volume of his "Hitler Diaries."

The "Donation of Constantine" and the claim of papal supremacy in Europe around 800; exposed by Valla 1440. Shroud of Turin (burial cloth of Jesus?) produced around 1350 (radio-carbon dating). Walter McCrone and his Chicago forensics lab. Linen weave and fibers.

Fakes: George Psalmanazar and his *Description of Formosa* (1704). The Polish "Testament of Peter the Great". Ben Franklin's 1730 "witch hunt" in Mt. Holly NJ. William Ireland and the lost plays of Shakespeare. James McPherson and the epic poems of Ossian (1750s).

The travel lies of Baron Munchhausen. The medical Munchhausens. Vrain-Denis Lucas and the 27,000 fake signatures of famous people sold to Michel Chasles (Jesus in French...).

Counterfeit money. Postage stamps. Secret Service 1865. Richard Pigott and the Charles Parnell letters (1888). The Etruscan fakes of the NY Metropolitan Art Museum. The fake relics of Joan of Arc (1867). The desert manuscripts of Islam Akhun. Edmund Backhouse and the Last Empress of China forgeries at Oxford U.

Catherine Radziwill and the promissory notes of Cecil Rhodes (1902).

WWI propaganda. The Bryce Report on atrocities. The corpse factory. The crucified Canadian. The Sisson Papers and Woodrow Wilson: German conspiracies. The Zinoviev Letter (1923) and the protection of British code-breaking.

H.L. Mencken and his fictional history of the bathtub (1922). Frank Foley and his fake passports save Jewish lives (1936-9) (a good hoax...).

Han van Mengeren and his “Vermeer” paintings. Goring. Pleading forgery rather than collaboration. Paul Coremans. Chemistry and the discovery of Bakelite and cobalt blue. Cracking by knee. Old canvas and paints. 1947 trial.

Leonard Lewis and the *Report from Iron Mountain* hoax (1967). *Naked Came the Stranger* hoax; No. 1 on NYT Best Seller list (1969).

The Vinland Map at Yale and Paul Mellon. Antinase ink. Father Josef Fischer at Stella Matutina. A twentieth-century forgery.

Clifford Irving and the 1971 “autobiography” of recluse Howard Hughes. Island of Ibiza. Irving and Elmyr de Hory, master art forger. Irving’s book on Hory, *Fake!*. Hughes accountant Noah Dietrich’s memoirs. Orson Welles film, *F for Fake* (1974).

Nazi memorabilia. Konrad Kujau and the 1983 “Hitler Diaries.” Gerd Heideman of *Stern* as collaborator. Fooling Hugh Trevor-Roper. 62 volumes sold to Stern for \$3 million. Paper and glue post-1955. Plastic cover letters “A.H.” Julius Grant, MI6 and the forensic analysis of paper, ink and plastic.

Mark Hofmann and the Mormon forgery murders of 1985. Joseph Smith and Emily Dickinson. The “Oath of a Freeman” fake. Bombs and jail.

Janet Cook and “Jimmy’s World.” Fake memoir of an 8 year-old heroin addict in the *Washington Post* (1980). Fabrication fraud.

Christopher Jones reports on the Khmer Rouge (1981) courtesy of Andre Malraux, *The Royal Way* (1930).

Glafira Rosales, Knoedler’s and the faking of Abstract Expressionism. Mark Rothko. Jackson Pollack.

Why do museums and the media fail at “due diligence” and purchase fakes? What motivates the forgers? The suckers? What is authentic? Fake? Can a fake be another form of art? Can fakes save lives?

Suggested: Stephen Fay, Lewis Chester and Magnus Linklater, *Hoax! The Inside Story of the Howard Hughes-Clifford Irving Affair* (1972); Leonard C. Lewis, *Report from Iron Mountain [1967]. On the Possibility and Desirability of Peace* (1996); Charles Hamilton, *The Hitler Diaries. Fakes that Fooled the World* (1991).

### 3. RUSES OF WAR. (October 14)

TRUTH: The first casualty of war, to be defended by a bodyguard of lies. Deception is a major tool of warfare.

Making the enemy think you are going to be when and where you are not. False weapons. Marching troops in a circle. Quaker Guns in the Civil War. Dropped false plans. Agents and turned agents of espionage. The use of camouflage on land and sea for misdirection and concealment. Blending in. The difference between "cover" and "deception." "Cover conceals truth; deception conveys falsehood. Cover induces inaction; deception induces action." Deception is more than concealment.



Dummy rubber tank of WWII.

The Trojan Horse. A Greek gift with soldiers inside as the Greek army fakes its withdrawal. Sun-Tzu: "All warfare is based on deception." Deception means not simply getting the enemy to believe something, but to do what you want them to do.

Causes of War: The 1869 Ems Telegram from William I on the Spanish succession excised by Otto von Bismarck. Hitler's hoax at Gliewitz 9/1/1939: SS men as Poles, dead convicts as murdered Nazi soldiers.

Inflated numbers: Civil War: Cross-dressing soldiers and spies. McClellan's inflated Confederate numbers based on movement of guns and soldiers back and forth. Baden-Powell and the ruses of the Siege of Mafeking in the Boer War. Loud noises and marching soldiers, buried 'mines', broadcast sounds of instructions and fake soldiers marching in circles. Disinformation by letters. The Lovat Scouts—hunters, ghillies, foresters, trackers.

WWI: Camouflage based on plant and animal disguises and color changes (chameleon). Artists as camoufleurs. Abbott Thayer (NH), protective coloration, and camouflage. The art of concealing that something is being concealed. False plans leaked to enemy: Richard Meinertzhagen and the dropped knapsack at Beersheba.

His fake memoirs and invented events. Dummy steel trees (snipers inside), ships, guns. Aerial reconnaissance. Cubist netting, canvas covers, cloaks. Zigzag “dazzle painting” of ships. Lights for nonexistent airstrips. Campfires without camps.

Propaganda: the German corpse factory; Nurse Edith Cavell; Russians in Scotland. Counterfeit money and postage stamps. Air-dropped leaflets. Press censorship and disinformation.

Edmund Allenby and the ruses of desert warfare. The Arab Bureau in Cairo. T.E.Lawrence and irregular warfare—Arab dress, “butcher and bolt” attacks, mining the RRs, poisoned wells, fake maps.

WWII: The Trout Memo of Sep 1939. John Godfrey, Ian Fleming. Deception as bait and lures for angling. Jasper Maskelyne and the “Magic Gang” in Egypt. Dudley Clarke and the deception operations of Archibald Wavell. “A” force deception. Dummies: trucks, tanks, airfields, desert cities at night, order of battle units, artillery, parachutists.

London Controlling Section: John Bevan. War rooms. The role of Ultra and the SLUs in battle. All Nazi traffic read at Bletchley Park in secret, gotten to front by SLUs. Double agents: Garbo and Zigzag. The XX Committee and disinformation. All Nazi agents under British control. Chickenfeed. Mix truth and lies. The myth of Coventry. Chaff and window. Radio and black propagands. Sefton Delmer.

Operation MINCEMEAT. The “man who never was” (“William Martin”) and the invasion of Sicily (not Sardinia). Charles Chomondoley. Ewen Montagu. Body snatching and fake documents. Basil Thompson novel.

Notional army units: Patton’s First U.S.Army Group (FUSAG) and the “bodyguard of lies” (FORTITUDE) for Overlord and D-Day. Fake armies in Germany.

Cold War: Disinformation by KGB/GRU. Radio Free Europe. SIGINT and NSA.

The Italian Letter, Niger uranium and the Iraq War. Fake letter behind Joe Wilson’s trip and Valeri Plame’s CIA outing. Used by Bush and Blair to justify Iraq war. Nonexistent “weapons of mass destruction”; Colin Powell as sucker.

Cyberwar. Computer Trojan horses. Viruses. Hacking: N. Korea and SONY, Stutznet destruction of Iranian centrifuges. Russian-US cyberwarfare. Are hacks hoaxes? Viruses? How effective are hoaxes as a tool of warfare? What other ruses of war do you know about?

Suggested: Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers. Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2004). Nicholas Rankin, *A Genius for Deception. How Cunning helped the British win Two World Wars* (2008).



#### 4. CONSPIRACY THEORIES. (October 21)

They are out to get us. The fear of the other, strangers, secrecy. The plot. Secret powers behind the throne. The conspiracy has the secret power (the Hidden or Invisible Hand, from Adam Smith). Conspiracy theory seeks the hidden truth behind events. Truthiness (spin) in the postmodern age of relativism. Conspiracy explains everything. A form of "history" where theory determines the interpretation of all evidence. Facts are irrelevant or wrong unless they support the theory. Lying as a way of life.



Dualism: God/Devil; Light/Darkness (Mani); good/evil; Christ/Antichrist; orthodoxy/heresy. Conspiracies of witches (devil); Jews; heretics; crusades v. muslims. The Inquisition.

The French Revolution. Illuminati and Freemasons. Antimasonry and the candidacy of William Wirt for president (1832). Freemason lodges as conspiracy. Secret rituals, symbols, rites. Nativism, anti-Catholicism, the *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836). Anti-Irish, German and Chinese immigration. Japanese internment. The conspiracy of the foreign other/stranger.

The medieval Blood Libel against the Jews. William of Norwich (1144). Mendel Beilis (1913). The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903). Maurice Joly and his *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu* (Brussels, 1864). Peter Rachkovsky and the Paris Okhrana (Russian political police). William Melville and Scotland Yard. Russian Jews in East London 1890s. Jews conspire to dominate world through finance and revolution. Audience is Tsar Nicholas II. Spreads after WWI to Europe, U.S. Middle East. The octopus of Jewish power. Henry Ford and the

*Dearborn Independent*. Arab publication. Nesta Webster. The Berne trial of the Protocols (1934). Zionism and the state of Israel (1948).

Nazi ideology, eugenics and race thinking as a hoax. Goebbels' Big Lie. Jewish conspiracies behind everything. Jews above (bankers) and below (revolutionaries). KKK and Aryan White superiority. ZOG and ZIP (Zionists in Power). Holocaust denial as a hoax.

The USSR and the conspiracy of capitalist encirclement. Marx, Lenin and class struggle. CP conspiracy. Bolshevism and power. Stalinism and the purges. "Enemies of the people" (Ibsen) are everywhere. Trotsky and permanent revolution. Killing the Devil (1940). The British Secret Service. The Doctor's Plot. Stalin's paranoia. Capitalism as an international conspiracy against Socialism in One Country.

Joe McCarthy's "conspiracy so immense." Roy Cohn and the politics of conspiracy. The Military Industrial Complex of DDE (1960). Wall Street and the 1%. Communists in high places; the "vast right-wing conspiracy" of radio talk shows and special prosecutors.

The Kennedy assassination. The JFK death list. Conspiracy: LBJ, Aristotle Onassis, Allen Dulles. J.H. Hoover, the KGB, CIA, FBI, Castro, etc.....

*The Report from Iron Mountain* (1967). Leonard Lewin, 1967 satirical hoax. Secret government report by a "special study group" on costs of peace. Economic conversion from war to peace. A permanent War/Peace Research Agency.

Area 51 (Nevada) conspiracy theories of UFOs and Roswell NM. Aliens and other invaders. Star wars and ET. The Dark Side.

The moon landing hoax conspiracies. Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) eschatology. Greg Allen, *None Dare call it Conspiracy* (1971). The New World Order of George Bush (1991). The murder of Princess Diana. 9/11 conspiracy theories. The "vast right-wing conspiracy," Vince Foster's suicide, the Clinton death list, and the Whitewater investigation of Kenneth Starr. Current view of Islam, terrorism and immigration. Real and imagined conspiracies.

Dan Brown, the Priory of Zion and the Templars. Pierre Plantard and the Priory of Zion hoax; Secret Dossiers in the Biblioteque Nationale. The Merovingian genealogy. Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. Plantard as pretender. Jesus as a married feminist.

Are conspiracy theories normally hoaxes? What is the difference between a conspiracy and a conspiracy theory? How can one disprove a conspiracy theory?

Suggested: Hadassa Ben-Itto, *The Lie that Would not Die. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (2005); Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel, *The Da Vinci Hoax. Exposing the Errors in the Da Vinci Code* (2004). Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (1965).

## 5. PRETENDERS AND IMPOSTERS. (October 28)

Impersonation and identity theft. Imposters Frank Abagnale and Frank Demara. Acting. Pretending to be someone you are not. Often claimants to a throne said to be illegitimately occupied are pretenders. Fake identities now resolved by DNA testing. Identity theft a major crime. Hoaxes can be illegal. Computer hacking. ID has unique fingerprints (friction ridge formation), face, gait, voice, handwriting, and DNA (from blood, skin, bones, hair, saliva, semen).



Anna Anderson, a.k.a. Anastasia

PRETENDERS. Roman and Byzantine emperors and claimants. Queen Elizabeth I; the "Bisley Boy." Lambert Simmel, Perkin Warwick and Richard, Duke of York (1495). Sarah Wilson as Queen Charlotte's younger sister.

The 3 False Dmitriis in Russia before 1613. The many selves of Peter the Great: German changeling, Antichrist. Peasant rebel Emelyan Pugachev pretends to be Tsar Peter III 1774. Fedor Kuzmich as Alexander I, the ex-tsar as holy fool. Anastasia, Anna Anderson and the many cats of Mrs. Monaghan. The last Romanov exposed as pretender by DNA test 1983. Current pretender GD Maria Vladimirovna and son/grandson.

Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobite pretenders to the British throne. The Act of Settlement 1707. The Fifteen and the Forty Five. Battle of Culloden (1745). King Louis XVII of France and the "Dolphin" of Mark Twain. Many pretenders, heart of real Dauphin tested by DNA. Princess Caraboo (1817).

Pierre Plantard, the Merovingian dynasty and the Priory of Zion. Dagobert. Creating false identity by forging documents and genealogy.

IMPOSTERS. Virginia Wolff and the *Dreadnaught* prank. Stephen Weinberg/Weyman impersonates a Romanian officer and visits the *Wyoming* in NYC 1915. Sponsors Astor Hotel dinner.

Cassie Chadwick (1857-1907). Born Canada "Elizabeth Bigley". Illegitimate daughter of Andrew Carnegie (con 1897). Forgery arrests. "Madame Lydia De Vere" clairvoyant of Cleveland. 1889 forgery/fraud trial and jail. Ran a brothel as "Cassie Hoover." Bank loans and assumed inheritance; debts; worthless securities; check forging. 1905 fraud trial, 14 year sentence, died 1907.

Wartime doubles: Bernard Montgomery/Clifton James; Hitler/6?; Himmler; Stalin/Felix Dadaev; Kissinger?; Yeltsin? Sukarno? Saddam Hussein?

Frank Abnagale. (1948--) Model for *Catch Me If You Can* (2002), with Leonard DeCaprio. Forger, trickster, imposter 1963-9, all under age 21. Pan Am Pilot, physician, lawyer, prison agent, etc. 8 IDs. Bank account fraud. Pediatrician as "Frank Williams." Fake Harvard transcript forged.

Frank Demara. (1921-82) *The Great Imposter* (1957), with Tony Curtis. Ship's doctor, civil engineer, surgeon, prison warden, lawyer, hospital orderly, teacher monk, cancer researcher. Pseudonym "Joseph Cyr." Joined Brothers of Christian Instruction and founded a college in Alfred, Maine.

Clark Rockefeller. Arrives Boston 1978 as Christian Karl Gerhartsreiter (b. 1961). Actor, director, ship's captain, British aristocrat. Boston Algonquin Club. 1985 murder of Jonathan Sokus. Married Sandra Boss as "C.R." 1994. Divorce. Convicted of first-degree murder 2013, in prison in CA.

IDENTITY THEFT. Problem of our times. Numbers: SS, telephone, drivers license, computer. Bil Morrison and the Nigerian prince scam (newspaper, telephone, Internet). Market for stolen identities is global: criminal; financial; ID cloning; medical; child ID theft. Ghosting the deceased. High-tech forgery of documents.

Adolfo Kaminsky: WWII French Resistance forger saved 14,000 Jews.

Albert Gonzalez: (b. 1981) Hacker 2005-7. Cuban. Stole and sold 170 million debit and credit card numbers hacked on line. In jail.

DNA AS PROOF OF IDENTITY. DNA THEFT. Fingerprints used since 1890s. Now DNA. Crime is "gene theft" from discarded objects with genetic material on them. "Gene snatching" (the unauthorized acquisition of someone else's DNA without their consent) is illegal in 8 states.

Suggested: Theo Aronson, *Kings Over the Water. The Saga of the Stuart Pretenders* (2015); V. Green and V. Hughes, *Almost Anastasia. The Life of Franziska Schauzkowsky* (2015); Mark Seal, *The Man in the Rockefeller Suit. The Astonishing Rise of a Serial Imposter* (2012).

## 6. SCIENCE HOAXES. (November 4)

Normal science: testing a theory (paradigm, model, hypothesis) by an experiment using and measuring evidence to confirm or refute the theory. Science proceeds by experiment and revision of accepted wisdom. The most significant theories are falsifiable (Karl Popper) and based on replicable experiments. Hoaxes are intentional distortions of science by claiming fake discoveries, inventing fake machines, or committing science fraud. False science can also become ideological orthodoxy (Nazi race theory, Stalinist genetics). Sometimes power trumps truth.

Astrology/astronomy and alchemy/chemistry in the Middle Ages. The thin line between magic, religion, mysticism and belief—and science. The parallel universes of science hoaxes and false claims.

DISCOVERIES: Adam Beringer and God's handiwork in the (planted) miracle rocks of 1725 Wurzburg. Mary Toft's rabbits (1726). The *NY Sun's* Great Moon Hoax of 1835 and Poe's "Hans Pfall" trip to the moon. Canals and living beings on the moon. The "moon landing" hoax of 1969 as conspiracy theory.

George Hull and the Cardiff Giant (1869) discovered in upstate NY. Barnum's "real" Cardiff Giant on exhibit.

Charles Dawson and Piltdown Man (1913) at Piltdown fossil excavations near Hastings, England. Human and Orangutan jaw bones combined to establish the 'missing link' between ape and man. Was Arthur Conan Doyle involved? Based on his 1912 *The Lost World*? Teilhard de Chardin? Textbook science until exposed 1953.



Excavating Piltdown Man around 1912. No ducking this hoax.

Crop circles seen from the air in 1970s England a hoax. The Tasaday Hoax of stone-age men in the Philippines(1972). Instructed savages and the Tasaday land grab of Ferdinand Marcos.

FAKE MACHINES: Charles Redheffer's perpetual motion machine and the man pedaling behind the wall (1813); W.C.Crosby, flour paste into coffee beans (1894); P.F.Jernegan's Gold Accumulator Company (1897); Harry Holland's secret invisible preserving fluid (paint) (1886); John Keely's "vibratory generator" water into fuel machine con (compressed air) (1875); Louis Enricht's green gasoline machine (1916); Walter Hohenau's Hydrogen Production Company of Houston (1927).

SCIENCE FRAUD. Cheating in the laboratory. Faking the data.

Genetics: Lamarckian inheritance of acquired characteristics, Paul Kammerer's midwife toad spots (India ink) and 1926 suicide. Trofim Lysenko's agronomy hoaxes (vernalization). Dean Hamer and the "gay gene" hoax of 1993. Xq28 region.

Stanley Pons, Martin Fleischman and Cold Fusion (1989). Not replicable experiment.

David Baltimore's painted mice and the human genome.

Hwang Woo-Suk (b.1953) and the false claim to have cloned embryonic stem cells from eggs. Dismissed 2006, prison for fraud and embezzlement 2009.

Andrew Wakefield and the autism- vaccination fraud of 1998. *VAXXED* film. MMR vaccine said to cause autism. False date, fraud, conflict of interest, lost license.

AND JUST PLAIN FUN. 1956 anthropology article "Body Ritual among the Nacirema" refers to American tooth brushing. Alan Sokol and the "hermeneutics of quantum gravity" hoax in *Social Text* (1996).

Do we believe any more in science as hypothesis tested by evidence and experiment? What do we do when scientific experts arrive at opposite or contradictory conclusions? When scientists create laboratory frauds?

Suggested: John E. Walsh, *Unraveling Piltdown. The Science Fraud of the Century and its Solution* (1996).

CONCLUSION: The purpose of hoaxes: money and fun. Intentional. Getting the suckers in the audience to believe and participate. Confidence men (and women) as professionals. The marketplace for hoaxes in today's virtual reality. Scepticism and curiosity about history and hoaxes.