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YSU

Broadening horizons Students ponder life beyond Earth

UFO class separates fact from fiction

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News Editor

While Reuters reported Nov. 12 that 24 former government officials and pilots are calling for the U.S. government to resume UFO investigations, students at Youngstown State University will be researching right along with them.

As a psychology special topics course, ETs and UFOs teaches students how to distinguish myth from fact. Temple University in Pennsylvania is the only other university besides YSU that has space aliens as a regular part of the curriculum.

The text, "Hidden Truth: Forbidden Knowledge" is comprised of over 400 testimonies author Steven Greer obtained from various government, military and corporate personnel, Steve Graf, emeritus professor of psychology, said. The individuals were forbidden by their workplaces to talk to anyone about knowledge of UFOs, so most of the information came from "death



Steve Graf teaches the ETs and UFOs course with help from his brother-in-law, Jack Auman. Photo contributed by Graf.

bed testimonials," where people thought they should set the record straight.

Much undercover operations dealt with "black budgeting," a process where powerful government agents were able to receive funding for projects which Congress had no knowledge of, Graf said. Only small cells within agencies were responsible for this kind of research.

Students are encouraged to find their own research on UFOs online, where they then can separate the reality from the myth, or as Graf calls it, the spin.

Graf has experienced firsthand the difficulty in separating the two. He said he researched UFOs during the late '80s until finally becoming discouraged by the information.

"I was so confused by trying to

distinguish what was fact and what was fiction," he said.

A discrepancy exists between the reality of extraterrestrials and what the media perpetuates about them, Graf said. While movies like "War of the Worlds" and "Independence Day" depict extraterrestrials as brutal monsters, reality points to peaceful visitors that do not aim to abduct earthlings or steal resources.

Graf said he admits that the class will be challenged by skepticism.

The climate of false thinking that surrounds the subject of UFOs often prevents educated individuals from becoming involved, Graf said. They don't want their credibility to be questioned.

"Academics are not about to

broaden the topic in a serious fashion," he said.

Graf said he wants students to come to their own conclusions.

"This is not something that we're pushing," Graf said, of student belief in UFOs. "Our job is to expose them to the best quality information we can."

Students who took the class last spring at the YSU Metro College in Boardman have formed their own opinions.

Prior to taking the class, former student Tina Fanfer didn't think about life beyond earth.

"It was a question I didn't want to answer or spend time on," she said.

During the class, she and other students learned about people who experienced contact with otherworldly beings, Fanfer said. Students also found events that the press didn't cover.

"It just kind of swayed me into believing that this was really a possibility," Fanfer said, of the class. "It keeps reminding me there's more out there than meets the eye."

Some area residents were reluctant to share their own testimonies, Fanfer said.

"They don't want to be seen as being kind of goofy," she said.

After realizing that extraterres-

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trials could have done away with our entire planet, Fanfer said she decided that they meant no harm.

"They're just existing the way we're existing," she said.

Senior Tatia Hollobaugh said the class has shown her how misinformative the media is.

Students often debated ways to make public aware without sounding crazy, she said.

"People are so closeminded," she said. Hollobaugh, for her part, hasn't been discouraged by the popular media. "I know there is life beyond earth," she said.

Hollobaugh said students also learned about harvesting energy from vacuums in space. "There's energy all around us that we are not using," she said.

Graf said the class will again focus on the need for alternative sources of energy and higher consciousness, but we won't get any help from friendly green aliens.

"We're on the brink of destruction because our technology is way, way ahead of our social develop-

ment," Graf said.

Quarantines are placed on societies or planets like ours that haven't fully developed socially. As a society, we are not mature enough to deal with extraterrestrials, Graf said.

"They're sort of waiting for us to get it," he said.

Ideally, instead of being separate beings, humans would be able to share one another's thoughts, he said. "Higher consciousness is the common denominator in all of us, extraterrestrial and earthling alike," Graf said. "In the largest sense, we're all one."

Society's separation between affluence and poverty keeps the world from sharing resources, he said. Poverty, international water shortage, and healthcare are all issues that should not exist.

"As a planet, we need to develop an approach and an ability to use higher consciousness and our own resources so that we are no longer threatening our planet," he said.