

THE UNEXPLAINED

There are many kinds of mysteries. In today's world we still wonder about the old questions: are there sea serpents, is my house haunted, who built that ruin. The rapid pace of technical progress seems to have added to these with new mysteries: What is that shiny thing in the sky, what are they really doing in that secret laboratory. This course is a look at some of the most famous mysteries of the 20th and early 21st centuries. We will have fun with them but we will also look for what facts and fears might lie behind these stories.

We will begin with Atlantis because it is one of those subjects that brings together many of the strands of modern myth and mystery. Where did the story come from? The fall and rise of the idea of catastrophes. Lost civilizations and fringe archaeology (or is it forbidden archaeology?). Ancient astronauts and elder civilizations. We will introduce the idea of looking skeptically at information...and the skeptics and look at how nearly scientific and totally outlandish these subjects can be.

From Atlantis we will go on to other popular subjects in the unexplained—

THINGS IN THE SKY: UFOs of course but other sky mysteries. UFOs are a fascinating subject by themselves. We will use the text for an overview of flying saucers and flying cigars, then we will look at the history of this popular phenomenon from the hysteria of the fifties to the grey aliens of the nineties and what's going on today. We will also talk about thunderbirds, flying mothmen, and very odd thunderstorms: the non UFO mysteries that were around before we worried about little grey men and are still around.

THINGS IN THE DARK WOODS AND DEEP OCEANS: Cryptozoology, the study (?) of mysterious animals. These include the old favorites Bigfoot and Sea Serpents, however there are other lesser known creatures that have attracted attention from time to time. Sometimes it is just mysterious footprints, sometimes it is fleeting encounters and sometimes it is up close and personal. We will look at the outrageous and those creatures that might actually exist but just haven't been photographed yet.

THINGS THAT AREN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN: Disappearances, hauntings, spontaneous human combustion. All the stuff that makes good filler in tabloids and ghost books. We will study a wide variety of stories, try to categorize them and then see if we can understand how these tales got started. Perhaps there will still be real mysteries when we are done.

THINGS WE AREN'T SUPPOSED TO KNOW: Great and spooky conspiracy theories. In this section we will not be particularly interested in politics and history but with the truly weird and bizarre. Nazi flying saucers in a hollow Earth and secret Alien invasions are the things we will be studying.