

## **CONSPIRACY THEORIES, HISTORY, AND CRITICAL THINKING**

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This SoTL project utilized a First-year Seminar on Conspiracy Theories and American History to examine how students think about conspiracy theories and how their thinking changes over time. The project draws on Anthony Ciccone's SoTL work (2008, 2016, 2018) to assess how first-year students engage in complex thinking. It seeks (1) to assess students' comprehension of conspiracy theories in American history and contemporary politics and society and (2) to assess students' comprehension of their own learning. It therefore engages in an inter-disciplinary approach to learning, drawing on history, political science, psychology, and cultural studies. As conspiracy theories often target racial and ethnic minorities, the project also foregrounds equity-minded pedagogy in an effort to raise awareness and improve student understanding of discrimination and racism. Students demonstrated improved understanding of conspiracy theories, increased awareness of racism and discrimination, improved understanding of the relation between conspiracy theories and history, and increased appreciation for their own learning.

