

**EEB 280W**  
**For students of Prof. Louise Lewis and Bernard Goffinet**  
**Spring, 2008**

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## **I. Contact Information**

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Papers can be turned in either as printed copies, or as Word document files. Printed copies should be placed in your W instructor's mailbox in the EEB department office (TLS 316), or delivered to our respective office (Pharm/Bio 200 for Dr. Lewis and 300 for Dr. Goffinet) by 4 P.M. on the due date. (Its okay to slide your paper under our office door if we are not there to receive it.) Word files must be sent to our e-mail address by 4 P.M. on the due date (be sure to include "EEB280W" in the subject line of the email. Notice that a copy of your source paper for the first assignment must also be turned in, either as a printed copy or photocopy to our mailbox or office, or you may e-mail a pdf of the paper if you have one.

How much help is available? LOTS. Please e-mail us to make an appointment. Notice that you are required to meet with us at least twice to discuss revision of the first drafts of your papers. You are welcome to meet other times as well, and are recommended to do so as you develop the first draft of your term paper. Other resources on campus include the University Writing Center (<http://www.writingcenter.uconn.edu/>).

## **II. Summary of Assignments and Due Dates**

There are two assignments, both of which will be rewritten. The first is a 2-page summary and discussion of a scientific paper. The second is a term paper on a topic of your choice related to green plant evolution (subject to our approval and input). The paper that you write about for your first assignment may be used as one of the sources for the term paper, so you should start thinking early about your probable term paper topic. Details follow.

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Note: This document is based on standard W instructions formulated for EEB courses such as 244W and 245W. We are not responsible for the example included at the back of this document on scientific paper citation format.

Assignment	Description	Percent of W grade	Due Date	Return Date
Required attendance at W section overview	Discussion of assignments, goals,...	NA	1 <sup>st</sup> week	
1st draft of short paper due; and photocopy of your source paper	Summary and discussion of a published paper on land plant evolution research. (See below for further description of this assignment.) Try to pick a paper within the topic that you will use for your term paper.	Not graded	Feb. 07	During meeting
Required meeting with W instructor	Make an appointment to meet with your W instructor during this week to discuss revision of your short paper, and to discuss possible term paper topics.	NA	Feb. 13-19	
Final version of the short paper and description of your term paper topic	1) Final version of your short paper 2) A brief description of your term paper topic with a list of at least 4 references you plan to use, including one from the last year (2007). The references should be listed in the proper format for a "References Cited" section (see below).	25%	March 06	During meeting
Recommended meeting with W instructor.	Make an appointment to discuss your term paper	NA	March 24-28	
Term paper draft	This should include all of the sections listed below.	25%	April 08	During meeting
Required meeting with W instructor	Make an appointment to discuss revision of your term paper.	NA	April 14-18	
Revised term paper	Final version of term paper	50%	May 1 <sup>st</sup>	At the final exam

### III. Descriptions of assignments

**A. Course goals.** The goals of this course are to help you learn to present information, ideas, and arguments in clear, well-organized prose and to introduce you to library research in biology, including reading of the primary literature in which scientists report the results of their studies.

**B. The short paper.** Two pages double-spaced. Use a 12-point font, preferably Times Roman or something similar. Number the pages; use 1-inch margins. If the paper is printed, use black ink that can be read with ease, and staple the pages together. You may print either on one side, or on both sides of the paper. Alternatively, you may e-mail a Word file of your document. Be sure to title your file with your name, not just "Assignment1.doc".

Also turn in a copy of your source paper (that one you are discussing). This can be a photocopy, or a pdf (the format of electronic papers downloaded through the library's web site).

Due date for first draft: February 7, turned into our mailbox or office, or delivered by e-mail, by 4 P.M.

Choose a topic pertaining to the evolution of green plants, from any of the sources listed below. We encourage you to choose a paper related to your probable term paper topic. This paper can be used (and cited) in your term paper. Use the library to locate one paper from the **primary literature** related to this topic. This paper must contain original data collected by the authors, i.e. it should not be a paper based on commentary, or on reviews of primary literature. We recommend that you check with us once you have found a paper, especially if you are unsure whether it is suitable.

The goals of the assignment are to write a concise summary of the key points of a scientific paper, to think about the paper critically, and to start developing a term paper topic. This is also an important, early chance to get feedback on your writing.

Your assignment is to:

- state the main research problem addressed in the paper
- briefly summarize how the data were collected
- briefly summarize the results of the paper
- discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the study
- correctly cite the source paper and any other references you use. (See the section on how to cite scientific papers below)

You **must** include a copy of the paper you are discussing when you turn in your short paper.

Your audience is someone who has taken an introductory plant biology course, and therefore has a general knowledge of plant diversity and evolution, but has not read the source paper that you are discussing. Strive to write a clear, concise "executive summary" for such a reader, so that he or she can understand what the scientists did, and what conclusions they reached. Point out any important ways in which the study was incomplete or unconvincing. Be sure to write your summary in your own words: do not copy the organization or phrasing of the paper's own summary or abstract. See the section on plagiarism below.

**C. Choosing a topic and paper for your short assignment.** One goal of the short assignment is to get you thinking about your term paper topic. You should choose a paper related to the probable topic for your term paper. You can consider any area of land plant evolution. You can look at recent issues of journals that report on the evolution of green plants (American Journal of Botany, International Journal of Plant Sciences, Systematic Botany, ... which you can find in the Babbidge library) but the literature is broadly scattered and we therefore recommend that you search for papers on line using the **Science Citation Index (Web of Science)**, which can be used for free on any computer within UConn's network. You can find this by going to the UConn library web page. The address is:  
<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/>

From the library's web page, click on the "Online Resources" link, then under "**Frequently Used Databases**" click on Web of Science. A new page loads with more information on this database. Click on "Web of Science" again. This should load the Web of Science web page. Click on "General Search." In the "Topic" field, type in a word or phrase related to your topic. After a few seconds, a list of papers related to that topic will appear. Only 10 at a time are displayed, but you can move forward to other pages listing more results of your search. If you click on the title of a paper, further information will show, usually including a summary or abstract of your paper. To use the paper for your assignment, you will need to see the full text, which is not displayed in Science Citation Index. Many, but not all, of these papers are available through Babbidge library. Some are available on line (See the "Ejournal Locator" link from the Online Resources page of the Library's web site); others are shelved in the library. When you look at the full text, you may find that the paper is not suitable; for example, it may be overly mathematical or require knowledge of advanced statistics. If so, look for another paper instead.

For further help, contact us or the University Librarian.

**D. The term paper.** The term paper will consist of 13-15 pages double-spaced. Use a 12-point font, preferably Times Roman or something similar. Number the pages and use 1-inch margins. You may either send a Word document of your paper to me by e-mail, or turn in a printed copy. If the paper is printed, use a black ink that can be read with ease, and staple the pages together.

Due date for first draft: April 8, e-mailed, or turned into my mailbox or office by 4 P.M.

The term paper will summarize and discuss several related papers from the primary literature on a topic related to the evolution of green plants. Your audience is, again, a former student from a general plant biology class who has a basic understanding of plant diversity and plant evolution, but knows little about the particular topic that you have chosen. Your paper will bring such a person up to date on research in your chosen area. In organizing your paper,

you may find it helpful to consider the following questions. What are the main questions around which the research is organized? What approaches have been taken by scientists investigating this topic, and what have these studies revealed? If there are several competing hypotheses, which ones have been well supported? What questions remain unanswered?

You should comment on the strengths and limitations of the studies that you summarize, which we can discuss when you meet with us as you work on your paper.

The first task is to find an appropriate topic (see below), which must be approved by your W instructor, and to find several papers from the primary literature that relate strongly to that topic. You should discuss a minimum of five papers, at least one of which must be from the last year (2007). These papers must be from scientific journals. These are often available on the internet, but you may not use changeable web pages as sources. We can help you to find appropriate papers.

**FORMAT:** The term paper should include the following:

**Title** -- The title should be brief and informative. This is the bait that lures the potential reader to continue further, so choose carefully. Your title must be new, and cannot match the title of the paper(s) you choose.

**Synopsis** -- This brief section (less than a page) gives a concise, specific, balanced summary of all the main points made in the paper. Write it after you have finished a full draft of your paper. Most journals call this the "abstract" or the "summary."

To save paper, don't include a separate title page. Instead, put your name, title, and synopsis all on the first page, along with however much of the introduction fits.

**Introduction** -- This section can range from one to several pages. The purposes of the introduction are to introduce your topic or question, to put it into a general framework, and to provide necessary background information for the reader. Clearly state the specific question that you are asking or the topic that you are addressing. Put the question or topic in some more general context so that we understand why the topic is interesting and important.

Also use this section to explain HOW you are going to go about addressing the topic. For example, you might state that you are going to (i) summarize several hypotheses related to the issue you have selected, (ii) present and discuss the results of several studies testing these hypotheses, and (iv) finally draw your own conclusions about the best-supported view or views.

It is not necessary to organize your paper around a particular thesis (a single idea that you plan to support). It is more likely that you will present several lines of evidence that bear on a problem, or several hypotheses along with evidence for or against each hypothesis.

**Main body of the text** -- This section should present an objective, unbiased account of the relevant information from the primary literature and your critical evaluation of that literature. It will be most effective if you present information organized around key points. Do not simply summarize the papers being discussed. Instead, give the reader enough information about the source papers so that your arguments can be followed and your opinions understood and evaluated. Being critical does not necessarily mean finding flaws in the papers. Rather, it involves expressing a reasoned opinion on a matter, involving judgment on its correctness, value, or significance.

The main point of each paragraph should be clear and supported by evidence from the literature. Use the proper citation format when giving data or conclusions from the papers you have read. If the author's name is used as part of the sentence, put the year of citation in parentheses following the author's name; e.g., "Simon (2005) argues that X." If the author's name is not used in the sentence, then the citation should be in parentheses at the end of the sentence (Simon, 2005; Jockusch and Simon, 2007; Smith et al., 2006). If there are more than two authors, use "et al." rather than listing all of the authors. The citation should be placed at the end of the sentence if it applies to the entire sentence (before the punctuation) or immediately following the information to which it applies. (See the example at the end of this syllabus.)

**Conclusions** -- In this section, present your own conclusions or analysis of the information you have presented. The quality of your paper rests on how well you support your view, not on what position you choose to support. If there is no controversy, then use this section to synthesize the major conclusions of the papers you have read.

**References Cited** -- This is exactly what it says: a list of all the papers (references, or literature) that you have cited in the body of your paper. Do not list here any references that are not cited in your paper.

Use the format shown in the Scientific Paper Citation Format section (see below) both to refer to papers in the text of the paper (the citation) and to list it at the end (References Cited). Papers should be listed alphabetically according to the first author's last name.

Your references must include at least one paper from the recent literature; that is, from the current year (2007).

**E. Choosing a topic and sources for your term paper.** The trick is to choose a topic that is neither too broad nor too narrow. "Fern Evolution" is far too broad--thousands of papers on diverse aspects of fern evolution have been published. "Evolution of the fern genus *Azolla* in New England" is too narrow: you will not find enough sources appropriate to the assignment. You should choose a topic so that you can find five or more papers from the primary literature that address a similar issue. You are advised to seek the help of your instructor, after you have done part of your literature search.

It will be easier to write a strong paper if you focus on a conceptual question, rather than description of a particular organisms or interaction.

**F. Researching the Paper.** The campus library is a tremendous resource. In addition to books and journals, it provides paper and electronic databases searchable by topic or author and an interlibrary loan service to obtain books and articles the library does not own. In my experience, the most useful database for EEB students is the Web of Science. This database is available online through the library website (under shortcuts or databases by title). The Web of Science can be used to do standard author or topic searches. It can also be used to search for papers that have cited a relevant paper or author. This feature is particularly useful if you have discovered an older paper on your chosen topic and want to find move forward in time to discover more recent sources. Furthermore, once you have found a good source, you can easily find other papers on the same topic. Click on the title of the paper to bring up the full record. Then click on the "Find Related Records" button. The result is a list of papers on similar topics.

## IV. Important Tips and Requirements

### A. Requirements

#### Short paper format checklist

- Two pages, double-spaced, with page numbers and 1-inch margins.
- Printed in readable black ink, or turned in as a Word document.
- If a printed copy is turned in, the two pages can be printed on both sides of a single sheet of paper, or else they must be stapled together in the upper left corner.
- 12-point Times Roman (or similar) font (not Courier, Ariel, or Helvetica).
- No quotations from the source paper.
- Retain a secure, backup copy of your paper on two disks.
- Turn in a copy of the source paper (either a photocopy, or a pdf file).
- If you turn in a printed first draft of your paper, turn in the same copy (with the instructor's comments) along with your final draft.
- The source paper is cited within the text of your paper and at the end, following the format illustrated below.

#### Term paper format checklist

- 13-15 pages, with page numbers and 1-inch margins.
- Printed in readable black ink, or turned in as a Word document
- If a printed copy is turned in, staple the pages together in the upper left corner.

- 12-point Times Roman (or similar) font (not Courier, Ariel, or Helvetica).
- No quotations from the source papers.
- No separate title page. The title and synopsis are on the first page.
- Discusses at least five papers from the primary literature, including at least one from within the last year.
- Retain a secure, backup copy of your paper on two disks.
- If you turn in a printed first draft of your paper, turn in the same copy (with instructor's comments) along with the final draft. (It is not necessary to turn in copies of your source papers.)
- Each source paper is cited within the text of your paper following the format illustrated below.
- "References Cited" section with papers listed alphabetically according to the first author's last name

### Some rules

- For your own benefit, meet the deadlines on the attached schedule. **Points will be deducted for papers that are turned in late.**
- It is your responsibility to meet deadlines and to make appointments with your assigned instructor to keep on schedule.
- You must turn in your first drafts with your final versions, unless they are supplied as Word documents.
- If you fail the "W" portion of the course, you will receive a grade of "F" for the entire course, regardless of your scores on exams and from discussion sections. This can result from plagiarism, from failing to turn in required assignments, including drafts, or from poor performance on the assignments.
- **Do not plagiarize.** Representing the work of another author as your own is plagiarism. There are several ways to commit plagiarism. One is to turn in a paper that you did not write (i.e., a paper that you bought, borrowed, or copied). This will result in a grade of "F" for the paper and the course. Another form of plagiarism is to copy the wording or sentence structure of your sources. To do so without explicitly acknowledging the original author is dishonest. Even when acknowledged by quotation marks, direct quotes are rarely necessary--the sources are rarely paragons of literary expression and the reader does not need to study the subtle nuances of the original text. Find a way to express the same information or idea in your own words.

It is also not enough to rework the original source by substituting or omitting some words and phrases. Here is an example:

The original:

"Interspecific competition between *Balanus* and *Chthamalus* was, on the other hand, a most important cause of death of *Chthamalus*. This is shown both by the direct observations of the process of crowding at each census and by the differences between the survival curves of *Chthamalus* with and without *Balanus*....In addition, the evidence is strong that the observed competition with *Balanus* was the principal factor determining the local distribution of *Chthamalus*. *Chthamalus* thrived at lower levels when it was not growing in contact with *Balanus*."

From: Connell, J. H. 1961. The influence of interspecific competition and other factors on the distribution of the barnacle *Chthamalus stellatus*. *Ecology* 42: 710-723.

An unacceptable summary:

"Competition between the two barnacle species was, nonetheless, an important source of mortality for *Chthamalus*. This was indicated both by the observations of crowding and by the contrasts between the survivorship schedules of *Chthamalus* with and without *Balanus*. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that competition with *Balanus* was the most important factor determining the local distribution of *Chthamalus*. *Chthamalus* prospered at lower levels when they were not touching *Balanus*."

This is not original writing: it is too close to the source in the organization of the paragraph, in sentence structure, and in choice of words and phrases. Writing of this kind will result in a substantially lower grade.

## **B. Grading and advice**

Grading is based both on the quality of the writing, and on the content. Your paper should read smoothly, like good newspaper or magazine article, but with more attention to the methods of the studies than is typically included in newspaper or magazine articles.

Weaker papers often move through the sources one by one, summarizing each source separately and doing little to pull them together. In weaker papers, critiques of sources may be gratuitous, suggesting for example that the studies should have collected more data over a longer period of time. (Every study would benefit from including more data, so this isn't necessarily an insightful comment. It's much better to identify a key type of data that is missing.) Relying on the wording, sentence structure, and paragraph organization of the original sources will also result in a lower grade. We would rather that you wrote an awkward paragraph yourself, which can then be revised for the final draft, than that you copy a good paragraph written by someone else. The weakest revisions accomplish little more than typing in the corrections marked on the first draft by the instructor.

Stronger papers are easily read by another plant biologist. The writing is clear and direct, with strong paragraph and sentence organization. Stronger papers have few grammatical and spelling errors, and avoid plagiarism.

The best papers reveal an effort to synthesize the information from different sources, and to think critically about the strengths and limitations of each study. How best to do this depends on the specifics of your topic and the sources that you read. Here are some possibilities. If the sources approach the topic in different ways (e.g., if some are based on surveys, while others use controlled experiments), then it might be effective to group the studies together by approach, discussing the successes and problems that arise. Alternatively, it may be that two or more hypotheses have been developed to explain a phenomenon. Then, you might organize your paper according to these hypotheses, discussing the papers that bring evidence to bear on each one. There are many other possibilities.

Strong revisions respond to the comments written by the instructor on the first draft by rewriting whole paragraphs, or even eliminating paragraphs and writing new ones.

Stronger papers indicate a critical attitude towards the sources by commenting on their strengths and weaknesses.

The table below describes in detail the grading criteria for the short paper. We will place greatest emphasis on clarity of writing. We do not expect flowery or profound writing, that you have a thesis or a particular point of view to defend, or that you will be knowledgeable about statistical and technical methods presented in the source paper. We would like to read clear, concise summaries of the source papers without becoming entangled in awkward or ungrammatical sentences. That's harder than it sounds, and it requires revision -- we'll work on it!

Criteria for grading	Strong papers: A's and high B's	Satisfactory papers (low B's and C's)	Problematic papers (D's and F's)
Clarity of writing	The paper reads smoothly, so that the reader can readily follow the intent of the writer, and can readily extract information. The reader can easily understand the most important aspects of the source paper, including its intent, methods, and conclusions. The overall organization (number, order and content of paragraphs) is strong, as are paragraph and sentence structure. Within each paragraph, the individual sentences cohere around a unified theme, which is declared by a topic sentence, when appropriate. Sentence structures are direct and clear. There are few or no errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or word usage.	The paper is mostly well written, presenting a good summary of the source paper and its conclusions. The flow may be occasionally interrupted by confusing statements or awkward sentences. The average paper has some problems in overall organization, paragraph structure, and/or sentence structure. For example, it may begin too abruptly, may not return to questions raised in the first paragraph, may lack strong topic sentences where they would be helpful, or may have individual sentences that are choppy, awkward, or hard to interpret. The reader can readily comprehend some, but perhaps not all, of the major aspects of the source study. Typically, a few spelling and grammatical errors are present, and word choice is not always optimal.	The organization of the paper is discernable, but has not been crafted to convey information effectively. This may be because sentences are rewritten in the order in which they appear in the source, without taking into account how well this works in a short summary. The reader cannot understand some key aspects of the source paper. Errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word usage are too common.
Was the assignment followed?	All requirements of the assignment are met. The source paper is from the primary literature. The goals, methods, and results of the study are summarized, and the paper comments on strengths and limitations of the source paper. The paper is turned in on time, along with a copy of the source paper.	Most or all aspects of the assignment are followed. A copy of the source paper is turned in. The source paper is acceptable, but one or more sections may be treated too briefly. Points may be lost due to missed deadlines.	Characterized by major deficiencies in following the assignment, such as choosing an inappropriate source, not turning in a copy of the source paper, or not including important aspects of the summary.
Lack of plagiarism	The summary and discussion of the source paper show that the source was read and digested. The organization and wording of the summary are original, rather than being taken from the source.	The paper is based on original writing, but may adopt elements of paragraph organization, sentence organization, or wording from the original source. This results in a lower score.	The paper is unacceptable if it was not written by the student, or if it takes much of its wording from the original source(s).
Mechanics	Each requirement in the format checklist is met.	The format checklist is satisfied with no more than minor deviations.	The specified format was not followed.
Revision	The final version of the paper represents a serious effort to improve on the first draft, based on the instructor's comments, and on the writer's own efforts to improve the content and the quality of the writing.	The revision addresses most of the comments made by the instructor, but does little more: if particular problems with word usage are noted in the first two paragraphs by the instructor, a weak revision does not correct similar problems elsewhere in the paper.	Little effort was put into the revision beyond typing in small corrections noted by the instructor on the first draft.

The grading basis for the longer paper will include the criteria listed above, plus the following:

Criteria for grading	Strong papers: A's and high B's	Satisfactory papers (low B's and C's)	Problematic papers (D's and F's)
Choice of source papers	The source papers are from the primary literature, and cohere around a common issue.	The source papers are clearly related, but discussion of these sources may not be well integrated, e.g. because they focus on substantially different issues. For example, the source papers may all be about the same animal species, but one may address habitat choice, while another addresses reproductive biology. When this is true, the term paper often tends to march through the sources one after the other, without drawing them together.	The number of source papers from the primary literature does not meet the requirement; one or more may be treated too briefly; there is no source from the last year; or the paper relies on information obtained from web sites (such as Wikipedia), rather than papers from science journals.
Discussion of the underlying question, issue, or topic	The paper describes how the authors of the source papers reached their conclusions (what methods were used, and how the conclusions follow from the results). The paper evaluates the strengths and limitations of the approaches presented in the source papers, informing the reader of the current status of investigation and of any controversy.	The methods of the sources are described, as well as the results. These descriptions may have some problems, such as presenting too much detail on specifics, as opposed to a concise summary that informs the reader of the essence of the approach. The paper could go farther in evaluating what has been firmly established, and what is not yet known.	The paper presents statements about the evolution of green plants (or their characters), but does not focus on how these conclusions were reached, or the degree of support.

### C. Avoiding three common errors

1. In scientific writing, the word “data” is always a plural noun. Thus, it is grammatically correct to write, “The data are presented in Table 1,” but it is incorrect to write, “The data is presented in Table 1.”
2. The most common spelling error is confusion of “affect” and “effect.” If in doubt, look these words up -- they are not interchangeable.
3. Latin names (scientific names) for species are italicized. The genus name is capitalized, but the species name is not. The lion, for example, is *Panthera leo*. The genus name should be written fully on first use, but should be abbreviated by its initial letter thereafter. So *P. leo* should be used for any further references to lions.

### D. Scientific paper citation format -- a primer for UConn Students

#### Faculty appearance and faculty quality: Is there a connection?

**Kurt Schwenk; Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, U. CT, Storrs, CT 06269\**

It has been suggested that balding, blond, bearded professors are superior in overall quality (Schwenk 1987), although a few investigators disagree (e.g. Hirsute 1990; Brunette 1991). Indeed, the computer simulation models of Schwenk and Budlite (1990) predict that the addition of a slight beer-belly to the Schwenk (1987) physical parameters would so enhance the popularity of a UConn professor that it is unlikely any space on campus could accommodate his or her class enrollments, with the possible exception of Gampel Pavilion. However, in a pointed rebuttal to the Schwenk and Budlite (1990) study, Slender et al. (1991) noted that Professor Schwenk, himself, fits the Schwenk (1987) and Schwenk and Budlite (1990) profile, and his enrollments hardly fulfill the prediction. Furthermore, in her now classic study, La Mujer (1978) showed that female instructors are consistently preferred three to one over males by students at ten top-ranking U.S. institutions. Given that female instructors generally have all their hair, often are not blond, are rarely bearded (Darwin 1871) and only infrequently have beer bellies, these results would seem to falsify the Schwenk (1987) and Schwenk and Budlite (1990) hypotheses. Slender et al (1991) noted that Schwenk's papers fail to cite the La Mujer study, and they further implied that the quality of Schwenk's scholarship is in question; indeed, they seemed to suggest that Schwenk had faked his data. In a vicious rejoinder to the Slender et al. (1991) paper, Schwenk (1992) claimed that Slender, Gracile and Lithe were involved in a massive conspiracy to ruin his professional reputation and that the conspiracy extended to La Mujer, Brunette, Hirsute, and a host of other investigators. He further claimed to have unpublished evidence linking these scientists to a heretofore unrevealed CIA plot to bring Elvis and Marilyn back to life in order to discredit Schwenk and his ideas. As proof, Schwenk (1992) offered the testimony of voices he hears constantly in his head (K. Schwenk, personal communication).

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