Course syllabus: **The Brain and The Self**

***IDH 2930, UF Honors Program (Un)common Reads course, section 144E***

***1 Credit***

1. **General Information**

**Professor:** Dan Wesson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics

University of Florida, College of Medicine

ofc: ARB 5-204, 352-294-8767, [danielwesson@ufl.edu](mailto:danielwesson@ufl.edu)

*ofc hours*: By appointment only.

Please email Heather Denson to schedule

**Coordinator:** Heather Denson ([hdenson@ufl.edu](mailto:hdenson@ufl.edu), 352-294-8768)

**Location:** Hume 119

**Time/day:** Thursday, 4:05-4:55pm

1. **Course description and educational goals**

Why do we think and behave as we do? This question holds implications for all fields of study, whether it is to understand the basis of a psychiatric disorder, what drives consumer purchasing behavior in business, or why we appreciate one painting more so than others. Due to this, the brain is a major frontier in science. This discussion-based course, *The Brain and The Self*, is centered around György Buzsáki’s book, *Rhythms of the Brain*. By the end of this course, you will gain an appreciation for the brain and its complexity by using both *Rhythms of the Brain,* and your creativity, as your guides.

This course is designed to accomplish four overall goals:

1. Render a general knowledge base of neural dynamics.
2. Provide experience in discussing the brain, different types of brain functions, and how these functions relate to behavior.
3. Facilitate engagement of students with the principles of multi-disciplinary brain sciences, including neurology, neuroscience, psychology, pharmacology, and psychiatry.
4. Promote critical thinking and creativity.
5. **Course calendar**

Jan 11th: Cycle 1 (Introduction)

Jan 18th: Cycle 2 (Structure Defines Function)

Jan 25th: Cycle 3 (Diversity of Cortical Functions Is Provided by Inhibition)

Feb 1st: Cycle 4 (Windows on the Brain)

Feb 8th: Cycle 5 (A System of Rhythms)

Feb 15th: Cycle 6 (Synchronization by Oscillation)

Feb 22nd: Cycle 7 (The Brain’s Default State)

March 1st: Cycle 8 (Perturbation of the Default Patterns by Experience)

March 15th: Cycle 9 (The Gamma Buzz)

March 22nd: Cycle 10 (Perceptions and Actions Are Brain-State Dependent)

March 29th: Cycle 11 (Oscillations in the “Other Cortex”)

April 5th: Cycle 12 (Coupling of Systems by Oscillations)

April 12th: Cycle 13 (Tough Problems)

April 19th: No class: Final synthesis paper preparation week

May 3rd: Final synthesis paper due by email (5pm cut-off)

1. **Evaluations and grading**

Grading will be in accordance with UF policy (https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx) and will be based upon a combination of your classroom participation and also written assignments as follows:

**30%** -- weekly written synthesis papers (12 papers, 2.5% each)

**40%** -- participation

**20%** -- final synthesis paper

**10%** -- your facilitated presentation

**100% total possible**

In this discussion-based course one student (you), with encouragement and support from the professor, will serve to facilitate an engaging discussion on an assigned chapter from *Rhythms of the Brain*. This format will be repeated weekly, with each week a new student leading the discussion. Your goal upon facilitation is to summarize the key components of the chapter you were assigned and then to frame some thought provoking questions around that chapter to inspire discussion among your peers. The use of ppt or computers for the presentation is not encouraged.

All students will be expected to read each chapter in advance as well (a feasible goal since each chapter averages under 30 pages). Finally, by the next week’s class, students will turn in a written report (no more than 3 double spaced pages) wherein they will be asked to relate that previous week’s chapter to their lives in any manner they can imagine. It is encouraged that you write this report as soon after class so the topics which inspired you are freshest on your mind. Please turn in hard copies of the paper with your name and date on them. These paper will be returned to you at the next class period. 25% will be deducted from a given synthesis report for every day late.

A final synthesis paper will consist of an 8 page (no more than 10), double spaced, written synthesis of what you foresee to be a major question related to the brain and how you would model the involvement of brain oscillations in this. The final synthesis report should be emailed to Heather Denson by 5pm on its due date. 25% will be deducted from the final synthesis report for every day late.

1. **Required materials**

Required text: *Rhythms of the Brain*, by György Buzsáki

1. **Attendance and participation**

“Requirements for class attendance … assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.”

All students are expected to participate in discussions within the class, every class session. As part of this, use of phone or computers for texting, social media communication, or talking, is prohibited since this distracts you as well as your peers from an engaging discussion. Laptops and tablets are allowed only if used to facilitate your class performance (e.g., taking notes, reading relevant literature). Please no eating during class, though drinks are ok. All students should plan to arrive prior to the start of class.

1. **Miscellaneous important information**
2. **Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

“Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.”

1. **Online course evaluation process:**

“Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.”

1. **Student conduct and demeanor:**

I expect students to be passionate about topics within this course and to approach the discussions with creativity and thoughtfulness. While critical discussion is encouraged, all students are expected to be respectful of unique opinions which may differ from their own.

1. **University policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc:**

“UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.”

1. **Campus resources:**

The following resources are available to you at UF:

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center:

http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). http://www.police.ufl.edu/

1. **Academic resources:**

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>

Library Support, http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.