

**IDH 2930–(Un)Common Read: *The Violent Bear It Away*****Honors Course****Fall 2025****Section: 2514****INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:**

<b>Name</b>	Taylor Morris
<b>Office</b>	TUR 4309
<b>Office Hours</b>	Wednesdays, 10 AM-1 PM, or by Appointment
<b>Email</b>	ta.morris@ufl.edu

**COURSE INFORMATION:**

<b>Days/Times</b>	W: 1:55 PM-2:45 PM
<b>Location</b>	Little Hall 0117

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

While many consider themselves fans of Flannery O'Connor after encountering her work in introductory literature surveys, they struggle to articulate what exactly makes her work so appealing beyond vaguely referencing the "Southern Gothic." This course will explore and elucidate the great merits of O'Connor's corpus including and beyond this aesthetic through reading her novel *The Violent Bear It Away*, as well as a few of her short stories and essays as supplements. This disabled woman and Southern Catholic author and her absurd yet strikingly real characters (which include would-be prophets and hermaphroditic carnies) are tremendous guides to navigating contemporary issues of identity, cultural conflict, philosophy, and religion. Navigating these "dark and unsettling" literary realms reveals that we may not actually be so distant from their would-be Gothic grotesqueness. We will also watch the recent film *Wildcat* (directed by Ethan Hawke and starring his daughter Maya) that adapts both O'Connor's life as well as a number of her creative works. The one written assignment for this course will be a short paper on a close analysis of a chosen scene; the rest of the course grade will come from active participation in our weekly discussions.

**Learning Outcomes**

- **Content**--Acquire a broad familiarity with the oeuvre of Flannery O'Connor through her major novel as well as short stories both seminal ("A Good Man is Hard to Find") and obscure ("A Temple of the Holy Ghost.") Understand the relevance of O'Connor's work to their own intellectual and social milieus. Consider the merits and challenges of adaptation through the film *Wildcat*.
- **Thinking**--Contribute engaged thoughts and questions to literary discussion, while forming important friendships and connections along the way. Format and follow productive critical thinking processes on their own beyond strictly course based contexts.
- **Writing**--Compose an original piece of writing using the literary analysis skill of close reading. Commit to memory common mistakes in student writing and how to overcome

them through proofreading and editing.

### **PERSONAL COURSE NOTE**

The aims of this course are, in a way, radical. In our era of discursive implosion in the realms of culture, religion, and politics, our daily lives have largely eschewed meaningful engagement with most forms of art. Our goal in this course is to attempt to begin a fight against this—to intentionally and discerningly interact both with the important, and hopefully inspiring and illuminating, texts of this course, and with each other through our daily class discourses. Reading and writing about media, and habitually exposing ourselves to it and immersing ourselves in it, can be seen as a way to develop a vocational path that incorporates not only a particular field of study or a career, but one's entire life and the lives of others. The world and its fashions often ignore or obscure vocation and the relevance of the humanities, and by encountering the latter we hope to begin to hear the voice of the former.

### **Class Structure**

Class meetings are held Wednesday afternoons only, during which we will discuss the readings for that week after some introductory lecture and comments. Typically, classes in which new units or concepts are being introduced will be more lecture-based, focusing on aspects of terminology, theory, or history relevant to our ongoing conversations and the material we're reading, as well as setting up various analytical or interpretive problems of interest. As each unit continues, and especially as the semester goes on as we all find a common grounding in our semester's texts, classes will become more and more discussion based, with our conversations unfolding both as an entire class and in small groups.

### **REQUIRED BOOK FOR PURCHASE:**

**(NOTE: I recommend, if possible, purchasing from AbeBooks or a similar used book website!)**

- Flannery O'Connor. *Collected Works*. Library of America. (ISBN: 0940450372)

### **GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

#### **Summary of grading**

- Attendance & participation/in-class discussion (75%)
- 1 Close Reading Paper (1000 words) (25%)

#### ***1. Attendance & Participation (75%)***

**Attendance:** Attendance/Roll will be noted at the beginning of class. Since this class only meets once per week, only one (1) unexcused absence is permitted, beyond that absences will harm the participation grade barring extraordinary circumstances. Repeated tardiness will also harm the participation score. Absences will be excused in accordance with UF policy. Acceptable reasons include illness, religious holidays, military obligation, and the twelve-day rule (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to what was covered in class.

**Participation:** Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before each class. Each week will begin with a series of basic questions on the contents of the assigned readings. If students are unable to answer these questions, it will be assumed that they have not done the reading and penalties will be appropriately applied. Consistent participation in class discussions and demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings will also contribute to this portion of the final grade.

An experimental aspect of this class is generally giving you a baseline of trust that you will do the readings in order to contribute to our ongoing group discourse. I believe/hope this has the most potential for success. Please take this course and readings seriously. It will be obvious if you attempt to “phone-in” discussions based on not having read, and I will have to make adjustments that will be much less enjoyable for all of us.

Since we’re not doing minor participation assignments or exercises like daily Canvas posts or discussion boards, that means **it’s essential that we all regularly participate in group discussion**. I know talking in class in front of others can be intimidating, but try not to fear sharing your ideas and see how we respond to them and how they might be challenged or improved. At the same time also note that **participation for the sake of participation is not the goal**. If you are contributing regularly and putting forth interesting or sincere thoughts, that is far more desirable than speaking in every class but being “that kid” that everyone dreads monopolizing the discourse. It’s a balance.

Here are a few qualities by which participation can be evaluated: **Individuality**, such that comments are not merely recapitulating events or ideas in the readings/films and reflect something of the student speaker. **Usefulness**, such that comments are relevant to texts being discussed, and might direct us to ideas we might not otherwise have considered. **Openness**, such that you can stand by your convictions but also be interested in hearing opposing ideas and developing or changing your views accordingly. **Discursivity**, such that thoughts contribute to ongoing discussion and don’t try to overbear or oversimplify topics. I’m aware that this type of exercise might be new for a lot of you. So I don’t expect perfection, especially early in the semester. We’ll develop together.

## **2. Close Reading Paper (1000 words, 25%)**

This assignment will test student skills in close reading, especially as that skill pertains to passages or scenes from O’Connor’s work. Students will be expected to analyze a text carefully and develop an argument regarding the whole of the text through a close reading. No outside sources may be used for this assignment. It is strongly recommended that students consult their ideas and early writing drafts with me in the lead up to this due date. Office hours are a great opportunity to brainstorm and bounce ideas off the instructional “sounding-board” as we hone your writing and thinking processes. **The final paper will be due at the end of Week 14 of the semester.**

### **CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

- **Late Work.** Papers will be penalized by applying this multiplier to your grade:

$$1 - \left(\frac{t}{7*24*60}\right)^4$$

where t is the number of minutes the work is late. For example, if an assignment is submitted exactly 2 days late (2880 minutes) and receives a pre-penalty grade of 90, your final grade for the assignment would be 89.4. The late policy is quite generous, basically giving you a 2-day grace period for assignments but with accelerating penalties as the deadline continues past. You need not ask to submit an assignment late; you can, but with the appropriate late penalty. Unpenalized extensions for illness, emergencies, etc., will be handled on a case-by-case basis. (*Credit to Hoss Craft for providing the lateness formula.*)

- **Electronics Policy:** Please do not use phones or laptops unnecessarily during class. Laptops will be necessary when we are discussing texts provided in online PDFs, but on other days we shouldn't need these devices out. It is advised that you take physical, written notes during lecture and discussion. This electronics policy is so our communication with each other is more intentional and productive.
- **Academic Honesty:** Students are required to be honest in their coursework, may not use notes during quizzes or exams, and must properly cite all sources that they have consulted for their projects. Any act of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in failure of the assignment in question and/or the course. For University of Florida's honor code, see [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code | SCCR \(ufl.edu\)](#)

**Plagiarism and other forms of cheating and dishonesty on papers will not be tolerated in this class.** This includes the use of generative AI such as ChatGPT and other large language models, as well as copying text from previous generations of students or students from other universities. **There is a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of academic dishonesty.** Any assignment that violates this rule will be given a grade of zero and a case will be filed with the appropriate academic and administrative authorities. If you are concerned about proper citation style please feel free to visit during office hours and we can review all of this (and fear not—it is easy for an instructor to distinguish between unintentional and malicious practices.) For our written assignments, any standard citation style and corresponding style manual is acceptable (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) as long as you are proper and consistent with the format you choose.

- **Honors Program Contact Information:**  
Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519  
Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email [advisor@honors.ufl.edu](mailto:advisor@honors.ufl.edu)  
Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>

## **OTHER CLASS POLICIES/RULES**

1. You must complete all assignments to pass and receive credit for this course.  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
2. Paper Format & Submission: Papers should be submitted with standard, 1-inch margins, double spacing, and 12-point Times New Roman font. All papers will be submitted electronically, via Canvas.
3. Paper Maintenance Responsibilities. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course (save things on a cloud server in case of severe computer issues). Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
4. UF's policy on Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty:  
<http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equitydiversity/resources/harassment/>
5. There will be several opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester by attending lectures or other events on campus related to the themes of this class. Each completed extra credit opportunity will award one bonus point to the semester's participation grade.
6. A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Other important syllabus information can be found at:

<https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>

Example Essay Rubric ( <i>Credit to Christopher Smith for general format and style.</i> )					
Length	10 points: within 10% of Length	6 points: 11% to 15% off of length	3 points: 15% to 20% off of length	0 points: more than 20% off of Length	10 Points
Thesis Statement	<b>15 to &gt;12 pts</b> <b>Thesis is</b> <b>clearly stated</b> <b>and is a</b> <b>provable</b> <b>point</b>	<b>12 to &gt;0.0 pts</b> <b>Thesis unclear or unprovable</b> There is a statement of organization, but perhaps it is a bit fuzzy about what the paper will actually argue. Or it is a statement that the paper will “discuss” or “examine” something, without stating what the paper’s argument will be.		<b>0 pts</b> <b>No thesis or not submitted</b>	15 points
Secondary Sources	<b>20 to &gt;10.0 pts</b> <b>Two academic sources, properly cited</b>	<b>10 to &gt;5.0 pts</b> <b>One source, or improper sources</b> Paper only has one secondary source, or it has one academic source and another source that is not academic (e.g., an encyclopedia, a newspaper or magazine article, a personal or organizational website, etc.). One source may be used for information rather than analysis. Citations may also have some issues.		<b>5 to &gt;0 pts</b> <b>No sources or improper sources, not submitted</b> The paper has no secondary sources, or all sources are non-academic. Sources only used for information. Sources are not cited or citations have major issues.	20 points
Organization/Flow	<b>20 to &gt;15.0 pts</b> <b>Well organized paragraphs</b> Each body paragraph has a clear point that contributes to proving the thesis, and includes primary source textual evidence and analysis.	<b>15 to &gt;5.0 pts</b> <b>Some organizational problems</b> Some body paragraphs may go off on tangents that do not contribute to the thesis. Some paragraphs may lack a clearly articulated point, or discuss the text in a broad way without citing specific evidence.		<b>5 to &gt;0 pts</b> <b>Serious organizational problems or not submitted</b> Organization is so problematic it is hard to follow the argument at all. No primary source evidence, or no analysis.	20 points

Argumentation	<b>20 to &gt;15.0 pts</b> <b>Convincing</b> The paper's argument follows logically from point to point and ultimately succeeds in convincing the reader of its argument (even if the reader might have some minor reservations)	<b>15 to &gt;10.0 pts</b> <b>Mostly convincing</b> The argument is mostly convincing, but there might be one or two paragraphs that are not convincing, or where the argument has obvious flaws that a well-informed reader can easily see. Despite these flaws, however, the paper succeeds overall in convincing the reader of the thesis statement.	<b>10 to &gt;5.0 pts</b> <b>Partially convincing</b> There are several paragraphs that are not convincing, or where the argument has obvious flaws that a well-informed reader can easily see. While the reader can see some merit in the overall thesis and might be partially convinced, they remain dubious	<b>5 to &gt;0 pts</b> <b>Not convincing, or not submitted</b> The argument has no logical flow, and is so flawed that the reader remains totally unconvinced.	20 points	
Mechanics	<b>15 to &gt; 12 pts</b> <b>Grammatical and correctly spelled, good sentence structure</b>	<b>12 to &gt;5.0 pts</b> <b>Some mechanical errors</b> Some misspellings or grammatical errors, but overall very readable			<b>5 to &gt;0 pts</b> <b>Many mechanical errors</b> Misspellings or grammatical errors are so severe they make the paper hard to read or understand.	15 points
Total Points: 100						

**Note:** It is a recurring pattern that papers with severe deficiency in one of these categories will often have problems that “spill over” into other categories. For example, a paper with noticeably poor mechanics will often hinder the comprehensibility of the paper’s argument and flow. So make sure to take each of these categories of a paper’s content seriously!

# Tentative Course Schedule

(Students should note that this schedule is a guideline and may change)

WEEK 1	CLASSES BEGIN THURSDAY–NO CLASS THIS WEEK
WEEK 2	8/27–Introduction to Course and Ourselves
WEEK 3	9/3–Chapter I (331-363)
WEEK 4	9/10–Chapter II (364-384)
WEEK 5	9/17–Chapters III & IV (384-404)
WEEK 6	9/24–Chapters V & VI (405-422)
WEEK 7	10/1–Chapters VII-IX (423-456)
WEEK 8	10/8– Chapters X-XII (457-479)
WEEK 9	10/15–“A Good Man is Hard to Find” (137-153)
WEEK 10	10/22–“The Life You Save May Be Your Own” (172-183)
WEEK 11	10/29–“A Stroke of Good Fortune” (184-196)
WEEK 12	11/5–“A Temple of the Holy Ghost” (197-209)
WEEK 13	11/12–“The Artificial Nigger” (210-231)
WEEK 14	11/19–“The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South” (853-864)
WEEK 15	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY–NO CLASS THIS WEEK
WEEK 16	12/3– <i>Wildcat</i> (dir. Ethan Hawke, 2023)