

UnCommon Read: Psychedelic Neuromedicine

IDH 2930 (25999)

University of Florida Honors Program

Wednesdays, 4:05 – 4:55pm (Period 9)

Little Hall 0117

CREDIT: 1 Semester Hour

Instructors:

Regan Garner

Associate Director, Honors Program

Office: 201 Walker Hall

Zoom office hours: [Tuesdays 2-4pm](#), Thursdays [10am – 12pm](#) or by appointment (call to schedule)

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Louis A. Ritz, Ph.D.

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Department of Neuroscience, College of Medicine

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Office phone: 352-273-5533

Course Goals:

This course is based on the book *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence* by Michael Pollan, which presents a review of the use of psychedelic drugs throughout human history, including in religious practices in various cultures and the US countercultural movement of the 1960s. In recent years, clinical trials have been conducted at major universities in the United States, supported by funding from the U.S. government, to evaluate the impact of psychedelic drugs on vexing psychiatric illnesses.

The course will require a mature perspective on drug use. Students can expect to participate in frank discussions around the effects of psychedelic drugs under a variety of conditions. The course does not in any way advocate the casual use of psychedelic or other drugs.

Course topics will be as far-ranging as spirituality, therapeutic treatments, the history of medicine, history of the 1960's counter-culture, brain neurotransmitters, brain circuits of our "self", mental health, psychiatric illnesses, and consciousness.

The class will be structured around weekly discussion of the book and related articles as assigned. Students will be evaluated based on class participation and two 1200-word papers.

Requirements, Assessment, and Grades:

I – Attendance and Participation: 20%

- You are expected to complete assigned readings prior to each class.
- Attendance will be taken each class. You may miss 1 class without penalty; each additional unexcused absence will incur a reduction of one letter grade. Please plan your Wednesday afternoons accordingly.
- The course is a semester-long, student-centered conversation, facilitated by the Course Directors, about numerous topics covered in the book.

II - There will be two 4-page papers (1200 words), each worth 40% (80% total).

- The papers are based on an integration of your reflections, understanding, and insights of our readings and classroom discussions.
- Papers must be uploaded as Word documents to the Canvas course site and emailed to Dr. Ritz by the due date. Late papers will be penalized with a letter grade deduction.

UF Class Attendance Policies:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, 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>

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, 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.

UF Grading Policies:

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations via email, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Class Culture:

1. This is a paperless course. All discussion materials, other than the books, will be sent to the students as a PDF or uploaded to Canvas. Reflection papers will be emailed to lritz@ufl.edu and uploaded to the Canvas site by the deadline as a Word document (.doc or .docx only).
2. Out of respect for each student's contributions to our discussions, we will give everyone our full attention. Please do not check your cell phone or computer during class time.
3. Instructors will be available for optional Tuesday and Friday Krishna Lunch meetings during 5th period the first month of the semester – our treat! We hope you will join us so we can better get to know one another. If you are unavailable for lunch, alternate meetings can be arranged.

How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence

by Michael Pollan

Students are expected to purchase or share the book – new, used, or electronic version

Course Schedule

Jan 11 (class 1) – Course Intro; Prologue: A New Door

Jan 18 (class 2) – Chapter 3 – History: The First Wave

Jan 25 (class 3) – Chapter 3 – History: The First Wave

Feb 1 (class 4) – *The New Alchemy* by Alan Watts

Feb 8 (class 5) – Chapter 2 – Natural History

Feb 15 (class 6) - Chapter 1 – A Renaissance

Feb 22 (class 7) – Chapter 1 – A Renaissance

Mar 1 (class 8) – 2006 Breakthrough Papers (Research + Commentary)

Mar 8 (class 9) – Near Death Experiences: A Taste of Mysticism

First paper – Due noon on March 11, assigned March 1

Mar 22 (class 10) – Chapter 4 - Travelogue

Mar 29 (class 11) – Chapter 5 – The Neuroscience

Apr 5 (class 12) – Chapter 5 – The Neuroscience

Apr 12 (class 13) – Chapter 6 – The Trip Treatment

Apr 19 (class 14) – Chapter 6 – The Trip Treatment

Apr 26 (class 15) – Epilogue

Apr 27 (optional) – Class visit to [Temple of the Universe](#), 7pm – 9:30pm

Second paper – Due noon on April 29, assigned April 19