

UnCommon Read: Psychedelic Neuromedicine

IDH 2930 (19263)

University of Florida Honors Program

Wednesdays, 4:05 – 4:55pm (Period 9)

Honors Village 114

CREDIT: 1 Semester Hour

Instructors:

Regan Garner

Associate Director, Honors Program

Office: 201 Walker Hall

Zoom office hours: Wednesdays [1:30 – 3:30pm](#) and Fridays [10:30am – 12:30pm](#)

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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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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 3-4 page papers (800-1200 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.

Honors Program Information:

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points toward Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module.

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 [here](#).

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) 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 found [here](#).

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 [here](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations via email in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or [here](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [this link](#).

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 Krishna Lunch on Tuesdays during 5th period throughout the semester – our treat! Email us to schedule. We hope you will join us so we can better get to know one another. If you are unavailable on Tuesdays, alternate meetings can be arranged.

Required Reading:

Griffiths, R.R., Richards, W.A, McCann, U., Jesse, R. (2006). Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance. *Psychopharmacology*, 187:268-283. *Plus commentaries (11 July 2006)*.

Pollan, M. (2019). *How to Change Your Mind the New Science of Psychedelics*. Penguin Books.

Watts, A. (1973). The New Alchemy. In *This is It and Other Essays on Zen and Spiritual Experience*. Vintage Books.

- Students are expected to purchase or share the book – new, used, or electronic version. Articles will be available in Canvas.

Course Schedule

Jan 15 (class 1)	Course Intro + Prologue: A New Door
Jan 22 (class 2)	Chapter 1 – A Renaissance
Jan 29 (class 3)	Chapter 1 – A Renaissance
Feb 5 (class 4)	Chapter 2 – Natural History
Feb 12 (class 5)	Chapter 3 – History: The First Wave
Feb 19 (class 6)	Chapter 3 – History: The First Wave
Feb 26 (class 7)	<i>The New Alchemy</i> by Alan Watts
Mar 5 (class 8)	Chapter 4 - Travelogue
Mar 12 (class 9)	2006 Breakthrough Papers (Research + Commentary)

First paper – Due noon on March 15, assigned February 26

Mar 26 (class 10)	Chapter 5 – The Neuroscience
Apr 2 (class 11)	Chapter 5 – The Neuroscience
Apr 9 (class 12)	Near Death Experiences: A Taste of Mysticism
Apr 16 (class 13)	Chapter 6 – The Trip Treatment
Apr 23 (class 14)	Chapter 6 – The Trip Treatment + Epilogue
Apr 24 (optional)	Field trip to Temple of the Universe (tou.org) , 7pm – 9:30pm

Second paper – Due noon on April 26, assigned April 16