

Honors (Un)Common Read

Exploring Cross Creek

IDH2930

Class #26579

Spring 2026 | January 12 – April 22

Wednesday | Period 8 3-3:50pm

Honors Village 114

Instructor Information

Primary Instructors:

- Braja Smith, b.smith2@ufl.edu, CORE Building 1441 Bledsoe Dr., (352) 294-1043

Peer Instructor:

- Taylor Henley, henley1029@ufl.edu, CORE Building 1441 Bledsoe Dr., (352) 294-1043

Guest Lecturer/Embedded Faculty

- Florence "Flo" M. Turcotte turcotte@ufl.edu, Smathers Library, (352) 273-2767

Office Hours: Please reach out to schedule a meeting, recurring office hours on Fridays from 1-3pm at the CORE Building.

Preferred Communication: Email is the preferred method for course-related communication. For technical issues, visit the UF Computing Help Desk website or call 352-392-4357.

Course Description and Objectives

This interdisciplinary honors course explores Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' seminal work *Cross Creek* as both literature and environmental writing, examining her role as an early voice in Florida environmental consciousness. Students will develop critical reading skills while exploring themes of place-based learning, agricultural heritage, human-environment relationships, and the convergence of natural sciences and the arts. Each week we will discuss different aspects of the text, including agriculture, documentation methods, natural phenomena observation, and sacred place and environmental identity. Journaling will be a regular part of course, so please bring a notebook.

A site visit to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Homestead is a required component of this class, as is a paddle or other immersive explorative physical experience on Cross Creek. The tentative date for the field trip is April 15th from 7am-3pm. Field trip date and time and

alternatives will be discussed the first week of class. If you are unable to attend the scheduled date, you will be required to visit the site and an independent excursion in order to complete the requirements for the class.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the relationship between literature, place, and environmental awareness through Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' work *Cross Creek*
- Demonstrate observational skills through outdoor experiences and reflective writing
- Appreciate the role of community and human connections in environmental stewardship and sense of place
- Build a sense of place in the specific environs of Gainesville, Florida through place-based writing, field trips, and critical analysis of the *Cross Creek*

Required Textbooks and Materials

- Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnan. *Cross Creek*. (Free versions available online, prefer a paperback copy for class but not required).
- [Turcotte, Florence M. "For This Is an Enchanted Land: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and the Florida Environment" \(2011\) \(article, available online and link will be provided\)](#)
- Notebook for journaling

Supplementary Readings, not required to purchase, excerpts or short articles

- Bateman, Savannah. "'Heaps o' folkses be varmints': Animal and Human Identity in Rawlings's *Cross Creek*." *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*, 2016.
- Cauthen, Sudye. "Sacred Place in the Work of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings." *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*, 2002.
- Claire, Dana Ste. *Cracker: Cracker Culture in Florida History*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006.
- Tentative: Film, *Cross Creek*.

Materials and Supply Fees: *None*

Class Schedule and Readings

Wednesday, January 14

Syllabus Review: Class introduction & Expectations

HW: Read Introduction and Chapters 1-6, edit in-class writing assignment

Wednesday, January 21 | Discuss Chapters 1-6

MKR Biographical Sketch w/ Florence “Flo” Turcotte

Turn in last week’s writing assignment

HW: Read Chapters 6-12

January 28 | Discuss Chapters 6-12

HW: Read Chapters 12-14 and Turcotte, Florence M. “For This Is an Enchanted Land: Marjorie Kinnan

Rawlings and the Florida Environment” (2011) <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol90/iss4/6/>

February 4 | Guest Lecturer: Florence “Flo” Turcotte

Intro to MKR Papers Collection at Smathers

Read Chapters 14-17

February 11 | Discuss Chapters 12-17

Read Chapters 17-19

February 18 | Discuss Chapters 17-19

Read Chapters 19-21

February 25 | Discuss Chapters 19-21

Read Chapters 21-22

March 4 | Discuss Chapters 21-22

Read Chapter 23, Final Chapter

March 11 | Visit Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Collection at the Smathers Library, 2nd Floor w/ Flo Turcotte

Begin 2nd Writing Assignment

March 18 | No class, spring break

March 25 | Discuss Final Chapter

Read selected essays

April 1 | Turn in 2nd Writing Assignment

Read selected essays

April 8 | Prep for Field Trip and Final writing assignment

Read selected essays (will be chosen from supplementary readings based on class interest)

April 15 | Field Trip to MKR Homestead and Cross Creek

April 22 | Final Class

Field Trip Reflection and Discussion, Final Assignment due

Course Topics

- Representation of place in *Cross Creek*
- Grounding *Cross Creek* in the local – geological and archaeological foundations of the greater Cross Creek area and Gainesville, FL
- Cracker culture and ‘rootedness’ in *Cross Creek*

Class Demeanor Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Attend all class sessions and arrive on time
- Come prepared with assigned readings completed
- Participate respectfully in class discussions
- Show attentiveness to both indoor discussions and outdoor experiences
- Demonstrate respect for the natural environments we'll explore
- Foster community through positive human connections

Method of Evaluation

Periodic short reflective journaling activities

3 Reflective Essay assignments

Essay 1 focused on personal connection to area: Write an informal, first-person narrative about your relationship to the place called Florida, reflecting on how you understand and experience Florida personally. How do you place yourself in Florida? Were you born here, or did you move here later? What was it like growing up here? How did your experience of place intersect with factors such as family or schooling? What regions of Florida have you experienced, and how has that history contributed to your sense of identity or to your beliefs and values? How do you think about Florida as a place or experience? 500 words

Essay 2: Second essay focused on Rawlings’ experience of area. What’s happening in Cross Creek? Is the pace of life slow or fast? How is it a window for seeing the local area? How is the place embedded in the experience of the local area as a watershed, as a community, as a state? How is her life at Cross Creek contributing to her sense of identity? Do you think her experience differs from her neighbors? What isn’t she writing about? What do you want to know more about? How does the act of writing ground her in place? 500 words

Final essay: Write about what you’ve learned about the local area through your encounters with Cross Creek, course materials, and the field trip, as well as your journaling in class. You should consider your first three essays as appropriate. How has your sense of place changed? How do you place yourself? What are the differences between observation and

exploration, and how does physical exertion and discomfort alter your sense of place?
What are you curious about next? 750 words

Your essays will be reviewed as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Satisfactory essays will exhibit evidence of engagement, reflection, and some identifiable structure. Your essay should have an appropriate style for the class context and genre. While you may use AI to assist in your writing, evidence of your own voice and experiences should shine through and awkward attempts are preferred over a voice which isn't yours.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy: To complete the course, you must not miss more than two classes.

Late Assignment Policy: To complete the course, no assignment can be more than one week late.

Academic Integrity: All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism will result in course failure.

Grading: A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. 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 Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

University Resources and Policies

Honors Program, Honors Village Complex #4, 352-392-1519

Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu

Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>

Honors Program Event Calendar: <https://www.honors.ufl.edu/news--events/calendar-of-events/>

Link to Academic Policies and Resources: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. Visit <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> to get started.

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.