

# UnCommon Read: Psychedelic Neuromedicine

IDH 2930 (18070)

University of Florida Honors Program

Wednesdays, 4:05 – 4:55pm (Period 9)  
Honors Village Building 1 room 114 (HVR1 114)  
CREDIT: 1 Semester Hour

## Instructors:

Regan Garner  
Associate Director, Honors Program  
Office: Honors Office, Honors Village Building 4  
Zoom office hours: [Mondays](#) 1 pm – 3 pm and [Thursdays](#) 10 am – 12 pm  
Email to schedule a meeting outside of office hours: [rlgarner@ufl.edu](mailto:rlgarner@ufl.edu)  
Office phone: 352-392-1519

Louis A. Ritz, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor Emeritus  
Director, UF Center for Spirituality and Health  
Department of Neuroscience, College of Medicine  
Office: L1-116, McKnight Brain Institute  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Email: [lrritz@ufl.edu](mailto:lrritz@ufl.edu)  
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 instructors about numerous topics covered in the book and other assigned readings. You are expected to participate in discussion on a regular basis.

### 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 Course 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.

## **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 [Iritz@ufl.edu](mailto:Iritz@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 are available to meet for Krishna Lunch or coffee on weekdays. Email us to schedule. We hope you will join us so we can get to know one another outside of class discussion.

## **Required Reading:**

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

➔ Students are expected to purchase or share the Pollan book; The readings below will be available in Canvas.

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).

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

## Course Schedule

Jan 14 (class 1) Course Intro + Prologue: A New Door

Jan 21 (class 2) Chapter 3 – History: The First Wave

Jan 28 (class 3) Chapter 3 – History: The First Wave

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

Feb 11 (class 5) Chapter 2: Natural History

Feb 18 (class 6) Chapter 1: A Renaissance

Feb 25 (class 7) Chapter 1: A Renaissance

Mar 4 (class 8) 2006 Breakthrough Papers (Research + Commentary)

Mar 11 (class 9) Near Death Experiences: A Taste of Mysticism

### ***First paper – Due noon on March 14, assigned February 25***

Mar 25 (class 10) Chapter 4: Travelogue

Apr 1 (class 11) Chapter 5: The Neuroscience

Apr 8 (class 12) Chapter 6: The Trip Treatment

Apr 15 (class 13) Chapter 6: The Trip Treatment

Apr 22 (class 14) Epilogue

### ***Second paper – Due noon on April 25, assigned April 15***

*April 20 (optional) Field trip to [Temple of the Universe \(tou.org\)](http://tou.org), 7pm – 9:30pm*