

## Honors (Un)Common Read

### Cross Creek IDH2930

#### Section 2517 | Course #27068

Fall 2025 | August 21 – November 14, 2025

Friday | Period 3 (9:35 AM - 10:25 AM)

Room 003 | CORE Building 1441 Bledsoe Dr.

### Instructor Information

#### Primary Instructors:

- Braja Smith, [b.smith2@ufl.edu](mailto:b.smith2@ufl.edu), CORE Building 1441 Bledsoe Dr., (352) 294-1043
- Taylor Henley, [henley1029@ufl.edu](mailto:henley1029@ufl.edu), CORE Building 1441 Bledsoe Dr., [phone number]

#### Guest Lecturer/Embedded Faculty

- Florence "Flo" M. Turcotte [turcotte@ufl.edu](mailto: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.

**Parking:** Parking is available at the Bledsoe Lot across the street from the CORE Building. Free 2-hour parking is available by scanning the QR code on the parking sign at the entrance to the lot.

**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 Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup> 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**

- 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.
- Clark, Ginger. "Orange Groves and Timber Stands: The Shaping of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings as Woman and Writer." *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*, 2023.
- Clayton, Susan, and Susan Opatow, editors. *Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.
- Thomashow, Mitchell. *To Know the World: A New Vision for Environmental Learning*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020.
- Tentative: Film, *Cross Creek*.

**Materials and Supply Fees:** *None*

## **Class Schedule and Readings**

### **Friday, August 22**

Class introduction & Expectations. Please have your copy of Cross Creek with you, any edition is fine. Course overview, discussion of three writing assignments, in-class writing assignment (we'll go outside).

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

### **Friday, August 29** | Discuss Chapters 1-6

Turn in last week's writing assignment

HW: Read Chapters 6-12

### **Friday, September 5** | 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/>

### **Friday, September 12** | Braja and Taylor Out | Guest Lecturer: Florence "Flo" Turcotte

Read Chapters 14-17

### **Friday, September 19** | Discuss Chapters 12-17

Read Chapters 17-19

### **Friday, September 26** | Discuss Chapters 17-19

Read Chapters 19-21

### **Friday, October 3** | Discuss Chapters 19-21

Read Chapters 21-22

### **Friday, October 10** | Visit Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Collection at the Smathers Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor w/ Flo Turcotte

Begin 2<sup>nd</sup> Writing Assignment

### **Friday, October 17** | Discuss Chapters 21-22

Read Chapter 23, Final Chapter

### **Friday, October 24** | Discuss Final Chapter

Turn in 2<sup>nd</sup> Writing Assignment

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

### **Friday, October 31** | Prep for Field Trip and Final writing assignment

Tentative: Visit Harn Museum

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

### **Friday, November 7** | Field Trip to MKR Homestead and Cross Creek

### **Friday, November 14** | Final Class

Field Trip Reflection and Discussion

Final writing assignment due

## **Course Topics (Tentative)**

- Place-based environmental writing and observation
- Citrus agriculture and contemporary challenges (citrus greening disease)
- Traditional agricultural practices and foraging
- Human connections to land and community, in particular discussion of paleolithic migration practices and settlement in natural area
- Basic understanding of geology and formation of Florida and how that affected the hammock/scrub ecosystems discussed
- Florida's inland exploration and settlement patterns
- Natural phenomena observation (crepuscular rays, weather patterns)
- Rawlings' documentation methods: field notes, dialect, recipes, and natural history

## **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**

First essay 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? Where 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 tend to think about Florida as a place or experience? 500 words

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

Third essay: Write about Cross Creek/Rawlings Homestead and your experience of visiting it. You can discuss its history briefly and describe its layout and location, but the main purpose is to reflect critically on your experience of moving through this space/place. What kind of place is it, and whose histories are reflected therein? 300 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 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.

### **University Resources and Policies**

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>

**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.

*This syllabus must be posted at least three days prior to the first day of classes and will be retained for at least three complete semesters.*