

IDH3931 Syllabus

One Credit to Rule Them All

General Information

This 1-credit course, offered through the UF Honors Program, runs from the evening of Saturday, August 16 to the morning of Wednesday, August 20 and will meet daily in Dauer Hall 342 as well as on site at various locations across campus. Meeting times vary by day — please refer to the schedule at the end of this syllabus.

Course Description

First-year students — human, hobbit, elf, or dwarf — are summoned to participate in the “One Credit to Rule Them All” Honors Camp to safeguard the One Ring of Power and protect it from the gathering forces of darkness. In this course student teams will explore the medieval world through five thematic lenses: communication, navigation, the built environment, the natural environment, and conflict resolution. All the while, you will also create your own fantasy lands.

OCRA is a creative immersion experience for UF Honors students inspired by the drama of Middle Earth as depicted in J. R. R. Tolkien’s classic *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson’s film version *The Fellowship of the Ring* will get us started). Students will join hobbits, elves, dwarves, and other inhabitants of Middle Earth to defend their way of life against the absolutist ambitions of the Dark Lord and pick up some basic principles of the medieval lifestyle and other important Middle Earth skills (castle building, siege engines, and more) along the way. Student teams will build their own fantasy worlds while competing against each other in various side quests to gain points and safeguard the ring.

As first-year students, making connections is critical. The relationships you build during OCRA’s singular fantasy adventure can become lasting “fellowships” that support your future UF success. To introduce students to the vast set of resources offered by the University of Florida and the Gainesville community, we will host guest speakers from the Department of Engineering Education, UF Smathers Libraries, the Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences, the Department of Entomology and Nematology, the local chapter of the Society for Creative Anachronism, and more.

Course Objectives

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

- (1) Identify some basic elements of Medieval society.
- (2) Recognize the fundamentals of fantasy world-building.
- (3) Confidently present material from team-based projects.
- (4) Navigate UF resources as a starting point for questions, research, etc.
- (5) Effectively collaborate in team-based activities.
- (6) Actively reflect on how their experiences translate professionally into tangible skills.

Course Expectations

To ensure that this short course is successful, students are expected to come to class daily prepared to learn and participate as active and thoughtful members of their groups and the total classroom environment. Pay close attention to the syllabus schedule, class announcements, and Canvas in the evenings.

Course Themes

The five themes of this course will direct our entire study as we learn about the medieval world, evaluate the fantasy world of *The Lord of the Rings*, and create our own fantasy worlds.

- **Communication: Reading, Writing, and Understanding**
 - We will explore late medieval, Renaissance, and early contemporary literature in the Rare Books Collection as well as medieval coats of arms.
 - We will learn about the contemporary genre of fantasy literature and a bit about literacy and reading in the ancient and medieval worlds.
- **Navigation: Cartography, History, and Government**
 - We will discover an array of real and fantasy maps and create our own maps of fantasy realms.
 - We will take an adventure across the UF campus in search of clues.
- **The Built Environment: Architecture and Material Culture**
 - We will learn about medieval and medieval-inspired architecture and make our own medieval structures.
 - We will enrich our Navigation side quest with special stops focused on campus architecture.
- **The Natural Environment: Ecology, Biological Diversity, and Animal Life**
 - We will visit the UF Natural Area Teaching Lab to learn about Floridian ecology while deciding how nature will play a role in our fantasy worlds.
 - We will go in search of alligators and bats on a side quest to Lake Alice and the UF Bat Houses.
- **Security & Conflict Resolution: Warfare and Self-Defense**
 - We will be treated to a demonstration of medieval heraldry, weaponry, and warfare and get a chance to build trebuchets and catapults to defend our fantasy realms.

Course Evaluation

Your grade is based almost entirely on your own level of attendance, participation, and effort. Neither prior knowledge of any course topic nor artistic skill is a requirement for success in this course. Just do your best, try out new things, and keep learning along the way! Each of the course's five themes is given a corresponding evaluation category and is weighed equally with the others:

Theme	Evaluation Category	Percent	Course Objective(s) Met
Communication	Final Group Presentation	20%	2, 3, & 5
Navigation	Self-Reflection Activity	20%	1 & 6
Built Environment	Fantasy World Creation	20%	1 & 2
Natural Environment	Participation	20%	3, 4, & 5
Conflict Resolution	Team Challenges	20%	3 & 5

You will be required to turn in one digital assignment on Canvas (the Self-Reflection Activity) no later than 11:59pm on Saturday, August 23. The assignment will open at 12:30pm on Wednesday, August 20.

For this course, we use a grading scale that is not typical for UF classes.

90+	80–89	70–79	69–
A	B	C	D

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

Course Communications

Students will join the OCRA 2025 Discord (along with the instructor and the SOFAs). Because of the short period of the course, the fact that students are brand new to college, and the reality of a weekend course, students can contact the instructor and SOFAs about questions, concerns, or emergencies through this Discord chat during reasonable out-of-class hours. Alternatively, students should use Canvas Mail or UF Gator Mail to contact a member of the instructional team. Students must use Canvas Mail or UF Gator Mail for sensitive topics or official communications (such as accommodation requests).

Special Course Considerations

Students are advised to dress in clothing and footwear that will be comfortable and appropriate for walking across campus and taking outdoor 'field trips' during the day in Floridian August heat. This also means coming prepared with umbrellas and/or raingear for the occasional shower or thunderstorm. Students will need access to their UF IDs to ride the RTS bus for free during field trips. IDs should be accessible through your cell phone.

It is also recommended that students bring and fill water bottles to remain hydrated throughout the day. Sunscreen for daytime field trips is recommended, as is bug repellent (specifically for mosquitoes) for evening field trips. Finally, students should ideally have access to a blanket or towel to sit on for the outdoor demonstrations.

While dinner on Saturday and lunch on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday will be provided by the course, students can bring snacks.

University Policies

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/) (<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>).

Honors Resources

- Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, Phone Number: (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>.

Detailed Schedule

Aug. 16	5:45pm–9:15pm	Introduction Dinner (Publix) and a Movie	Dauer 342
Aug. 17	9:30am–10:00am	Morning Check-In	Dauer 342
	10:00am–11:30am	Fighting Demonstration	University Auditorium
	11:30am–1:00pm	Coat of Arms Activity	Dauer 342
	1:00pm–2:00pm	Lunch (Publix)	Dauer 342
	2:00pm–4:15pm	Lectures World-Building Workshop	Dauer 342
	4:15pm–5:30pm	Architecture Workshop	Dauer 342
	7:30pm–9:00pm	Scavenger Hunt	Dauer 342 / Campus
Aug. 18	9:00am–10:30am	Map and Book Showcase	Smathers Libraries
	10:30am–12:00pm	Mapmaking Workshop	Dauer 342
	12:00pm–1:30pm	Lunch (UF Catering)	Reitz Union
	1:30pm–5:00pm	Engineering Workshop World-Building Workshop	Dauer 342
	8:00pm–9:00pm	Bat Houses	Bat Houses
Aug. 19	9:00am–9:30am	Morning Check-In	Dauer 342
	9:30am–11:00am	Environmental Field Trip	NATL
	11:00am–12:00pm	World-Building Workshop	Dauer 342
	12:00pm–1:00pm	Lunch (Domino's)	Dauer 342
	1:00pm–2:00pm	Game Day	Dauer 342
	2:00pm–4:00pm	Lectures World-Building Workshop	Dauer 342
Aug. 20	9:00am–12:15pm	World-Building Workshop Final Presentation Closing Remarks	Dauer 342