

**UnCommon Read – The Emotional Life of our Brain**  
**IDH 2930 Class #22571**  
**University of Florida Honors Course**

**Wednesdays 5:10 – 6pm (Period 10)**

**Honors Village 1 Room 14**

CREDIT: 1 Semester Hour

**Louis A. Ritz, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor Emeritus

Director, UF Center for Spirituality and Health

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Teaching Assistant (Non-Grading)

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**Course Overview:**

This course is based on the book **The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think Feel, and Live – and How You Can Change Them** by Richard Davidson, Ph.D. Dr. Davidson is a professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Dr. Davidson is one of the world's leading authorities of neuropsychology and of mindfulness-based meditation systems. The book explores our six "Emotional Styles" – Resilience, Outlook, Social Intuition, Self-awareness, Sensitivity to Context, and Attention. The class will be structured around weekly student-centered discussions of the book.

**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 to 4-page papers (900-1200 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 emailed to Dr. Ritz by the due date. Late papers will be penalized with a letter grade deduction.

**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 at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

**Honors Program**, Honors Village Complex #4, 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>

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [dso.ufl.edu/drc](mailto:dso.ufl.edu/drc)) 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:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

### **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.

### **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 at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/](http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations via email, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/](http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/).

### **Class Culture:**

- 1) This is a paperless course. All discussion materials, other than the book, will be sent to the students as a PDF. Reflection papers will be emailed to [lriz@ufl.edu](mailto:lriz@ufl.edu) by the deadline as a Word document (.doc or .docx only) copying to yourself.
- 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 (other than taking class notes) during class time.
- 3) All religious, spiritual, psychological, and scientific perspectives of the class participants will be honored.
- 4) Dr. Ritz is available to meet with students for Krishna Lunch or at his office within the McKnight Brain Institute.

**Required Reading:**

Davidson, Richard J., Ph.D. with Sharon Begley. 2011. Hudson Street Press

**The Emotional Life of Your Brain**

Students are expected to purchase or share the book – new, used, or electronic.

**Course Schedule**

Jan 14 (class 1) – Introduction: A Scientific Quest

Jan 21 (class 2) – Chapter 1

Jan 28 (class 3) – Chapter 2; Neuroanatomy Primer

Feb 4 (class 4) – Chapter 2

Feb 11 (class 5) – Chapter 3

Feb 18 (class 6) - Chapter 4

Feb 25 (class 7) – Chapter 5

Mar 4 (class 8) – Chapter 6

**First paper – Due 4PM on March 11, assigned March 4**

Mar 11 (class 9) – Chapter 6; a word about Health

**March 16-22 – Spring Break**

Mar 25 (class 10) – Chapter 7; a word about mindfulness

Apr 1 (class 11) – Chapter 7

Apr 8 (class 12) – Chapter 8

Apr 15 (class 13) – Chapter 9

Apr 22 (class 14) – Chapter 10

?? (optional) – Class visit to Temple of the Universe, 7:30pm – 10pm

**Second paper – Due 4PM on April 30, assigned April 23**