

MIND *And* MOMENTS

IN NATURE
spring 2026



HONORS IDH3931 (26909)

Meetings: Tuesdays, 7th-8th periods

Locations: Classroom meeting space varies by week

Materials: Available in Canvas

In Sometimes, poet and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Mary Oliver, whose work is deeply rooted in the natural world, provides these valuable "Instructions for living a life: Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it. That is exactly what we seek to do in this course.

Nature has long been regarded as a space for connection, healing, and growth. Currently, a significant body of research documents the positive impact of nature on our lives and well-being. Through artifact examination, physical exposure, and creative visualization, we will explore natural and agricultural biodiversity through the themes of wonder, awe, resiliency, stillness, conservation, and creativity.

INSTRUCTORS

Kristy Spear, PhD

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Honors Village Bld 4, 166

Email to schedule a meeting

Vaughn Shirey, PhD

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McGuire Center 214

Email to schedule a meeting

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EXPECTATIONS

Come to class prepared and on time

Actively engage in discussions

Demonstrate respect and kindness

Submit deliverables on time

GOALS & OBJECTIVES



Articulate the effects of focused time spent in natural environments, drawing from personal experiences, artistic expressions, and scholarly perspectives on nature and well-being



Recognize how mindfulness practices and nature connection can support well-being, self-awareness, interdependence, and structure to calm the restless mind



Build rich relationships with instructors, peers, and the natural spaces around campus through experiential, socially engaged mindfulness practices and collaborative discussion



Create an original, nature-based expressive work that demonstrates greater ecological and personal awareness and acknowledges that we exist as a part of nature, not separate from it

COURSE SCHEDULE

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|--------|---|
| Jan 13 | The Beginners Mind @ Honors Village Bld 2, Maker Space |
| Jan 20 | Capturing the Moment @ Natural Area Teaching Laboratory |
| Jan 27 | Interconnectedness of All Things @ Florida Museum of Natural History |
| Feb 3 | Intentional Attention @ Natural Area Teaching Laboratory |
| Feb 10 | Seeding Curiosity & Harvesting Gratitude @ Field and Fork Farm and Gardens |
| Feb 17 | Sensory Delights @ the Horticultural Sciences Teaching Farm |
| Feb 24 | The Pleasure of Observing @ Wilmot Gardens |
| Mar 3 | Roots and Reflections @ Honors Village Bld 2, Maker Space |

SUPPLEMENTARY EVENTS

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| Jan 17 | Arbor Day Tree Planting |
| Mar 10 | Loblolly Woods Nature Walk |
| Mar 24 | Honors Week Nature Showcase |

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

Attendance and Class Participation (56 points total / 7 points per class)

Final Project (44 points)

Reflecting on our class topics and field trips, your task is to compose a final project that explores a theme and message linked to mindfulness and nature. Your project may use any medium of your choosing. Suggested media may include, but are not limited to, artwork, creative writing piece/portfolio, research proposal, short film, journalistic writing, documentary, presentation, podcast, musical composition. The work must be accompanied by a 100-300-word artist statement which includes (1) a description of the work, (2) an explanation of the creative process which helps viewers appreciate the craftsmanship involved, and (3) your source of inspiration (personal experiences, cultural influences, etc.) for this piece.

Students will share projects in a 5-minute presentation during our final class on March 3rd. Some options for the presentation include reading a section from your piece of writing, showing and describing your piece of art, discussing your research/ project process and writing choices, or showing a video. This is a very short and firm time limit. Please practice and make sure you stay within the allotted time. Projects will be shared broadly during Honors Week.

Scale: 93-100 (A); 90-92 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 83-86 (B); 80-82 (B-); 77-79 (C+); 73-76 (C); 70-72 (C-); 67-69 (D+); 63-66 (D); 60-62 (D-); 59-0 (E); Incomplete (I) will not be issued.

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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Working Outdoors

Unless weather conditions are dangerous, we will conduct most of our work in this class outside (rain or shine). We will notify you if we are to have class inside. Typically, if there is thunder or high wind speeds, we will hold class indoors. Working outside can be both physically and mentally taxing at times. Several ground rules can help us accomplish the work in this class effectively while remaining cognizant of our surroundings.

- 🌿 **Dress for the terrain and weather.** We will meet outside unless conditions are hazardous. Please dress appropriately and comfortably for outdoor elements.
- 🌿 **Sunscreen.** Prolonged exposure to UV radiation from the Sun can increase your risk of developing sunburn and even skin cancer. Please wear sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 30.
- 🌿 **Bug Spray.** Wear bug spray, if you desire. Biting insects are usually tolerable but may be more abundant in other areas of campus.
- 🌿 **Water and snacks.** Stay hydrated during class, especially when we are outdoors. You may also want to consider packing snacks to support your energy levels.
- 🌿 **Outdoor hazards.** Alligators, snakes, and other wildlife are present on campus. Maintain a safe distance from bodies of water and wildlife at all times.

Honors Program

Location: Honors Village Building 4, www.honors.ufl.edu

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

Need an Honors advising appointment? [Schedule via Microsoft Bookings](#)

[Honors Program Event Calendar](#)

UF Academic Policies and Resources - [view](#)

Campus Resources

[Counseling and Wellness Center](#) or call 352-392-1575

[Student Health Care Center](#) or call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 assistance.

[GatorWell Health Promotion Services](#) or call 352-273-4450

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter to present to the instructor. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester, but may initiate the process at any time.