

## Women and Religion in American Popular Fiction

IDS2935/3F99, Class # 16221Fall 2019

T | Period 9-10 (4:05-4:55 Room: [MAT 0013](#) R | Period 9-11 (4:05- 6:00 PM) Room: [MAT 0013](#)

Instructor: Assoc. Prof. Trysh Travis, Women's Studies Teaching Assistant: Ms. Asmaa Ghonim, English	
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Office Hours: TBA	Office Hours: TBA

This course in the UF Quest 1 Arts and Humanities curriculum (Theme: Identities) can substitute for IDS1611, What is the Good Life? It counts as a 2000-level elective in the Women's Studies and Religion departments; meets the Gen Ed Humanities and Diversity requirements; and offers 2000 words of WR credit. A grade of "C" or above is required for Gen Ed credit. NOTE: Dr. Rachel Gordan's course of the same name meets all these requirements **EXCEPT for WR.**

- The **complete course information, including the syllabus, required/recommended reading, schedule of assigned work, and all course policies**, is available in the course Canvas page: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/377947/pages/home-page-for-women-and-religion-in-popular-american-fiction>

- **Required Books** (available at UF Bookstore: <https://www.bsd.ufl.edu/g1c/bookstore/bookstore.asp>)

Hansberry, *Raisin in the Sun* (1957)

Goldberg, *Bee Season* (2000)

Walker, *The Color Purple* (1982)

Acevedo, *The Poet X* (2018)

Plus a **required course reader** ("CR" in syllabus), available at Target Copy on University Avenue the first week of class: <https://target-copy.com/>.

**If you cannot afford the course reader, see me the 1<sup>st</sup> week of class to arrange to borrow a copy.**

Recommended: Lunsford, *Easy Writer* (any edition)



**Course Description:** Women and religion have played central roles in American popular fiction since the terms "America" and "fiction" came into popular use in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Women have always been the bulk of the fiction-reading public; novels that treat religious life have waxed and waned in popularity, but have always been what publishers call "steady sellers." This was particularly true in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. After World War 2, many women who had moved into the paid workforce during the War returned to the domestic sphere, and mainstream religions (Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism) assumed a new centrality in public discourse as Americans reckoned with the horrors of the Holocaust and the atom bomb. TV, with its seemingly unlimited possibilities of genre and subject-matter, was only just becoming a staple of the middle-class home. In this "golden age" of American literature, fiction captured the centrality of gender and religion in society.

This course examines best-selling fictions dealing with women and religion, first in the immediate post-WW2 period and then in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the popular culture pendulum swung in a more secular and, for women, "liberated" direction. Emphasis is placed on understanding works in historical context as well as on critical self-reflection; students are invited to understand how, like the authors they study, their own position as people with specific gender identities and relationships to religious practice (including being a non-religious person) affects what and how they read.

**Class Compartment:** This class deals with historical dimensions of American life that may be new and/or uncomfortable, including slavery, anti-Semitism, sexism, the history of homosexuality, and the nature and place of religion in public life. If we all knew everything there is to know about these topics and agreed on all of them there wouldn't really be much point to having this class. At the same time, there is also not much point to having the class if we each see it as an opportunity to grandstand about our beliefs and browbeat those who don't share them. Classroom discussion works best when it is both frank and respectful—sometimes a hard balance to strike. In this class you may need to separate your personal (intuitive, gut-level) feelings from your best rational mind in order to follow an idea through, see it from different angles, and give consideration to its complexity. If we all do that, we may find surprising common ground for agreement or—also useful—respectful and productive ways to disagree.



Objectives: This course will...	SLOs: At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to...
1. Introduce the concept of American gender and religion as historically contingent categories evolving out of the long 19 <sup>th</sup> century experience of immigration and industrialization	1. Identify, describe, and explain 19 <sup>th</sup> century beliefs about “proper” gendered and religious experiences 2. Identify and describe elements of the evolving religious and gendered landscape of Post-WW2 America (content)
2. Describe the ways that WW2 impacted mainstream Americans understandings of religious tolerance, racial equality, and women’s identities	3. Identify, describe, and explain the importance of historical context, including critical reception history, for the interpretation of literary texts (critical thinking)
3. Demonstrate the ways that academic literary criticism seeks to contain and limit popular readers’ pleasure and meaning-making	4. Analyze literature using contextualizing historical sources, theories of gendered performativity, and close reading (critical thinking)
4. Examine the ways in which popular literary forms advance and/or complicate mainstream American ideas about religious, gendered, and racial propriety	5. Express ideas about literature in appropriate oral and written forms (communication) 6. Reflect on how their understanding of how their gendered and religious identities have shaped and will continue to shape their development as readers in school and beyond (connection)

## SYLLABUS

### This syllabus details the work you need to do for each day's class.

- Assignments are due through the Canvas assignment function unless otherwise noted.
- Readings should be completed--carefully!-- before class begins.
- Bring hard copy of the day's assigned reading to every class.

## ☞ UNIT 1: INTRODUCTIONS TO EVERYONE & EVERYTHING

- **Week 1) 20-22 August**
  - T: Read, Discuss, Expectations: The Religion Part
    - [Bellah, "Religion" \(handout\)](#)
  - Th: Read, Discuss, Expectations: The Women and Popular Fiction Part
    - Morrison, "[Men & Women Don't Read from the Same Page](#)"
    - Maher, "[Oprah Books and the New Socially Conscious Zeitgeist](#)"
- **Week 2) 27-29 August**
  - T: American Religious Trends
    - [Pew Survey: The American Religious Landscape](#)
  - Th: Women, Religion, Writing
    - Mary Gordon, "Getting Here from There: A Writer's Reflections on a Religious Past" (1987, CR ["course reader"])

### Week 3) 3-5 September

- T: Gender, Reading, and the Language of Brows
- Th: Good and Bad Religions
  - Tracy Fessenden, "Introduction," *Culture and Redemption* (2017, CR) read from start of chapter through "cultural authority," p. 6
    - **DUE: Paper #1: Syllabus Reflection and Goals**

## ☞ UNIT 2: HISTORY AND THEORY TOOLBOX

- **Week 4) 10-12 September**
  - T: Good and Bad Books/Readers
    - Jane Tompkins, "Sentimental Power" (1986, CR) read from start of chapter through "let us consider," p. 127
  - Th: Good Woman + Good Religion = Good Book?

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, "In Which it Appears that a Senator is But a Man," pp. 70-84 from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1861, CR)
- [Prep Sheet #1](#)

#### Week 5) 17-19 September

- T: What is God Good For?
  - Stowe, cont'd
- Th: One God, Two Races
  - Harriet Jacobs, "Childhood" and "The New Master and Mistress," pp 9-16 from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861, CR)
  - [Prep Sheet #2](#)

#### Week 6) 24-26 September

- T: Immigration: New Women, New God
  - Lecture: Race, Ethnicity, and Popular Fiction in the Gilded Age
- Th: The Promised Land-- and its Limits
  - Mary Antin, "My Country" and "Miracles," pp. 222-251 from *The Promised Land* (1912) pp
  - Anzia Yezierska, "Hester Street," "Speaking Mouth of the Block," and "Burden Bearer," pp 1-33 from *Bread Givers* (1925)
  - [Due Prep Sheet #3](#)

### ☞ UNIT 3: THE POSTWAR CONSENSUS AND "TRI-FAITH AMERICA"

#### Week 7) 1-3 October

- T: Postwar America and Popular "Anti-Anti-Semitism "
  - Lecture WW2 and the Ideal of Tri-Faith America
  - [Due: Paper #2: Compare/Contrast](#)
- Th: The Middlebrow Outrage Narrative
  - Elia Kazan, *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) available at library west closed reserve or via streaming services
    - [Due Prep Sheet #4](#)

#### Week 8) 8-10 October

- T: All the Single WASP Ladies
  - *Gentleman's Agreement*, cont'd
- Th: How the Irish Became White
  - Mary Doyle Curran, "Irish Parish and Money Hole Hill" and "The Look of a Fixed Star," pp. 1-54 of *The Parish and the Hill* (1948, CR)

#### Week 9) 15-17 October

- T: "In My Mother's House there is Still God"
  - Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1957) Act 1
  - [Due Prep Sheet #5](#)
- Th: *Raisin*, Act 2

#### Week 10) 22-24 October

- T: *Raisin*, Act 3
- Th: In-class midterm exam; bring your own blue book!

### ☞ UNIT FOUR: THE POST-POSTWAR WORLD

#### Week 11) 29-31 October

- T: That 60s Thing
  - Lecture: What was "the '60s" for Women, Religion, and Popular Fiction?
  - [Due: Anthology Proposals](#)

- Th Naming the Problem(s)
  - Betty Friedan, "The Problem that Has No Name" from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963, CR)
  - The Combahee River Collective, "Statement" (1978, CR)
  - Alice Walker, "Womanism" (ca. 1982, CR)
    - **Due Prep Sheet #6**

#### Week 12) 5-7 November

- T Remember Harriet Jacobs?
  - Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1982) pp. 1-97
    - **Due Prep Sheet #7 Option**
- Th "If God love me...I don't have to do all that."
  - *Color Purple*, 98-end

#### Week 13) 12-14 November

- T Into the Mystic
  - Myla Goldberg, *Bee Season* (2000) pp. 1-132
    - **Due Prep Sheet #7 Option**
      - **12 pm, WEDNESDAY, 13 November: Meet the author!** workshop and discussion with Myla Goldberg, Judaica Library (alternatives will be posted for those with scheduling conflicts)
- Th "God is inside all of us, but we forget this."
  - *Bee Season*, 133-end

#### Week 14) 19-21 November

- T Meet the New Catholics...
  - Elizabeth Acevedo, *The Poet X* (2018) pp. 1-100
    - **Due Prep Sheet #7 Option**
- Th ... Same as the Old Jews?
  - *Poet X*, 100-end

#### Week 15) 26-29 November

- T: Catch-up day
  - **Due: Anthology Entries**
- Th: No Class, Thanksgiving

#### Week 16) 3 December

- T: Conclusions, Evaluations, Take-home Exam Questions Distributed in Class
  - Return Anthology entries, distribute anthologies, party!

**\* Take-home Exams due at or before assigned exam period: Friday, 13 Dec., 12:30-2:30 \***

#### **LIST OF GRADED WORK (NOTE: YOU MUST DO ALL THE GRADED WORK IN ORDER TO PASS THE CLASS)**

##### **Paper #1: Syllabus Reflection and Goal Setting (500-750 words)**

Overview of course requirements and content with reflection on how the course extends/differs from humanities classes you've taken in the past, and how it can meet learning and life goals of yours

**Due:** Th, 5 September

**Value:** 16 points

##### **Paper #2: Picturing the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (750-1200 words)**

Choose two women from the 19<sup>th</sup> century readings and discuss the similarities and differences in their gendered religious experiences

**Due:** T, 1 October

**Value:** 20 points

### **Paper #3: Anthology Contribution (800-1250 words)**

Each student will propose an additional novel or memoir from one of the three historical moments covered in class to include in the course syllabus, and write an explanation of how/why it could be added. Entries will be compiled into a course anthology, and all students will receive a copy on the last day of class.

**Proposal Due:** T, 29 October

**Proposal Value:** 8 points

**Contribution Due:** T, 26 November

**Contribution value:** 24 points

### **Mid-term Exam: In-class blue book exam, combination of short answer and essay questions**

**Date:** Th, 24 Oct.

**Value:** 20 points

### **Take-Home Final: 2-4 Synthetic Essay Questions**

Questions will be distributed on the last day of class.

**Due:** On or before Friday, 13 Dec., 2:30

**Value:** 36 points

### **Prep Sheets 1-7: Structured note-taking to grapple with reading and prepare for class discussion**

Prep sheets will be available on line

**Due:** Th, 12 Sept; Th, 19 Sept; Th, 26 Sept; Th, 3 Oct; Th, 10 Oct; Th, 31 Oct; and choice of Tuesday 5, 12, or 19 Nov.

**Value:** 5 points each for a total of 35 points

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**Total Points: 159**

### **Statement on WR Credit**

UF requires all classes that award Writing credit contain the following statements:

- "The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning."
- "Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course."
- Holistic Grading w/Rubric: Papers written in this class will be graded holistically, using the rubric on the next page, which evaluates content (are the ideas interesting, original, relevant, and significant?), development (does the paper have a clear, logical, and compelling progression from beginning to middle to end?), style (does the author's voice sound appropriate, precise, enjoyable, and professional?), and usage (is the word choice, punctuation, and grammar correct?).
- Writing Workshops: we may break periodically from our discussions to address specific writing problems that crop up regularly—weak topic sentences, flabby verbs, punctuation errors, etc. To illustrate these problems and their solutions, I use examples from student work to workshop in class. Having your writing chosen to exemplify a particular issue is not punitive—it does not mean your paper is necessarily worse than others, just that it gives a particularly clear example of a common problem. Your anonymity will be protected, and you may be pleased to find that having your work workshopped in class makes you more aware of these troubling issues in your writing.

	<b>Excellent (A)</b>	<b>Good (B)</b>	<b>Adequate (C)</b>	<b>Poor (D)</b>	<b>Failing (E)</b>
<b>Content</b>	Significant controlling idea or assertion supported with concrete, substantial, and relevant evidence.	Controlling idea or assertion supported with concrete and relevant evidence.	Controlling idea or assertion general, limited, or obvious; some supporting evidence is repetitious, irrelevant, or sketchy.	Controlling idea or assertion too general, superficial, or vague; evidence insufficient because obvious, aimless, or contradictory.	No discernible idea or assertion controls the random or unexplained details that make up the body of the essay.
<b>Development</b>	Order reveals a sense of necessity, symmetry, and emphasis; paragraphs focused and coherent; logical transitions reinforce the progress of the analysis or argument. Introduction engages initial interest; conclusion supports without repeating.	Order reveals a sense of necessity and emphasis; paragraphs focused and coherent; logical transitions signal changes in direction; introduction engages initial interest; conclusion supports without merely repeating.	Order apparent but not consistently maintained; paragraphs focused and for the most part coherent; transitions functional but often obvious or monotonous. Introduction or conclusions may be mechanical rather than purposeful or insightful.	Order unclear or inappropriate, failing to emphasize central idea; paragraphs jumbled or underdeveloped; transitions unclear, inaccurate, or missing. Introduction merely describes what is to follow; conclusion merely repeats what has been said.	Order and emphasis indiscernible; paragraphs typographical rather than structural; transitions unclear, inaccurate, or missing. Neither the introduction nor the conclusion satisfies any clear rhetorical purpose.
<b>Style</b>	Sentences varied, emphatic, and purposeful; diction fresh, precise, economical, and idiomatic; tone complements the subject, conveys the authorial persona, and suits the audience.	Sentences varied, purposeful, and emphatic; diction precise and idiomatic; tone fits the subject, persona, and audience.	Sentences competent but lacking emphasis and variety; diction generally correct and idiomatic; tone acceptable for the subject.	Sentences lack necessary emphasis, subordination, and purpose; diction vague or unidiomatic; tone inconsistent with or inappropriate to the subject.	Incoherent, rudimentary, or redundant sentences thwart the meaning of the essay; diction nonstandard or unidiomatic; tone indiscernible or inappropriate to the subject.
<b>Usage</b>	Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling adhere to the conventions of "edited American English."	Grammar, punctuation, syntax, and spelling contain no serious deviations from the conventions of "edited American English."	Content undercut by some deviations from the conventions of "edited American English."	Frequent mistakes in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling obscure content.	Frequent and serious mistakes in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling make the content unintelligible.



**UF Syllabus Policies—UF requires that the policies below appear in every syllabus. The complete course policies for Women and Religion in American Fiction are available at the course Canvas site:**

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/377947/pages/home-page-for-women-and-religion-in-popular-american-fiction>

### **Academic Honesty**

- UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code ([sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/](http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/)) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.
- Students violating the honor pledge will be referred to the Dean of Students office for adjudication. The minimum penalty for such violations is a zero on the assigned work.

### **Attendance**

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: [catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/](http://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/)

## **Disability Accommodations**

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

## **Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points.**

Available at: [catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/](http://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/)

## **Evaluations**

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 through the email they receive from GatorEvals, 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/)

## **Communication and Technology**

- The Instructor in this class will communicate through UF Email and the Canvas messaging tool. It is your responsibility to have and maintain a gatorlink email account.
- For assistance resolving technical issues with Canvas, contact the UF helpdesk.[ufl.edu](http://ufl.edu), 352-392-4357.

## **Campus Resources**

- Health and Wellness  
*U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [umatter.ufl.edu/](http://umatter.ufl.edu/) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.  
*Counseling and Wellness Center:* Visit [counseling.ufl.edu/](http://counseling.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.  
*Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit [shcc.ufl.edu/](http://shcc.ufl.edu/).  
*University Police Department:* Visit [police.ufl.edu/](http://police.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).  
*UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center](http://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).
- Academic Resources  
*E-learning technical support:* UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or e-mail at [elpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:elpdesk@ufl.edu).  
*Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services [career.ufl.edu/](http://career.ufl.edu/).  
*Library Support:* [cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask](http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask) various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.  
*Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. [teachingcenter.ufl.edu/](http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/)  
*Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. [writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/](http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/)  
*Student Complaints On-Campus:* [sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/](http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/)  
*On-Line Students Complaints:* [distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process/](http://distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process/)

## GENERAL EDUCATION AND UF QUEST CONNECTIONS

Quest 1 courses fill the General Education Humanities (H) Requirement. This course also counts as Gen Ed Diversity (D). As such, the course's Objectives and SLOs align with the Quest 1 and Gen Ed H and D Objectives and SLOs below.

### Gen Ed Humanities Objectives

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

### Gen Ed Humanities SLOs

Content:

Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used.

Critical Thinking:

Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area. Approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives.

Communication:

Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively.

### Gen Ed Diversity Objectives

In Diversity courses, students examine the historical processes and contemporary experiences characterizing social and cultural differences within the United States. Students engage with diversity as a dynamic concept related to human differences and their intersections, such as (but not limited to) race, gender identity, class, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and (dis)abilities. Students critically analyze and evaluate how social inequities are constructed and affect the opportunities and constraints across the US population. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultures and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understandings of themselves and an increasingly diverse U.S. society.

### Gen Ed Diversity SLOs

Content:

Identify, describe, and explain the historical processes and contemporary experiences characterizing diversity as a dynamic concept related to human differences and their intersections, such as (but not limited to) race, gender identity, class, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disability.

Critical Thinking:

Analyze and evaluate how social inequities are constructed and affect the opportunities and constraints of different groups in the United States. Analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultures and beliefs mediate understandings of an increasingly diverse U.S. society.

Communication:

The diversity designation is always in conjunction with another category. Communication outcomes are listed in those subject areas.

### Quest 1 Objectives

- Address the history, key themes, principles, terminologies, theories, and methodologies of various arts and humanities disciplines that enable us to ask essential questions about the human condition.
- Present different arts and humanities disciplines' distinctive elements, along with their biases and influences on essential questions about the human condition.
- Explore at least one arts or humanities resource outside their classroom and explain how engagement with it complements classroom work.
- Enable students to analyze and evaluate essential questions about the human condition clearly and effectively in writing and other forms appropriate to the discipline.
- Analyze the role arts and humanities play in the lives of individuals and societies and the role they might play in students' undergraduate degree programs and lives after college.



### Quest 1 SLOs

- Identify, describe, and explain the history, theories, and methodologies used to examine essential questions about the human condition within and across the arts and humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (**Content**).
- Analyze and evaluate essential questions about the human condition using established practices appropriate for the arts and humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (**Critical Thinking**).
- Develop and present clear and effective responses to essential questions in oral and written forms as appropriate to the relevant humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (**Communication**).
- Connect course content with critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond (**Connection**).