

The ELI Weekly

Out and About: My First Experience in the ELI

by Yureidy Chinchilla, RW60

When I finished my first semester in ELI, I could say it was one of the best experiences of my life. So, it all started in August of last year. I was in Colombia when I made the decision to study English, but not only did I want to study, but I also wanted to have new and unforgettable experiences, too. My first day I was nervous because I didn't know if I was going to understand my professors or how I was going to be able to speak in a different language. Everything around me was fresh. Even so, I had a good attitude to learn everything that I could. That day my classes began by meeting my classmates and my professors, every class had people from different countries and my professors in each class was exceptional at teaching. And I started to feel comfortable and excited. Every day, I was studying and learning all my professor taught me. I was meeting all my classmates and their cultures and for me it was exciting and engaging. I had never

thought that I would have been able to live and share with fascinating people. Further, there were activities at night where I could practice English with my classmates and other people from other classes. These activities were the best tool to practice and lose fear of speaking. At first, I didn't participate in all activities because I felt nervous about meeting more people from different classes. After I lost the fear, I was able to take advantage of every activity to speak with people as much as possible. During that time, my life was so enriching not only was in my academic studies, but my personal life changed positively, too. For all of this I am grateful to the ELI for all the unforgettable experiences and my academic progress that I have had since I arrived. So much so that, despite many personal situations, I did all possible to continue this semester. Basically, I am joyful to be here to have more unforgettable adventures and learn everything as much as possible from my professors.



Scenes around Matherly (Photo Credit: Yureidy Chinchilla)

CIP Weekday Activities

Monday, February 19th – Coffee Talk – 6:30-9:00pm—Activity still happening on Instructor Work Day—please join us!



Socialize with LAs and ELI friends at the **Starbucks** on Archer Road! Play games, speak English, and drink a coffee or get dinner at the restaurants nearby! Take bus 1, 12, or 34.

Address: 3524 SW Archer Rd #160, Gainesville, FL 32608

Tuesday, February 20th – Volleyball – 6:30-9:00pm



Come play volleyball and hang out at **Lexington Crossing Apartments Phase 2** Volleyball Courts! No experience necessary! Take bus 35.

Address: 3700 SW 27th St, Gainesville, FL 32608

Wednesday, February 21st – Soccer – 6:30-9:00pm



Come play soccer at **Flavet Field** on campus! No experience necessary!

Address: Woodlawn Dr, Gainesville, FL 32603

Thursday, February 22nd – Reitz Karaoke at the Game Room – 6:30-9:30pm



Game night with a twist! Come sing Karaoke in the game room or watch your friends sing! You can also go bowling and play games! Bring your Gator1 ID for cheaper rates.

Address: 655 Reitz Union Drive, Gainesville, FL 32611

Friday, February 23rd – Live Music at Satchel's Pizza – 6:30-9:00pm



Visit one of Gainesville's most famous restaurants and watch live jazz music! Order yummy pizza with friends and shop in their quirky gift shop! Take bus 15 or 26 and walk from there to meet us in the back building of Satchel's where the stage is.

Address: 1800 NE 23rd Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609

Weekend Activity

Saturday February 24th Silver Springs State Park – 8:00am – 1:00pm

See the beautiful Florida springs! This specific state park is famous for the glass bottom boat tours! You can take a boat tour, kayak, or just explore the springs and trails! Make sure to bring a packed lunch so that we can eat lunch together on the beautiful, grassy field next to the springs. **Swimming is NOT allowed at this spring.** The park entry fee is 2 dollars and boat tours start at 12 dollars depending on the length. Kayaking varies in prices. Please see the website below for costs of different activities. Make sure to bring money to be able to participate in your preferred activities! Meet at Norman Garage at 8:00am.

You must sign up to attend this event. Please only sign up for a ride if you do not have a car to get there. There are slots for people with their own ride as well so please read carefully:

Sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0C4BA9A823A02-48000933-silver>

Silver Springs Website: <https://silversprings.com/>

Norman Parking Garage Address (Meet here at 8:00am!): 1210 SW 8th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32601

Silver Springs State Park Address: 5656 E Silver Springs Blvd, Silver Springs, FL 34488

Other CIP Reminders

Sign Up for the Talent Show



The ELI will be having a talent show on April 5th in the beautiful University Auditorium! Anyone is welcome to perform!! Please sign up if you have a talent to share, or even something simple to share. Some ideas are: singing, playing an instrument, showcasing your art, doing a dance, reading poetry, doing a skit – anything you like! You do not need to be amazing to perform, there is no winner! This is a great way to connect with ELI friends and share your interests in a supportive environment. Signing up for the Talent Show involves coming to a few practices – details to come soon. The first information meeting will be February 28th after classes.

Sign up to perform here (and share with your friends!):

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0C4BA9A823A02-47954719-elitalent>

Want to MC/Host the talent show? Talk to Tate!

Conversation Partners



Want to meet with a fluent English speaker and make a new friend? Sign up for a CP! If you choose to sign up, you must meet with your partner for one hour a week. It can take up to two weeks to get a partner from when you sign up. Please sign up at this link: <https://forms.gle/Vs8dgX3R8qGvT1Ed7>

Please email Will at conversationpartners@eli.ufl.edu for any issues, questions or concerns or visit him in the CIP Office during office hours.

CIP Passport

Don't forget to get your CIP Passport hole punched from the activity leaders AT the event (not after). **We don't hole punch passports after the event.** Redeem your completed passport for a small gift a photo for the ELI Instagram, and your name published in the ELI weekly!

Need a new CIP Passport? Stop by the CIP Office?

Remember the CIP Pineapple is hidden in a new place every Monday in the CIP office. Stop by and find it for hole punches!

Completed CIP Passports

Congrats to students who completed their CIP Passports! Thank you for being so involved with the CIP!

- Abdullah (Abadey) Bashmail

Notes from the Office

People out: Christine and Tate are both out of the office on February 22 and 23. Christine will also be out February 26-29. Please plan around these dates if you need to talk to Christine or Tate.

Student Voices: Every semester, we have amazing student writers, so we take your writing and publish it in an online collection called Student Voices. In past semesters, students have written paragraphs, essays, creative stories, recipes, letters, obituaries, poetry, and more. You can see past editions of Student Voices (<https://eli.ufl.edu/news-publications/>, scroll to the bottom of the page) for inspiration.

We encourage you to submit anything of your work that you wish to see published. It can be from any class or something you have written on your own but ask your teachers for help editing! You can email it to Olga Moody (omood@ufl.edu) or to your teacher. Please include your name and class on your submission. The deadline for submissions is Friday, March 29.

US Federal Tax Forms for International Students

International students that were present in the U.S. in 2023 have a responsibility to file tax forms with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Tax forms are due on April 15th this year. They are filed for the previous calendar year, which in this case is 2023.

You must provide required tax forms even if you did not earn any money in the U.S. in 2023. **All F-1 students (including dependents) must submit tax forms.**

As a UF ELI student you can use a free international student tax filing program called Sprintax. All current F-1 ELI students who were in the US in 2023 received an email with instructions on how to access Sprintax. The email provides an access link. We recommend that you use Sprintax to complete required tax forms.

If you had on-campus employment in 2023 as an international student, you will receive a form from your employer reporting your income and tax withholdings called a W-2. **Because you earned reportable income, you must submit a federal tax return to file your W-2.** Sprintax can help you do this.

The ELI is not permitted to assist any student with IRS tax form preparation or give tax advice. We strongly recommend that you use Sprintax as it can determine which forms you are required to submit and it can file the forms. They offer 24-hour chat services and have scheduled workshops which ELI students can attend.

If you choose to NOT to use free Sprintax services, you can complete the required forms, print and sign them, and mail them to the IRS. Talk to Daryl if you want to learn more about this option.

Please contact Daryl Bish (studyenglish@eli.ufl.edu) if you have questions about the above information or if you did not receive the Sprintax access email.

Photo of the Week



Gator Nights!

Birthdays!

Students:

- Seyun Jo, 2/21
- Nouriya Alsahli, 2/23
- Paula Barragan Sanchez, 2/24
- Salvador Ubilla Zavala, 2/25

Staff:

- Olga Moody, 2/25



Manners & Culture

Q: I want to try some real Florida food, but when I think of US food, I only think of fast food, like McDonald's. Can you suggest real Florida food?

A: When you start looking for Florida food, start with the seafood. Clams, stone crab, shrimp, oysters, scallops, grouper, mullet, and snapper are some of the seafood coming from around Florida. One restaurant in Gainesville that has fresh local seafood is Northwest Seafood. Try the fish tacos or fried shrimp. You can also buy fresh raw seafood from Northwest Seafood to cook at home. The town of Cedar Key is well-known for Florida-style seafood. ELI Director Megan Forbes recommends a restaurant called Annie's, where you can find a delicious fried mullet breakfast or a soft-shelled crab sandwich.

Besides seafood, Florida has a lot of southern US influences on food, also called soul food. Fried chicken with greens, biscuits and gravy, fried okra, grits, and BBQ are some of the tastes of southern food. Chain restaurants like Sonny's BBQ or Cracker Barrel have been successful in spreading these southern traditions. For a more local BBQ experience, try Mojo Hogtown Bar-B-Que, David's BBQ, or Adam's Rib Co. For soul food in Gainesville, try Lucille's Southern Kitchen. Many of the small towns around Gainesville also will have restaurants that embrace the southern food traditions.

Another specialty of Northern Florida and Southern Georgia is the boiled peanut. Typically, people set up a small stand by the side of the road with a sign that reads, "Boiled P-nuts." When you go to order, you might get to pick a flavor like salted or hot. You will receive a warm bag full of peanuts boiled in their shells that make a fun snack.

As you travel southward in Florida, you will begin to see "Floribbean" food, which combines Puerto Rican, Cuban, Jamaican, Haitian, and South American dishes. Some of these food trends have reached Gainesville. Restaurants like the Latin American Bakery and Cafe, Tinker, and La Cocina De Abuela are examples of "Floribbean" food.

You can't live in Gainesville and not try gator! Many restaurants around Gainesville have alligator on the menu. You can try gator tail at Gator's Dockside and gator bites at the Swamp Restaurant.

Desserts are a category on their own! If you are looking for Florida desserts, try key lime pie, Dole Whip, banana pudding, and strawberry short cake. Any dessert with fresh Florida strawberries, blueberries, or oranges will also be fantastic!

I would love to hear from LAs, instructors, and staff about favorite Florida foods and where to find them. Let's convince our students that we don't just eat McDonald's!

Grammar

Q: Why do Americans ignore the grammar rules when speaking?

A: Nearly everyone does, to some extent. This is how we create slang and idioms and how language evolves over time. Language is not a static, unchanging thing. It lives because it's spoken by a nearly infinite variety of people with a nearly infinite variety of thoughts and ideas. Think about it: when you speak in your native language with your friends, does it sound exactly like the language you are taught in school? Does it sound like the same language that your grandparents or even your parents use when they speak to their friends? Learn the rules and then learn how to break them, so you understand the English around you.

Joke of the Week

Q: What time did the man go to the dentist?

Tooth hurt-y.

Notes from the Editor



Thanks for the help this week! I still need your help with the ELI Weekly. Send me a paragraph about fun activities you have tried in Florida or send me a story about an interesting place in your country. Send me grammar questions, culture questions, or even jokes. Send them to mshastri@ufl.edu. Use the subject heading ELI Weekly.