



CONTEMPORARY ETHICS

**PHI 4360 - SPRING 2024
TR 9:30-10:45 AM
MORRISON HALL 108**

DR. ANNE JEFFREY

WELCOME TO CONTEMPORARY ETHICS!

PROFESSOR: [Dr. Anne Jeffrey](#)

COURSE SITE: <https://baylor.instructure.com/courses/202931>

COFFEE HOURS [appointments available](#)
anne_jeffrey@baylor.edu

I'm looking forward to learning from you, our community partners, and authors as well as sharing knowledge with you. In this class, you can expect to learn from our community partners and each other just as much as from me as an instructor.

Shoot me an email with a fun fact about yourself anytime in the semester and I'll return the favor!



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ENGAGE

OUR COMMUNITY

This course is part of the Community Based Global Learning collaborative. The CBGL collab fosters “community-based learning and research for more just, inclusive, and sustainable communities.” We'll prioritize and practice skills in cultural humility, local action, and reciprocal and cooperative learning.

Part of the regular class time for the course will take place outside the classroom with community partners who will co-educate with the instructor. You will interface with people dealing with real-world problems in education, immigration, inequality, housing, or health through our partner organizations.

Your capstone project will integrate theoretical ethics with what you learn from your community engagement and one another. Following participatory action research approaches, you will create a project that is informed from the beginning by those community members who have a vested interest in the ethical issue in question.

Successfully completing the capstone project will require deep understanding of philosophical theory and argument as well as cultural humility and positive, trusting relationships with community members you develop this semester.



PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH



WHAT IS IT?

Participatory action research is a research method that targets problems generated by unequal and unjust systems, and critically involves the people harmed by such systems. It aims to “**create knowledge and social change in tandem**” (Cornish et al. 2023).

Researchers can use this approach to “document, interpret and address complex systemic problems,” (ibid.). Rather than coming at a problem as a neutral, outside observer and expert, researchers partner with those affected by a problem. Together they generate analyses of the problem, dialogue between academic literature and lived experience, and intervention projects that can transform the social landscape, leading to better outcomes.

HOW WILL WE USE IT?

Throughout the semester, we will learn about ethics— how to live well— not just by reading the philosophical work of experts in ethics, but also by listening to the community. Each student will be paired with a community partner organization and spend several months getting to know people who experience particular obstacles to living well, whether it be absence of stable housing, chronic physical illness, barriers to education or sustainably generated food. You will come up with a research question in ethics together with these community partners and do a project aiming to make progress on the question.

WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

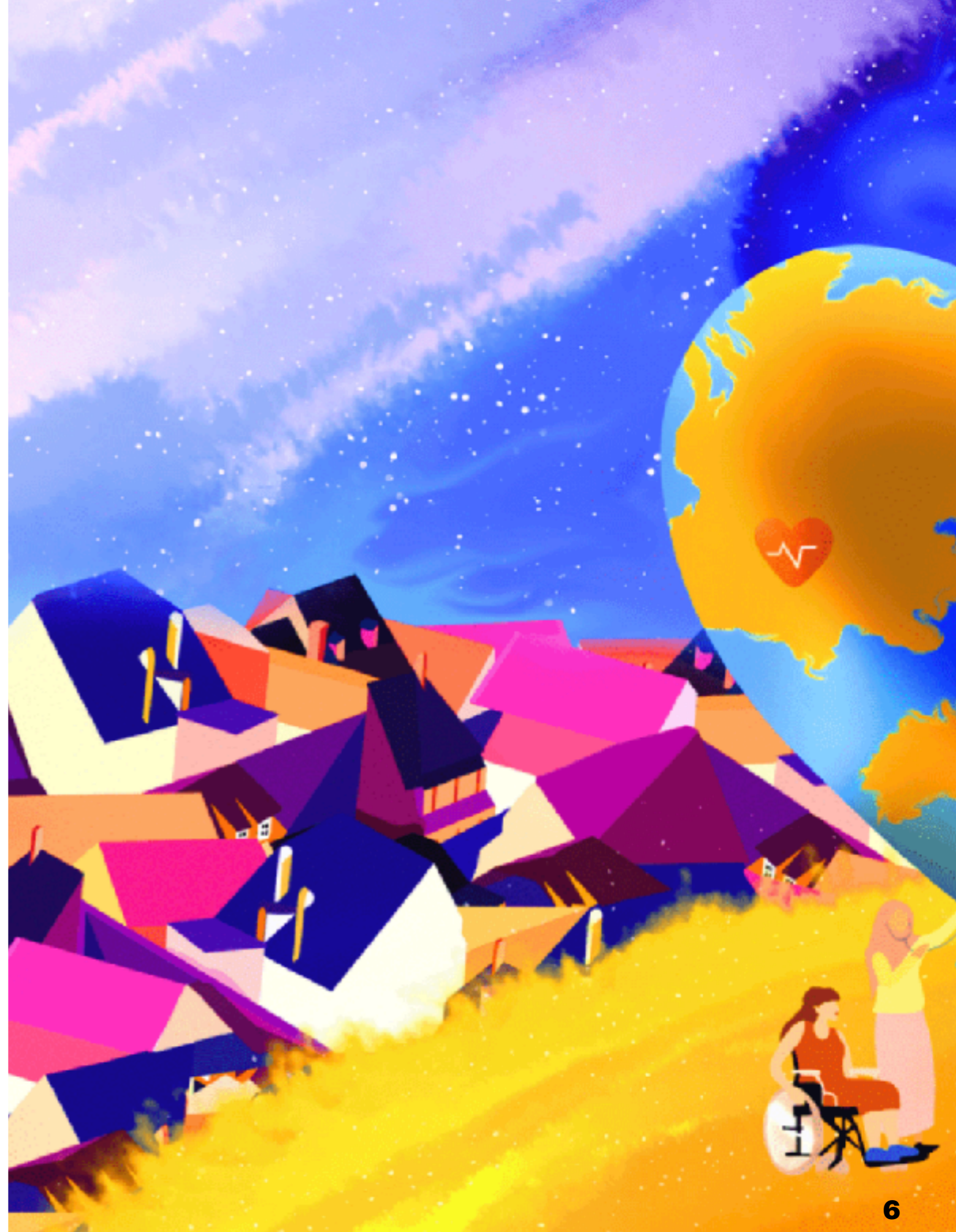
The central question of ethics is *how should we live?* Answering this question is not optional; we all have to address it because we all have a life to live.

The merits of engaging that question using **philosophy** is that we can approach that question in a principled, charitable, patient, and careful way.

Traditional philosophical approaches are limited in the way they can address the question of how should we live. Often, ethical theories operate at a level of abstraction that can obscure issues of real importance in human life or issues that arise for certain populations.

In this course, we're aiming to get a sophisticated and critical understanding of major ethical theories and the extent to which they can and cannot guide us. Our participatory research with the community will help us see the shortcomings and strengths of ethical theories.

We'll work to build a community of mutual respect, encouragement, and commitment to the common good.



WHAT WILL WE READ?

We'll work our way through four books with some supplemental readings as listed on the reading schedule online.

Each text should be available to you through the Baylor library or in Perusall.



Brewer, Talbot, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
ISBN: 9780199557882

Driver, Julia, *Consequentialism* (New York: Routledge, 2012). ISBN: 9780415772587

Scanlon, T.M. *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
ISBN: 9780674004238

Van Zyl, *Virtue Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2019).
ISBN: 978-0-415-83616

WHAT WILL WE LEARN?

LEARNING GOALS

Learning goals are big-picture and intangible.

You can make measurable progress towards the goals by achieving *course objectives*. *Course objectives* are tangible and specific ways of meeting these learning goals.

1 UNDERSTAND CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL THEORIES

You'll learn to differentiate and identify what drives different views about how we should live: consequentialism, Kantian contractualism, virtue ethics.



The deepest philosophical ethics is written with one eye on the past and one eye on the contemporary world. - Talbot Brewer

2 THINK AND WRITE PHILOSOPHICALLY ON ETHICS

You'll learn to think like a philosopher about how to live: in a careful, charitable, patient, and principled way. This involves being able to write arguments in support of or against claims of the theories in philosophical language.

3 ENGAGE ETHICAL ISSUES IN REAL LIFE

You'll learn and practice skills in ethical analysis, argument, and practical work through your community-based research project.

4 CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY LIFE

You'll gain relationships characterized by mutual encouragement, honesty, respect, and esteem for each other as offering perspectives and gifts that will help us figure out how to live well.

You'll also build relationships with people outside our classroom and cultivate skills to contribute to a thriving community: cultural humility, trustworthiness, and reciprocity.



HOW WILL WE SHOW PROGRESS?

There are 15 **course objectives**: tangible ways you're progressing towards the learning goals. When you meet an objective you earn one point towards your final grade. Your final grade is based on how many points you accumulate by the end of the semester.

Each assignment is worth the number of points that correspond to the number of objectives you can meet on the assignment.

1. UNDERSTAND THEORIES

- 1a. Differentiate ethical theories from one another ([comprehension checks](#))
- 1b. Interpret texts about theories charitably ([theory paper](#))
- 1c. Reconstruct arguments for/against main claims ([theory paper](#), [comprehension checks](#))

2. THINK AND WRITE PHILOSOPHICALLY

- 2a. Articulate plausible connection between community research question about an ethical problem and philosophical literature ([capstone research question](#))
- 2b. Philosophically analyze or diagnose an ethical problem in your community ([capstone background](#))
- 2c. Present a philosophical argument supporting your proposed project to address the ethical problem ([capstone workshop](#), [proposal](#))
- 2d. Communicate effectively through academic philosophical writing (conforming to grammatical, organizational, and style standards) ([capstone research question](#), [background](#), [proposal](#), [theory paper](#))
- 2e. Identify a novel argument for/against an ethical theory ([theory paper](#))

3. ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY

- 3a. Articulate an ethical question with import for your community partners ([capstone research question](#))
- 3b. Present a clear and compelling analysis of community-identified ethical problem and possible, feasible solutions ([capstone background](#), [workshop](#))
- 3c. Collaborate to create a proposal for a feasible project to address ethical problem that centers community knowledge and values ([capstone proposal](#))
- 3d. Produce materials for community partner for proposed project ([capstone portfolio](#))

4. CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY

- 4a. Display cultural humility in class and community partnerships ([community partner evaluation](#))
- 4b. Contribute respectfully and regularly to class discussion through preparation and in-class contribution ([consequentialism](#), [contractualism](#), [virtue ethics](#), [critical theories discussions](#))
- 4c. Build relationship of trust and reciprocity with community ([community partner evaluation](#))

WHAT WILL WE DO?

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The main assignments for the class are readings, comprehension checks, a theoretical paper, and a practical capstone project. Each assignment is assessed based on whether you meet the relevant objectives. More details are on the assignments page on Canvas. (If you do not meet objectives 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, or 3c on earlier phases of the capstone project, you are eligible to make them up in the portfolio.)



Assignment	Objectives	Due	Total Pts
Comprehension Checks	1a, 1c	2/1, 2/27, 3/28, 4/25	8
Reading and Class Discussion	4b	2/8, 2/27, 3/12, 5/2	4
Capstone Project: Research Question	2a, 2d 3a	2/15	3
Capstone Project: Background	2b, 2d 3b	2/29	3
Capstone Project: Workshop	2c 3b	4/11	2
Capstone Project: Proposal	2c, 2d 3c	4/18	2
Capstone Project: Portfolio	3d (makeup 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 3c)	5/4	1
Theory Paper	1b, 1c 2a, 2d, 2e	4/2	5
Community Partner Evaluation	4a, 4c	rolling	2

WHAT IS THE GRADING SCALE?

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

A	27-30 pts
A-	26 pts
B+	24-25 pts
B	23 pts
B-	22 pts
C+	20-21 pts
C	19 pts
C-	18 pts
D	17 pts

You can expect transparent, formative assessment of all your work. This course implements **standards-based grading**— a method that proven **highly effective** in secondary and postsecondary education for improving **student learning outcomes**.

Standards-based grading is known for helping focus attention on learning portable skills, encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning, and offering feedback and assessment that more effectively generates improvement. Each grade corresponds to a number of points you've accumulated by meeting course objectives. Thus, the grade earned reflects your progress towards the learning goals measured by objectives.

WHAT'S THE SCHEDULE?

DUE DATE	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
Tuesday 1/16	Introductions to Community Partners Submit preferences for community partnership by 3 pm Wednesday 1/17
Thursday 1/18	Liberatory Ethics and Participatory Research Paulo Freire, <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> , ch. 2; Hohn, "Flint's Water Crisis and the 'Troublemaker' Scientist"; Reynolds, "Research for What? For Whom?"
UNIT 1: CONSEQUENTIALISM	
Tuesday 1/23	Consequentialism: History and Overview Julia Driver, <i>Consequentialism</i> , Ch. 1 ; Driver, "Moral Theory" sections 2-3
Thursday 1/25	Consequentialism: The Priority of Value Driver, <i>Consequentialism</i> , Ch. 2
Tuesday 1/30	Consequentialism: Aggregation and Indirection Driver, <i>Consequentialism</i> , Ch. 3-4
Thursday 2/1	Consequentialism: Subjective versus Objective Driver, <i>Consequentialism</i> , Ch. 5; Elizabeth Barnes, "Disability and Adaptive Preference" Consequentialism Comprehension Check due
Tuesday 2/6	Participatory Action Research Discussion Flora Cornish, "Participatory Action Research" select sections; Jamila Lyiscott "3 Ways to Speak English"
Thursday 2/8	Consequentialism and Charity Alex Dietz, "Effective Altruism and Collective Obligations" or Amia Srinivasan, "Stop the Robot Apocalypse" ; Richard Yetter-Chappell, "Why Not Effective Altruism" Last day for Consequentialism Discussion Contribution
Tuesday 2/13	Community Partner Day

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

UNIT 2: CONTRACTUALISM	
Thursday 2/15	Contractualism: History and Overview Elizabeth Ashford and Tim Mulgan, "Contractualism" Capstone Research Question due
Tuesday 2/20	Contractualism: Against Wellbeing As a Master Value Tim Scanlon, What We Owe to Each Other, Ch. 3
Thursday 2/22	Contractualism: Why Be Moral? Scanlon, What We Owe to Each Other, Ch. 4
Tuesday 2/27	Contractualism: What Reasonable Persons Can't Reasonably Reject Scanlon, What We Owe to Each Other, Ch. 5 Contractualism Comprehension Check
Thursday 2/29	Participatory Action Research Discussion Capstone Background due
Tuesday 3/5-7	NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK
Tuesday 3/12	Contractualism and Environmental Problems Rendell, "Discounting, Climate Change, and the Ecological Fallacy"; Suikkanen, "Contractualism and Climate Change" Last day for Contractualism Discussion Contribution
UNIT 3: VIRTUE ETHICS	
Thursday 3/14	Virtue Ethics: History and Overview Talbot Brewer, <i>The Retrieval of Ethics</i> , Intro Leisl Van Zyl, <i>Virtue Ethics</i> , selections
Tuesday 3/19	Community Partner Day Theory paper draft due
Thursday 3/21	Virtue Ethics: Against the Production Model of Value Brewer, <i>The Retrieval of Ethics</i> , Ch. 2
Tuesday 3/26	Virtue Ethics: Goods Internal to Activities Brewer, <i>The Retrieval of Ethics</i> , Ch. 3
Thursday 3/28	Virtue Ethics: The Unity of Individual and Common Good Brewer, <i>The Retrieval of Ethics</i> , Ch. 6 Virtue Ethics Comprehension Check
Tuesday 4/2	Virtue Ethics: Friendship and Community Brewer, <i>The Retrieval of Ethics</i> , Ch. 7 Theory paper due

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Thursday 4/4	Virtue Ethics and Injustice Celeste Harvey, "Eudaimonism, Human Nature, and the Burdened Virtues" ; Lisa Tessman, "Moral Distress in Healthcare: When Is It Fitting?" Last day for Virtue Ethics Discussion Contribution
Tuesday 4/11	Capstone Workshop
UNIT 4: CRITICAL THEORIES	
Tuesday 4/16	Capstone Workshop
Thursday 4/18	Feminist Ethics: History and Overview Virginia Held, "Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory"; Kate Norlock, "Feminist Ethics" Capstone Proposal due
Tuesday 4/23	Feminist Ethics: Epistemic Problems Mole, "Emancipatory Attention" or Nora Berenstain, "Epistemic Exploitation"
Thursday 4/25	Community Partner Day
Thursday 4/30	Critical Theory and Emancipatory Ethics Paulo Freire, <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> ch. 4; Rainer Forst, "The Rational Critique of Social Unreason" (optional) Critical theory comprehension check due
Tuesday 5/2	Participatory Action Research Discussion Last day for Critical Theories Discussion Contribution
Saturday 5/4	Final Capstone Portfolio due

WHAT RESOURCES DO WE HAVE?

COFFEE HOURS

Coffee hours are times I've set aside to get to meet one-on-one or in small groups. I hope you'll take time to visit with me — over coffee or tea if you like. Sign up for an appointment on my calendly page here. We can talk about what brought you to Baylor, your major; what you are thinking about, getting out of class and readings; ideas you have to improve the course, and what's working well for you. Sometimes college students think "office hours" are only for students struggling or with other issues. By calling my office hours "coffee hours," I hope I'm dispelling this myth! This is a fun learning-enhancing opportunity. https://calendly.com/baylor_ethics/coffee-hours

FOSTER SUCCESS CENTER

Everyone in our class has the ability to meet the goals and objectives outlined. The Foster Success Center is here for you to help you exercise that ability. Those who use it regularly are among the most successful students at Baylor, so I highly encourage you to let them partner with you in your academic journey.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER & LIBRARIANS

I came to college thinking I was a good writer. In my freshman year I bombed the first essay in a medieval philosophy class and ended up learning that academic philosophy writing standards were different from what I had become accustomed to!

We can *all* get better as writers, *even if we are very good*. The University Writing Center can help you at any stage from brainstorming to editing. And our librarians can help you learn how to research using methods that will take your writing to the next level. The library has even compiled a Philosophy resource guide for us!

FIRST IN LINE

My father did not complete a 4-year college degree. I married someone whose father was a college professor. My partner's experience navigating college and grad school was *totally* different from mine because of support and institutional knowledge of the "hidden curriculum" of advanced education. Things that he grew up understanding were unfamiliar and confusing to me.

If your parents did not complete a 4-year college degree, I encourage you to take advantage of the First in Line program! It's here to support you as a pioneer the college experience (firstinline@baylor.edu).

OALA

If you need academic accommodations related to having different ability/disability, please let me know as soon as the semester starts and get signed up with the Office of Access and Learning Accommodation. They'll help walk you through documentation and information.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES

If you need emotional or psychological support, the Baylor Counseling Center is here for you at 254-710-2467. In crisis or emergency, you can reach out to our wonderful Chaplain at 254-710-3517.

TITLE IX AND EQUITY

Baylor University does not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, race, color, disability, national origin, ancestry, age over 40, citizenship, genetic information or the refusal to submit to genetic test, past, current, or prospective service in the uniformed services, or any other protected characteristic under federal, Texas, or local law.

If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience involving sexual or gender based harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, intimate partner violence, or retaliation for reporting one of these types of prohibited conduct, please visit www.baylor.edu/titleix or call 254-710-8454 or email titleIX_Coordinator@baylor.edu.

If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience involving harassment excluding those listed above, or adverse action, based on protected characteristics, please visit www.baylor.edu/equity or call 254-710-7100 or email equity@baylor.edu.

The Office of Equity and Title IX understand the sensitive nature of these situations and can provide information about available on and off campus resources, such as counseling and psychological services, medical treatment, academic support, housing, advocacy, and other forms of assistance that may be available. Staff members at the office can also explain your rights and procedural options. You will not be required to share your experience.

If you or someone you know feels unsafe or may be in imminent danger, please call the Baylor Police (254-710-2222) or Waco Police (911) immediately.

Except for Confidential Resources, all University Employees are designated Responsible Employees and thereby mandatory reporters of potential sexual and interpersonal misconduct violations. Confidential resources who do not have to report include those working in the Counseling Center, Health Center, and the University Chaplain.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGE- MENT

“We are gathered on the unceded land of the Comanche, Hueco, Tawakoni, and the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes. We also acknowledge that it was founded upon exclusions and erasures of many Indigenous peoples, including those on whose land this institution is located.”*

Baylor was founded by Baptist leaders who owned enslaved persons, supported the institution of slavery both during and following the Civil War. This includes Baylor’s founders, most members of its initial board of trustees, and several early leaders of the institution. The University that today grants students such benefits as a Christian liberal arts education has a history marked by deep injustice antithetical to Christian life and mission.

As a professor of Baylor, I enjoy and distribute benefits partly gained through these injustices and inequalities. This acknowledgement marks a commitment to the ongoing work of restoration, redemption, and God’s justice for all people at Baylor University.

