

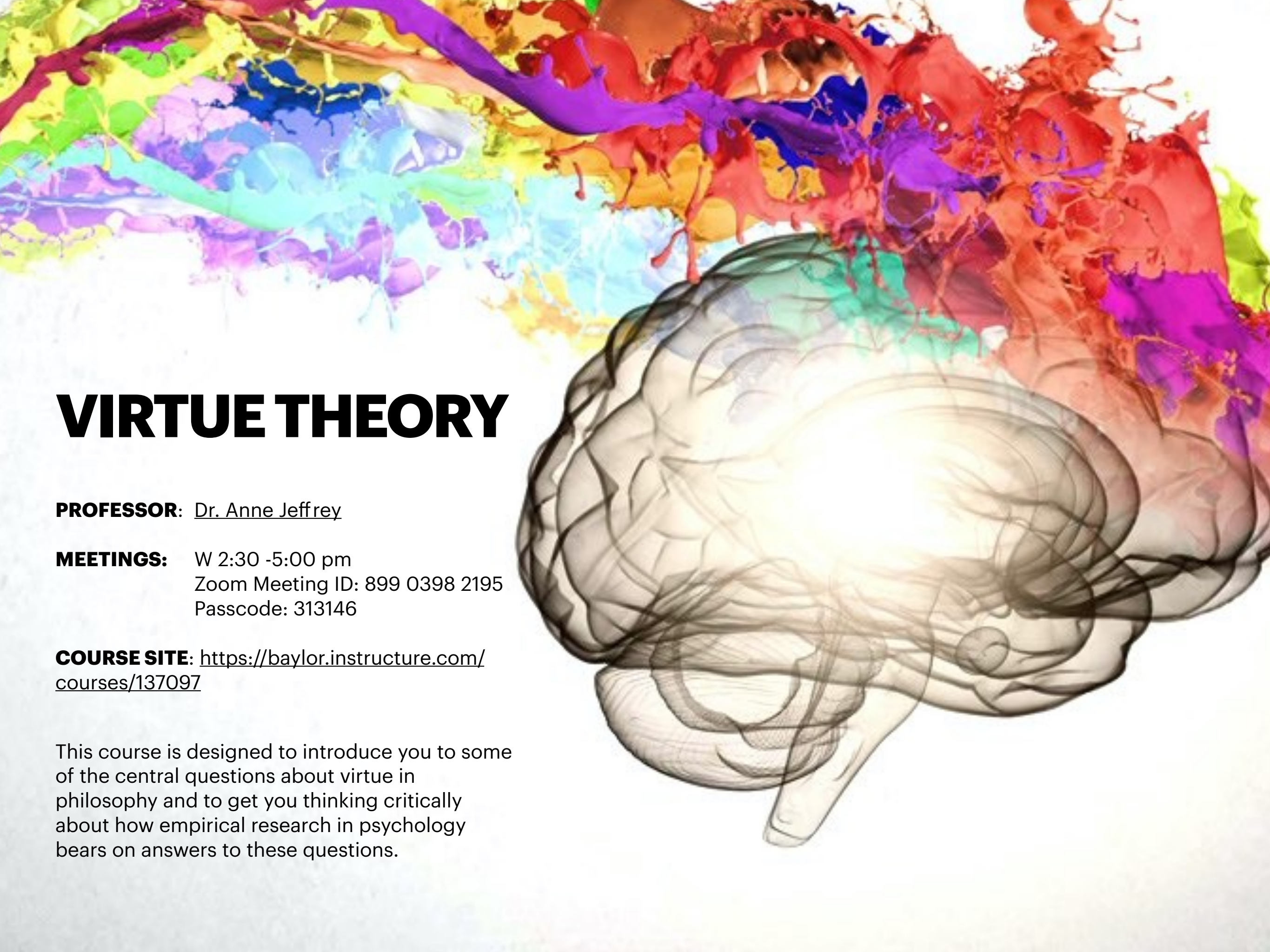
VIRTUE THEORY

PROFESSOR: Dr. Anne Jeffrey

MEETINGS: W 2:30 -5:00 pm
Zoom Meeting ID: 899 0398 2195
Passcode: 313146

COURSE SITE: <https://baylor.instructure.com/courses/137097>

This course is designed to introduce you to some of the central questions about virtue in philosophy and to get you thinking critically about how empirical research in psychology bears on answers to these questions.



YOU MATTER

Graduate school is an already trying time without the added stress of the current pandemic. We want you to succeed as students; more importantly, we want you to thrive as human beings.

This semester you may find yourself in a situation where you are unable to complete certain tasks, meet due dates, or attend class due to COVID-19 (e.g. contracting the virus, temporary relocation due to exposure, needing to care for a loved one). While you never need disclose details or personal health information, please do let me know if you are experiencing an issue that may impede your progress in the course or your ability to meet your responsibilities. I will work with you to find a solution.

I commit to extending grace and understanding to you at this time. I hope you'll join me in extending grace to each other in how we comport ourselves as well as in what we say. We never know what difficulties others are facing outside the classroom that are affecting them in the classroom.



WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

Any ethical theory that makes use of the concept of virtues needs a philosophy of psychology. Such a philosophy would include a virtue theory.

Virtue theory does not presume that the fundamental concept in ethics is virtue; rather, virtue theory is an area of inquiry that investigates the nature of virtue somewhat independently about whether virtue ethics is the correct normative ethical theory.

Virtue theory explores, for instance: What does it take psychologically for a trait to be a virtue? Is it realistic to think people have or can acquire such virtues? Which psychological traits in the world are virtues? What roles do the virtues play in normative theory, given certain conceptions of what they are? Can we make scientific observations about virtues, and if so, how? What does it look like to act from virtue, and to cultivate it?

This course will examine such questions. We will draw on contemporary literature in both philosophy and psychology. We will consider particular purported virtues like honesty and practical wisdom to anchor our inquiry.

This is a collaborative effort. We'll build a community with mutual respect, esteem, encouragement, and a shared desire for understanding.



WHAT WILL WE READ?

We will read various articles and excerpts from books, all of which will be available freely for you on Perusall. Some of the OUP books are available to you in their entirety electronically through the Baylor library. I do recommend going ahead and getting your own copy (or downloading and printing the PDFs from the library) the following books:



Annas, Julia, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)


Annas, Julia, Nancy Snow and Darcia Narvaez (eds), *Developing Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Hursthouse, Rosalind, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Miller, Christian, *Character and Moral Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Miller, Christian, *Moral Character: An Empirical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Stichter, Matthew, *The Skillfulness of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).



WHAT WILL WE LEARN AND LEARN HOW TO DO?

Learning goals are big-picture and intangible aims I hope you'll accomplish by the end of the semester. You can make measurable progress towards the goals by meeting tangible, specific **course objectives** on assignments.

There are 10 course objectives. Assignments are assessed using rubrics with the course objectives, rather than grades. You will either meet the objective, earning 1 point, or not, on the assignment. You will have multiple opportunities to meet each objective.

Your final grade is based on accumulated points (see below).

ARTICULATE POSITIONS AND STAKES IN MAJOR DEBATES

- 1 Identify and accurately articulate the main positions in a debate about the nature of virtue
- 2 Communicate clearly why the issue being debated matters

UNDERSTAND AND ACCURATELY COMMUNICATE ARGUMENTS FOR EXTANT POSITIONS

- 3 Rehearse an argument for a view stated in the course text accurately and charitably
- 4 Identify motivations for an argument or premise of an argument in a course text

ENGAGE FRUITFULLY WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

- 5 Correctly summarize a psychological experiment or study bearing on an issue in virtue theory
- 6 Give a compelling explanation for why a philosophical view or argument is or is not vulnerable to empirical evidence
- 7 Integrate validated empirical findings into your own arguments effectively

THINK FOR YOURSELF ABOUT VIRTUE

- 8 Communicate an interesting and original claim about virtue
- 9 Identify a new problem or objection for an argument or view we've discussed
- 10 Advance a novel valid argument engaging virtue theory

WHAT WILL WE DO?

PRÉCIS

Write a concise (1-2 page) summary of an assigned reading before class the day the reading is due. You can meet objectives 1-4. You should accurately restate the author's thesis **(1)**; contextualize it in the debate, explaining why the thesis under consideration matters **(2)**; recount the major argument(s) in your own words **(3)**; and provide possible motivations for premises or claims **(4)**. If the paper has an empirical element, you may correctly summarize the studies or experiments (objective **5**).

PRESENTATION

Sign up to give one 15-20 minute presentation in which you teach one of the readings. You should, at the very least, meet objectives 1-3. You will explain the context of the article or book section and state the author's position perspicuously **(1)**; engage a discussion with the class on why the thesis under consideration matters **(2)**; provide a handout or other media with the main argument(s) in your own words **(3)** and lead a discussion of the premises. You may also identify possible motivations for premises or claims (objective **4**) and raise problems or objections (objective **9**).



FINAL PAPER

You'll complete your final paper in two stages— a working draft by April 10th and a final draft by April 30th.

Working Draft. This draft should be around 3,000 words and feature the main argument for your original thesis. You must make an appointment to meet with me to discuss and get approval on your topic in advance. It should be in good but not full or perfect shape: as complete as a conference paper, but not as polished as it would be to submit for publication. You'll turn this in to me and one peer, and circulate a long abstract (500 words) to the class on April 10th.

You should aim to make an original claim, support a claim with an original argument, provide a novel objection, or identify a new problem for some topic in virtue theory (objective **8, 9, or 10**). Further, if your topic intersects with empirical work in psychology, you might also attempt to integrate that work into your argument fruitfully (objective **7**), demonstrating your understanding of the studies (objective **5**) and explaining its relevance or why it does not jeopardize a philosophical view or argument (objective **6**). It is possible to meet any of the objectives in your paper. You'll want your discussion to be sufficiently focussed, so I don't recommend trying to meet all of them.

Comments. Everyone will get comments and be responsible for giving comments on someone else's paper on April 14th at our paper workshop. The comments should proceed as in APA comments, highlighting the author's main argumentative move(s) and then raising potential worries, or tracing interesting implications, or drawing attention to a suppressed assumption. You can meet objectives **4, 6, or 9** in your comments.

Final Draft. This draft should take into account feedback from the paper workshop and me and will probably be 5-7,000 words, including footnotes and references. It should follow Chicago manual of style guidelines. You will earn points for whatever objectives you met in the final draft and the peer commentary.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM YOU?

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

A	13+ pts
A-	12 pts
B+	11 pts
B	9-10 pts
B-	8 pts
C+	7 pts
C	5-6 pts
C-	4 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.

READING SCHEDULE

DUE	TOPIC	READING ASSIGNMENTS
1/20	What is a virtue? Eudaimonist approaches	Rosalind Hursthouse, <i>On Virtue Ethics</i> , Introduction (pp. 1-16) Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices" (pp. 1-10)
1/27	The skill model	Matt Stichter, <i>The Skillfulness of Virtue</i> , Ch. 2 excerpts (pp. 59-64) Julia Annas, <i>Intelligent Virtue</i> , Ch. 2-3 first half (pp. 9-32) Robert C. Roberts, "Will Power and the Virtues" (pp. 227-247)
2/3	Relativity of virtue	Christine Swanton, "Developmental Virtue Ethics" (pp. 116-134) Martha Nussbaum, "The Non-Relativity of Virtue" (pp. 1-32)
2/10	What role do the virtues play in normative ethics?	Hursthouse, <i>On Virtue Ethics</i> , Ch. 8 (pp. 164-191) Ben Bradley, "Character and Consequences" (pp. 78-87)
2/17	Psychological approaches	Juliette Ratchford, Tim Pawl, and Sarah Schnitker, "Virtues in Psychology and Philosophy" (pp. 1-15) Christian Miller, <i>Character and Moral Psychology</i> , Ch. 1 (pp. 3-36) Anne Jeffrey and Alina Beary, "Against Reductivist Character Realism"
2/24	Constructing an account of a virtue: Honesty *Miller visit*	Miller, <i>Honesty</i> , Chs. 1-3 (pp. 9-78)
3/3	Empirical challenges to the existence and attainability of virtues	John Doris, <i>Lack of Character</i> , Ch. 3 Miller, <i>Moral Character</i> , Ch. 5 (pp. 102-130)
3/10	Aristotelian responses to the situationist challenge	Rachana Kamtekar, "Situationism and Virtue Ethics on the Content of Our Characters" Gopal Sreenivasan, "Character and Consistency: Still More Errors" (pp. 603-612) Stichter, <i>The Skillfulness of Virtue</i> , Ch. 5
3/17	Whole Trait theory and Mixed Trait theory	Miller, <i>Character and Moral Psychology</i> , Ch. 2 -3 Will Fleeson and Michael Furr, "Do Broad Character Traits Exist?" (pp. 231-246)
3/24	Virtue and right action	Annas, <i>Intelligent Virtue</i> , Ch. 3 second half (pp. 33-51) Iskra Fileva, "Two Senses of 'Why': Traits and Reasons in the Explanation of Action" Clea Rees and Jonathan Webber, "Automaticity in Virtuous Action" (pp. 75-90) Hursthouse, <i>On Virtue Ethics</i> , Ch. 1
3/31	Practical wisdom	Olivia Bailey, "What Knowledge Is Necessary for Virtue?" (pp. 1-18) Stichter, <i>The Skillfulness of Virtue</i> , Ch. 4 (pp. 120-143) Jeffrey, "How Aristotelians Can Make Faith a Virtue"

DUE TOPIC**READING ASSIGNMENTS**

4/7	Virtue development: models	Kristjan Kristjansson, <i>Aristotle, Emotions, and Education</i> , Chs. 2-3 (pp. 16-47) Jennifer Herdt, "Guilt and Shame in the Development of Virtue"
4/14	Paper workshop	Short drafts of student papers
4/21	Virtue development: strategies	Alan Wilson, "Admiration and the Development of Moral Virtue" (pp. 1-18) Miller, <i>The Character Gap</i> , excerpts and <i>Honesty</i> , postscript
4/28	Virtue development: religious perspectives OR Virtue development: normative considerations	Angela Knobel, "An Instinct for the Divine: Faith and the Formation of Infused Virtue" Porter and Rickabaugh, "The Sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit in Christian Virtue Formation" Herdt "Augustine on Grace and the Formation of Virtue" Jeffrey, "The Normative Developmental Question" Mark LeBar, "Norms of Justice in Development"

WHAT RESOURCES DO WE HAVE?

COFFEE HOURS

I hope you'll take time to visit with me — over coffee or tea outdoors or on zoom. This offers me a chance to get to know you better, to learn about your research and teaching interests and backgrounds, as well as to extend our discussion of virtue theory outside class. Make an appointment!

FOSTER SUCCESS CENTER

Everyone in our class has the ability to meet the goals and objectives outlined. It's tempting to think that student success centers and writing centers are for undergraduates, but we can all improve our writing and work habits. As a faculty member I've participated in seminars offered by the Faculty Hub on research and writing. Foster Success Center is here to help you, too, so I highly encourage you to let them partner with you in your academic journey.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER & LIBRARIANS

The University Writing Center can help you at any stage from brainstorming to editing. And our librarians (bill_hair@baylor.edu) can help you learn how to research using methods that will take your writing to the next level and prepare you for dissertation-level work. The library has even compiled a Philosophy resource guide for us.

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.

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 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“We are gathered on the unceded land of the Comanche, Hueco, Tawakoni, and Wichita peoples. 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.

*Research done by Baylor Theater Department, 2020

