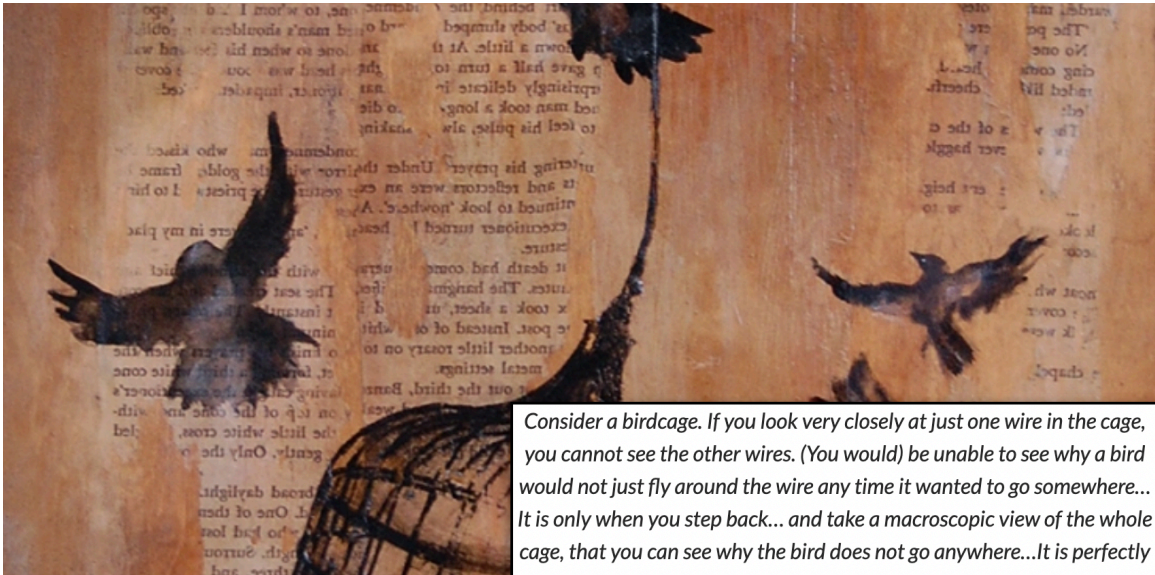


# HUMAN NATURE



Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. (You would) be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere... It is only when you step back... and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere... It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.

Marilyn Frye. *Politics Of Reality* (1983)

## Course Description

What does it mean to be human? Is there such a thing as a shared universal humanity? Are we one or are we many? Do we have a “true” identity or are we multiple, fractured, even broken selves? Are we autonomous and free or are we merely pawns to contingent events, physical determinism and/or oppressive social regimes bent on marginalizing entire segments of day-to-day lives? Can we subvert social structures and other possible systems of oppression which regulate our identities? How might gender, sex, race and/or culture identity limit or determine our understanding of what it means to be human, our capacity for joy and happiness? What if I am not normal or don’t fit? Can I be happy? What does it mean to love, to feel, to have passion in a world that seems to dismiss and silence individuals who do not live the “expected” life, who fail to be incorporated into the “normal”? What does it even mean to be “normal” and how might philosophy and other academic disciplines promote “hegemonic” ways of being in the world? Is there a way we can do philosophy, to teach the perennial questions of being, in such a way that breaks down the standard tropes that may have erased those who live on the margins of regimes like white, masculine, heteronormative, capitalist, imperialist patriarchy? Wow! What is that and how might it have everything to do with the so-called “standards” and “norms” of being human?

Dr. Danielle A. Layne

(she/her/they/them)

[layne@gonzaga.edu](mailto:layne@gonzaga.edu)

Office Hours:

T/TH 1pm-3pm

Location: Robinson 207

# Course Grades

There are five forms of assessment in this course, each required but also adaptable to student needs.

## I. Class Participation/Reading Material (10%):

Each day sections of the text will be assigned and I expect that all of you will read each text with great joy and enthusiasm. However, just in case you ever feel deterred from such splendid activity, two things are required every day:

A. **Reading Material:** Student are **REQUIRED** to bring reading material (either printed or on an electronic devise that can LAY FLAT - if you don't have a computer that can do this, e-readers are available for under \$100 - see guidelines about how both these options [printing or purchasing an e-reader] are cheaper and more ecological than purchasing a textbook for the class). This should be a free 5% of your grade as all you have to do is print out or bring the material in an electronic form that isn't distracting to your peers or myself (see guidelines for why computers that sit upright are distracting for students and teachers alike). Each day you bring your material you earn .25 of your participation grade with 3 days of leeway (23 meetings with reading required = 20 days you are required to bring material). More than 3 days of not having material in the two ways outlined (including days you don't have the material or those days you bring an upright computer versus something that can lay flat), will effect your grade in this area. **(.25 x 20 = 5%)**

B. **Active Participation via "Note-card questions" and Cold-Calling.**

- I. Note-card Questions: On the first day of class, I provided each student with a packet of notecards and each day there is a reading, students are expected to come to class with **3 questions or quotes you would like discussed.**



## Learning Outcome 1

Students will be able to explain competing models of human nature involving philosophical concepts of soul, mind and body while further situating such concepts in to historical and contexts that respond to contemporary problems and concerns, such as the power of scientific accounts of human nature.

## Learning Outcome 2

Students will be able to describe the implications of competing accounts of human nature for a set of related topics, such as human intellect, emotions, freedom, sociality, the relationship between humans and animals, and human dignity.

## Learning Outcome 3

Students will recognize the relevance for human nature from within the Catholic intellectual tradition, such as God, creation, soul human freedom and dignity.

**Write these questions and quotes on the notecards and when I pass out your name plates (discussed on the first day) prior to class, you can turn in your notecard by depositing it in THE MOTHER OF ALL BOWLS (up at the front of the room).** Please put your name on the notecard so that your participation can be evaluated even if your card is not drawn or you do not speak in class. You are also welcome to add extra and/or anonymous questions or comments but make sure to also have the regular notecard with questions or quotes with your name on it as well. By the end of the semester, each student is expected to have 20 notecards on file **(.25% per card x 20 = 5%)**.

2. Cold-calling: In this class there will be regular but also conscious/responsible cold-calling. Please be prepared to answer questions about the reading or to read from the material if asked. However, don't worry if you don't know the answer. There is no penalty. If you are unable to answer the question, just shift the focus to something you do understand or would like to talk about. Historically (and admittedly pre-Covid) for me, cold-calling has been the most effective technique for getting students comfortable talking. I know that seems counter-intuitive but once you see that there is NEVER any judgement and that there are NEVER any bad responses, you will likely learn to have fun and I will no longer need to cold-call to get student engagement. For research that shows that cold-calling is an effective and inclusive technique in the classroom, please consider reading the following: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258153531\\_Impact\\_of\\_Cold-Calling\\_on\\_Student\\_Voluntary\\_Participation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258153531_Impact_of_Cold-Calling_on_Student_Voluntary_Participation) As long as you attempt to engage with the material, all is well. Your thoughts don't need to be perfect. You can run-on, digress, make jokes, anything that shows you have read and are engaged, even if critically. Nonetheless, if you are consistently unable to engage due to the fact that you have not read the material, your overall participation grade will be effected.

## 2. Class Synopsis Paper (10%):

There are three requirements for a successful synopsis but it basically begins with the fact that today there is a sign up sheet going around the class. Here, you are putting your name next to a particular date. On the date you put your name you become the "Class Secretary" and you must take the best notes of your life. Following this class you are must do the following three things:

### A. Office Visit (3%):

- **Visit me during office hours or to make an appointment to discuss the material either in person or via Zoom (3%)**, with your permission we may also record these sessions for the **PODCAST** (discussed below);

**B. One Page Narrative (5%):**

- **Write a one-page narrative of the day's lecture, discussions and questions and post to the Class Synopsis Blog prior to the next class.** Quality papers will be written in a cohesive narrative in which any student can, even ones who are absent, follow. Basically, you will need to write eloquent paragraphs summarizing the radiance of the class' superior collective intellect versus bullet points that only capture the shadows of our awesome power.

**C. Class Recap (2%):**

- Come to class ready to summarize your synopsis and to start a conversation on the meaning of the material.

**3. SDCC with Show & Tells, Socratic Dialogue and Peer Response (13% x 5 = 65%):**

To emphasize the importance of student-lead assessment and dialogue, every 3-4 classes will end with the following assessment, involving 3 components.

**A. Student-designed Content Creation (7% x 5 = 35%):**

1. On the day prior to the Socratic Dialogue Day, students should post a link or copy in the blog their "student-lead content creation" (= SDCC\*), at least an hour before the class. Be sure that your content creates a space for asking questions that stimulate debate/conversation in class. You are expected to use quotes in your SDCC and to show understanding/direct engagement with the material. So no matter how creative your SDCC is, be sure to quote and engage the material of the class.
- ♦ **What is a Student-designed Content Creation?** Great question! Well, first I want to move away from a uniform approach to assessment as many people excel and exhibit understanding of philosophical material in a variety of ways (think of Tolkien or the creators of *HouseMD* or Beyonce's *Lemonade*). Consequently, you get to decide how you will be assessed. Do you want to write an essay or are you better at creating visual imagery or writing short stories or creating a podcast or YouTube video or blog? Or are you musical and you want to write a song or you are an engineer and you want to build something? Or a comic and you want to write a routine based on the material or are you an actor/director and you want to get your friends together to do a skit? Do WHATEVER helps you engage the material thoughtfully and responsibly. All it has to do is have the three components

**How Much Time  
Should I Be Spending  
on this Course?**

**3 credit hours (1 course)  
= 3 hours in class per  
week = 6-9 hours study/  
preparation time per  
week.**



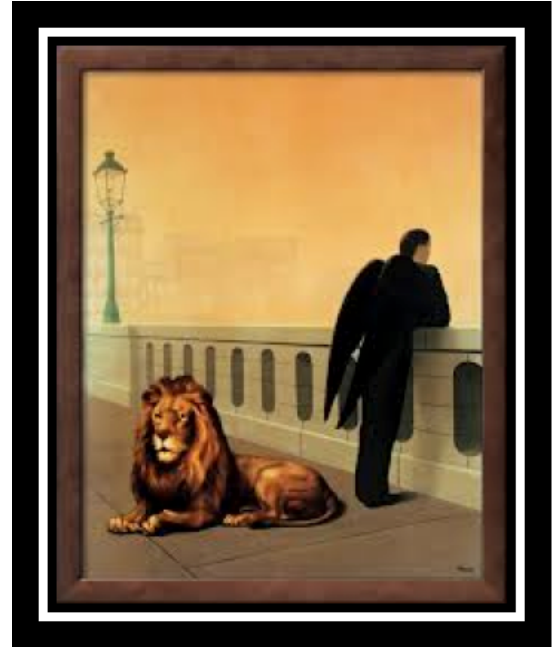


**"OUR FEELINGS  
ARE OUR MOST  
GENUINE  
PATHS TO  
KNOWLEDGE."**



discussed in section A3 below and be linked or copied into the class blog in BB.

2. To make sure that your content is accessible to all, be sure to have a **SHOW & TELL aspect to your content, i.e. relate it to things like movies, tv shows, current political debates, etc.** Also, be sure to add two or three questions for your peers.



3. You will be graded on a) how much your SDCC exhibits understanding and engagement with the readings, b) how much your SDCC evidences responsible and creative application of the reading, c) how much your SHOW and TELL qualitatively exhibits relevance and direct understand of the material. Keep in mind, that while I want you to do you, I must be able to evaluate how your SDCC shows a strong grasp of the material. Make that the priority in your projects.

### *Extra Credit Policy*

There will be numerous films, debates and other extra-curricular events throughout the semester. If you need more, please visit your professor during office hours and further possibilities may be tailored to meet your needs. Please keep in mind that extra credit will be due two weeks before the end of the semester so if you are falling behind do not wait until the last minute as your professor needs time to appropriately evaluate your extra work.

### *B. Socratic Dialogue Day (3% x 5 = 15%):*

1. During Socratic Dialogue Day (=SDD) you will be expected to discuss the unit, your SHOW and TELL and your SDCC. Come to class ready to talk. Participation matters. Students are in charge of making sure that the day is filled with argumentative debate and incisive analysis that will help them engage the material in new ways.

2. If you are not comfortable talking in class please see C2 below.

### *C. Peer Response (3% x 5 = 15%):*

1. After SDD you are required to respond to a peer's reflection with at least 200 words of feedback which is directly related to the material (i.e. basically in your responses

show understanding of class content by engaging in a dialogue with your peer about either their Show and Tell, their questions or their SLCC).

2. If you were not comfortable talking during SDD or didn't get a chance to speak, please increase the word count of your response by 100 words or comment on multiple peer's SDCC or Show and Tell.

#### 4. Face to Face Check-In (3%):

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All students are **REQUIRED to visit office hours or by appointment (either in person or via Zoom) at least once** a semester, the earlier the better but at least once (on top of the class synopsis visit). If you are in agreement, there is a possibility we can record such discussions for a **PODCAST** project wherein which the goal is to show audiences how students/young people from a diversity of backgrounds engage philosophical material at a Jesuit University which attempt to "educate the whole person; intellectually, spiritually and embodied to be persons for and with others". (By the way, I will give you extra credit if you come up with a catchy name!) Recording for the podcast is NOT a requirement. The only requirement is to come and sit and have a conversation about anything whatsoever. I want everyone to feel comfortable in my classroom and I have found that meeting with me, one on one, allows for students to feel heard and seen especially in these difficult times wherein which it is easy to hide behind masks and to get lost in the classroom.

#### 5. Socratic Dialogue Day Final Group Project (12%):

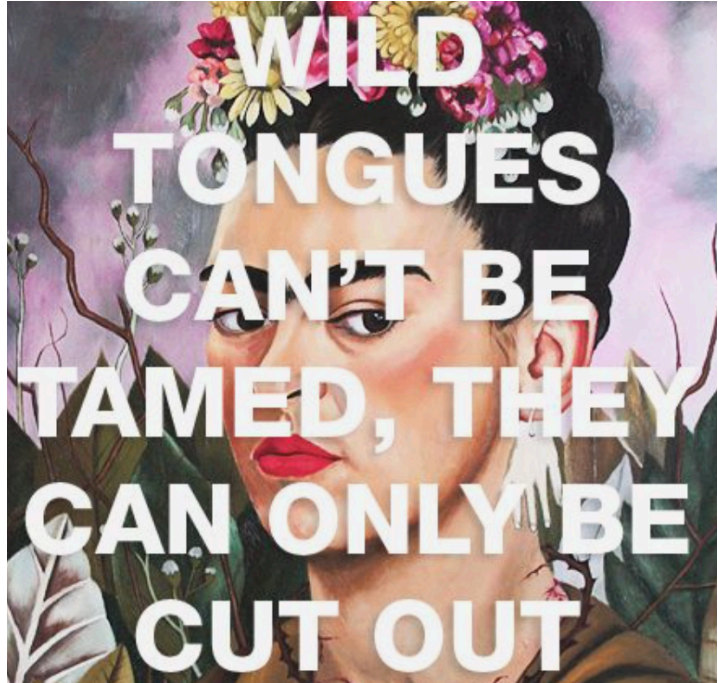
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The last day of class (the final exam period) will be reserved for SDCC *group* project which covers the final section of the class as well as the comprehensive question "What is your collective thesis concerning the Human Nature?" Like the other SDCC and SDD, you should also provide the class a Show and Tell, analyzing something in pop culture, e.g. a music video, artist, film, politics, etc. but basically do the same thing as SDD but in groups that promote class discussion rather than individuals.

- A. Group Work: All students will be divided into groups of four or five. Each group must defend an interpretation of human nature and then use your pop cultural reference as an aid in explaining your group understanding of human nature. Your group should analyze the ethical consequences of this understanding, asking how the image(s) suggest we act with regard to others, the world and ourselves. Your group project should apply the theories or themes we have discussed in class so as to evidence engagement with the literature we have been analyzing. Each group should have an overall thesis and offer evidence supporting the thesis by dividing the premises between members. In other words, you should have one main thesis but each person will work on his or her own premise to develop the argument. Please consider

doing something creative like a video or an interview or a play or make a music video. There is a lot y'all could do beyond a PP presentation!

- B. Presentation: Each group will have 15 minutes to present their project and each member should expect to speak about their individual premise **(6%)**. Again, remember that PP is not the only way to present. Y'all can create a website, a podcast, a vlog, a political activist campaign, a play, a song, etc. It just needs to show concrete engagement with the material.



- C. Individual SDCC post: In the final section (6) of the course, there is still a spot for a SDCC, show and tell and response blog. Post here 1) a summary of your part in the group presentation , 2) your understanding of human nature and 3) a response to a peer's SDCC **(6%)**. If you write a simple narrative, a standard word length should be more than 600 words but less than 900. Citation of texts and quotes is expected in all forms of the individual component of this project. Basically, this part of the Group SDCC is the same as the Individual SDCC in other units except for the fact that it should respond to the question of human nature in general and it is also due before the presentations. Remember if you don't want to provide Spoilers to your group SDCCs, be sneaky.





# General Guidelines

1. **TRIGGER WARNING:** Almost all the content in this class will cover and discuss things that can be potential triggers for some students. Please note that this Human Nature course will discuss things like sexism, racism, heteronormativity as well as mental, physical and sexual violence toward women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and neurodiverse individuals, etc. This will happen on a regular basis (almost every reading). Some readings are very explicit. If you do not feel that you can engage in a semesters long course that repeatedly deals with such issues, I understand and I would love to assist you in finding a different version of Human Nature 201 with content that may be more amenable to your needs.
2. Prior to COVID, I followed strictly the university's standard policy on absences: the maximum allowable absence is two class hours (100 minutes) for each class credit. For a three-credit class meeting three times a week, the maximum number of absences allowed is six. For a three-credit class meeting twice a week, **the maximum number of absences allowed is four**. The grade for excessive absences is "V", which has the same effect as "F" (Fail) and is counted in the GPA. (See also "Class Attendance Policy" on page 73 of the University's online catalogue. **However**, during these unprecedented times, I am very amenable to absences related to COVID concerns. Please just let me know what is happening and I will look for ways to accommodate you.
3. Come to class prepared to take notes and ready to answer and ask questions. If you do not answer questions appropriately, i.e., it is obvious you have not done the reading, then your class participation grade will be effected. If you need accommodations for whatever reason please let me know immediately so that I can find other ways to evaluate whether you have done the assigned reading.



4. **Laptops that do not lay flat in class are NOT allowed.** Research indicates that computer screens are distracting for not only your peers but also your professor and, furthermore, "students who write out their notes on paper actually learn more....Why? Writing by hand is slower and more cumbersome than typing, and students cannot possibly write down every word in a lecture. Instead, they listen, digest, and summarize so that they can succinctly capture the essence of the information. Thus,



taking notes by hand forces the brain to engage in some heavy “mental lifting,” and these efforts foster comprehension and retention. By contrast, when typing students can easily produce a written record of the lecture without processing its meaning, as faster typing speeds allow students to transcribe a lecture word for word without devoting much thought to the content.” (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>) ALSO - EACH CLASS HAS AN ASSIGNED NOTE-TAKER who will post their summary of the lecture each day so there is no reason to transcribe the lecture via typing everything yourself.

5. Bring texts to class as we will read from them everyday. **Print ALL online texts at the beginning of each section (getting a binder might be quite handy as you can also store your notecards in them).** This is cheaper than making you buy each text or requiring a textbook. At \$.05 per black and white page this is sure less than making you buy 7-8 different books or 1 or 2 textbooks for approximately \$200. Further, it is also ecologically more friendly than the pollution and waste created in making a textbook (the glossy paper and binding make them impossible to recycle). With the exception of cell phones, you can use electronic versions **IF** your device can lay flat. If you don't want to print out material and don't have a device (not a phone) that lays flat, you can purchase an **E-reader (like a Kindle Fire) from anywhere between \$50-100. This is also less expensive than requiring you to purchase a \$150-200 textbook.** At the beginning of every class I will collectively scan the classroom to see if all students have their texts and will make a note of those who do not. I will email students who consistently fail to bring the material, reminding them that bringing the material to class is a **REQUIREMENT and it will eventually effect their participation grade.**
6. Turn off and put away your cell phones when in class. When I am lecturing or your fellow classmates are engaging in discussion, under no circumstances is texting allowed or side-talking with a peer or any other distracting behavior. If your behavior is distracting in anyway, I will email you as a warning but if not corrected, I will adjust your participation grade to take these things into account.



Sometimes **people try to destroy**  
you, precisely **because they**  
**recognize your power**  
- not because they don't see it,  
but because they see it and they  
don't want it to exist.

— Bell Hooks

7. I welcome all diversity in my classroom and would like to let you know that I am a proud woman-identifying queer individual with diagnosed adult ADHD and PTSD (comorbid with acute anxiety). Due to both of these things, I am, indeed, awkward and odd and may even have panic attacks which may not even be observable to you (years of hiding them has taught me how to do such a thing) or possible fits of laughter if I am extremely scared. Despite these things one of the several silver linings to my neurodiversity is that I am extremely compassionate with regard to every student's unique needs and sensitivities particularly those with anxiety issues. Like yourselves, I am always looking for constructive feedback, so never hesitate to reach out to me for whatever reason so that I can find ways to be inclusive of all people in my classroom.



## Course Compliances

### **Religious Accommodations for Students**

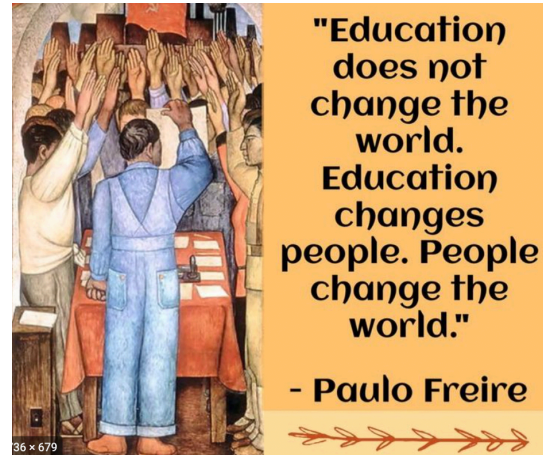
In compliance with Washington State law, Gonzaga University will reasonably accommodate students who, due to the observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of their academic course or program. Gonzaga University prohibits discrimination, harassment, and retaliation on the basis of religion. The Religious Accommodations for Students policy as well as the process by which students can request accommodations can be found on the Academic Policies & Procedures webpage.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

All members of the Gonzaga community are expected to adhere to principles of honesty and integrity in their academic endeavors, and I will abide strictly by procedures and guidelines of the University's Academic Integrity Policy, which you can find in full here or at the Academic Integrity Policy website. Students and faculty are governed by this policy, and I encourage you to familiarize yourself with its scope and procedures. Ignorance of the policy shall not serve as a defense against any violations.

## Students with Disabilities/Medical Conditions and Accessible Documents (EITA) (Modified, Fall 2021)

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides civil rights protection for persons with disabilities and requires that students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodations. As COVID-related challenges persist, students with qualifying disabilities and/or medical conditions, as per CDC recommendations for higher education, are eligible for and may request reasonable accommodations through established procedures. Students should contact the Disability Access Office to begin the process. In addition, Gonzaga University seeks to provide equal access to electronic content consistent with applicable federal and state laws, such that when possible “Accessible Documents” will be created with the proper formatting tools to maximize communication of content regardless of what device or adaptive equipment he or she is using; see Electronic Information Technology Accessibility (EITA).



## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Our human differences contribute to the richness of our academic community life. In partnership with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, we expect all class participants to cultivate an academic environment that is welcoming and accessible to students, staff, and faculty regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sexual orientation or identity. Supporting this aim, the Bias Incident Assessment and

Support (BIAS) Team exists to foster a campus environment where everyone feels safe and respected. If you have experienced or witnessed a bias incident, please visit the BIAS Report site.



Let's stop 'tolerating' or 'accepting' difference, as if we're so much better for not being different in the first place. Instead, let's celebrate difference, because in this world it takes a lot of guts to be different.

— Kate Bornstein —

## A Note on Harassment, Non-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct

Notice of Non-Discrimination - Gonzaga University does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, military status, or any characteristic protected by local, state, or federal law, or any other non-merit factor in employment, educational program, or activities that it operates.

Consistent with its mission, Gonzaga seeks to assure that all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment (please review Harassment & Discrimination Policy). Title VII, Title IX and Gonzaga's policy prohibit gender-based harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. Gonzaga encourages anyone experiencing gender-based harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from Gonzaga's reporting and support resources list found here: Title IX | myGU ([my.gonzaga.edu](http://my.gonzaga.edu)). It may be helpful to talk about what happened in order to get the support needed and for Gonzaga to respond appropriately. There are options for support and resolution, namely confidential support resources and campus reporting and support options are available here. Gonzaga will respond to all reports of sexual misconduct in order to stop the harassment, discrimination, or misconduct; prevent its reoccurrence; and address its effects. Responses may vary from support service referrals to formal investigations.

## 9 THING TO KNOW ABOUT TITLE IX

- 1** Title IX is a civil right that prohibits sex discrimination in education.
- 2** Title IX applies to all students regardless of gender identity.
- 3** Schools may not retaliate against someone filing a complaint and must keep complainants safe from other retaliatory harassment.
- 4** Schools should ensure that no student has to share campus spaces with their abuser.
- 5** Schools must be proactive in ensuring that your campus is free from sex discrimination.
- 6** Schools must have a procedure for handling complaints of sexual harassment and violence.
- 7** Schools cannot discourage you from continuing your education.
- 8** All schools receiving federal funding, including public K-12 schools and a majority of colleges, are subject to Title IX.
- 9** Schools can issue no-contact directives to prevent alleged perpetrators from approaching or interacting with you.



Side Note: As a faculty member, I want to get you connected to the resources here on campus specially trained in and experienced in assisting in such complaints, and therefore I will report all incidents of gender-based harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct to Title IX. A representative from that office will reach out to you via phone and/or email to explore options for support, safety measures and reporting. I will provide our Title IX Director with all relevant details, including names and identifying information, of the information reported. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Title IX. If you would like to make a report of harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct directly, you may:

- Contact the Title IX Coordinator by phone, email, or in person: Stephanie N. Thomas, Title IX Coordinator, 509-313-6910, [thomassn@gonzaga.edu](mailto:thomassn@gonzaga.edu), Business Services Building, 102 Or complete an online reporting form.

### **FERPA and Privacy**

Under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), your educational records are confidential and protected. Under most circumstances your records will not be released without your written and signed consent. Instructors are not allowed to publicly post grades by student name, social security number, GU student identification number, or any other identifiable means, without written consent from the student. The FERPA policy does not apply to third party online applications that may be used in courses (e.g., wikis and blogs) such that it is the student's responsibility to read the privacy documentation at each site.

### **Course Evaluations**

At Gonzaga, we take teaching seriously. We ask our students to evaluate their courses and instructors so that we can improve our classes and programs and provide the best possible learning experience. In that spirit, we ask students to give us feedback on their classroom experience. Near the end of the semester, I will ask you to complete the course/instructor evaluation on-line (see the Course Evaluations website for more information). Please know that I appreciate your participation in this process.