

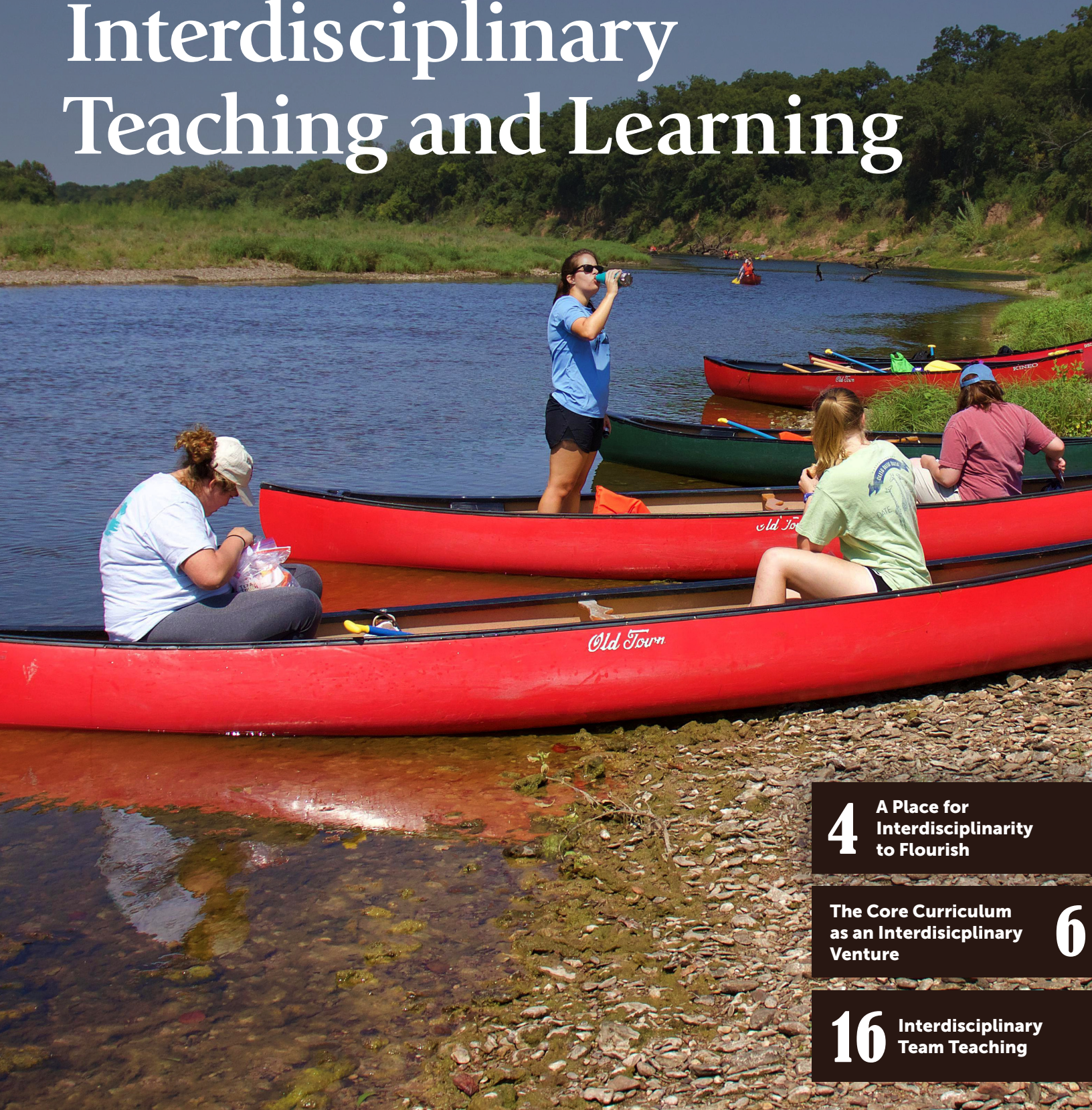


Baylor University
ACADEMY FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

THE REVIEW

SPRING 2022

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning



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Interdisciplinarity
to Flourish

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as an Interdisciplinary
Venture

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Team Teaching

Mission

To support and inspire a flourishing community of learning.

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Collaborative Online International Learning

Kate Birmingham, ATL Graduate Fellow

The global leadership initiative of Baylor's strategic mission is embracing the virtual global experience offered by COIL, Collaborative Online International Learning.

COIL is an online component of a course that brings the instructors and students of two geographically distinct classrooms, in distinct courses, into recurrent collaboration on a mutual project. Through frequent virtual classroom interactions and collaborations among students over a designed period of the course, COIL emphasizes international exchange of ideas and collaboration. COIL courses seek to offer students a taste of the study abroad experience that encourages multi-cultural understanding and intercultural competence.

Some Baylor faculty are currently implementing COIL in their courses, but they have done so without the benefit of formal support or guidance. A recent push to establish a University-sponsored resource for interested faculty is gaining momentum. A major step towards advancing COIL at Baylor will be the organization of a formal set of resources for faculty, such as where to find partner schools and professors, training opportunities, and tips on self-education. COIL may soon be recognized in Baylor's course catalogues as a formal component of a course with students potentially seeing

COIL designations in the course offerings.

The COIL model emphasizes meaningful cultural exchanges. In the Modern Languages & Cultures department, senior lecturer in Japanese Yuko Prefume considers COIL to be an alternative to study abroad for students who may not have the opportunity to travel internationally. Having embedded COIL into an existing course, Prefume and her partner faculty member in Japan organized an eight-week COIL component for their respective courses. With planning and collaboration, the partnered professors led a mutual project that sought to mirror the cultural exchange benefits of a study abroad experience. In lieu of a service project on Japanese soil, the COIL students collaborated on a virtual translation of survivor stories from the 2011 tsunami. While COIL has obvious applications for her language students, Prefume emphasizes that the benefits of COIL reach beyond language

learning. In planning their COIL component, the faculty partners sought to promote multi-cultural understanding and student engagement aimed at challenging stereotypes and broadening cultural perspectives.

Yoshiko Gaines, senior lecturer in Japanese, has partnered with a professor from Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka, one of Baylor's partner schools, to bring their two courses in collaboration on a case study. After weekly Zoom meetings throughout the semester, the international collaboration between Baylor's Japanese for Business class and SGU's Communications Studies class culminated in a joint presentation at the end of the semester. Gaines remarks that flexibility in scheduling is necessary to accommodate the time difference. Likewise, faculty cooperation and collaboration ensure the alignment of course topics as well as levels of content knowledge and language skills for both groups of students.

Looking forward to formalized COIL parameters, Prefume and Gaines also suggest that a key to widespread COIL adoption and success is flexibility to allow faculty to explore their own ideas to suit their own courses. Baylor instructors can look forward to a COIL handbook with resources to find further information. For now, interested faculty can contact the Center for Global Engagement at Global_Baylor@baylor.edu.



A Place for Interdisciplinarity to Flourish

A Conversation with Paul Martens, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies



This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

ATL: Can you explain your title, “Director of Interdisciplinary Studies”?

Martens: It’s an evolving title, as the Office of Interdisciplinary Programs is evolving. We have three subgroups of things happening under the interdisciplinary umbrella. One is Area Studies, which by definition are profoundly interdisciplinary. And we have currently four area studies: Latin-American Studies, Asian Studies, Slavic and East European Studies, and Middle Eastern Studies. The second group is what we’re now calling “Humanities +” programs. They’re programs that are interdisciplinary within the humanities but also reach beyond the humanities. So we have Medical Humanities,

which is a strong program. It’s been around for a long time. We have Women’s and Gender Studies, which has not been around for as long but is very important for our future. And we have things like Military Studies, which is virtually brand new, and Humanities Fellows, which is launching in the fall. And then there’s a third group of entities, what we’re calling “Humanities + Research Initiatives.” The Baylor Ethics Initiative is one of these. And there’s a second one emerging right now, the Digital Humanities Initiative. The role I have is to support and encourage the existing programs and to grow new programs as necessary. We’re a very traditional department-based university where hiring is done in departments, and that is fantastic. But the difficulty then becomes, what happens when there’s things that don’t fit

departments perfectly? We need to find a place for these things to flourish.

ATL: What’s the difference between interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary?

PM: I think the best way to understand multidisciplinary is when you have multiple disciplines talking about the same problem. And so, you have, say, philosophy saying something about a problem. And then you have a political scientist saying something. And then you have linguistic experts saying something about a problem. And all you have is competing perspectives. Interdisciplinary is trying to integrate them into a whole. So, you have philosophy saying something and political science saying something, and then trying to find bridges and

ways to integrate what they’re saying and creating a better way of seeing a challenge or problem. If it’s a complex problem, you’ll need multiple disciplines contributing this way. And so, the integration is increasingly complex as you go along. Transdisciplinary is cooler and newer. And it’s the code word for holistic. And in essence, its aim is to accomplish

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I think the best way to understand multidisciplinary is when you have multiple disciplines talking about the same problem.

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the same thing as a properly integrated interdisciplinarity. But it depends on your semantic parsing of the two terms integrate and holistic.

ATL: How is this related to academic freedom?

PM: Emmanuel Kant's "The Conflict of the Faculties" is essentially an argument for why philosophers should get to say what they want to say because they're not talking about the same things, are not following the same rules as theologians are. So, the notion of academic freedom is deeply tied to the creation of disciplines in many ways. As soon as you want to step beyond those things, the problems of interdisciplinarity come up: "How do we validate claims that don't fit the criteria each of our disciplines have for knowledge?"

ATL: Why is interdisciplinarity important for colleges?

PM: The simple, tongue-and-cheek answer is because life is like that. None of us experience our life through a single discipline. Think of health. Is health biological? Psychological? Is health spiritual? We live in a world in which we're constantly drawing on all of the disciplines at any given time. What we try to bring as a university is the best ways of thinking about all these individual pieces and bringing

them into a bigger whole. We need to take that part of our role as educators seriously.

ATL: How are students enriched and challenged by interdisciplinary study?

PM: I hope it helps them self-consciously integrate the things

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”

they are learning and to self-consciously become better human beings because of it—rather than accumulators of data and knowledge. I'm excited to watch our students become whole people who integrate these multiple perspectives that they engage here and become complex human beings that are navigating a world that we couldn't have imagined when we were their age.

ATL: What are current challenges for interdisciplinarity?

PM: The biggest challenge is not student or faculty interest. I take most of the challenges to be

structural: it's not valued in tenure and promotion, lack of supportive team-teaching arrangements, difficulty in determining appropriate peer reviews. Another difficulty is navigating interdisciplinarity in a way that doesn't seem like it's competing with disciplines especially when it comes to faculty hiring and funding, which are so tied to departments. Money, of course, doesn't solve all the problems. How do we get departments to think of what they do as also contributing to things bigger than their own vision? How can we invite departments to think about their vision as also part of a larger vision?

ATL: On the other side, what are the bright spots?

PM: I think all the interdisciplinary programs that Baylor

has are wins. The energy that faculty have for these things and the love they have for not only their discipline but communicating it with students, hoping that they embrace it and become better than we are. I also think that recently the administration through the COACHE Survey has recognized that faculty are more interested in these things than perhaps perceived. We're all waiting to see what comes out of these conversations.

Use this QR code to listen to the full podcast episode.



The Core Curriculum as an Interdisciplinary Venture

Danielle M. Williams, Director of the Core

In fall 2019, the College of Arts & Sciences implemented a unified core curriculum that now spans 25 departments and programs. In addition, five academic units offer courses in the Core. This range of courses provides students with different disciplinary approaches to uncover and recognize truth, deepen their faith, live virtuously, strengthen their communities, and affect the world in transformative ways.

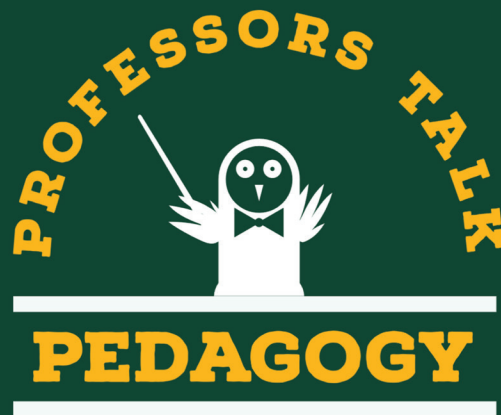
When we think of interdisciplinarity, we tend to think about the links that occur “between” disparate elements. The five Common courses—American Literary Cultures (ENG), The U.S. History in Global Perspective (HIS), The U.S. Constitution, Its Interpretation, and the American Political Experience (PSC), The Christian Scriptures, and The Christian Heritage (REL)—furnish a foundation of shared knowledge, skills, and virtues for all A&S students. Students also share additional common experiences through Chapel, the Creative Arts Experience, and Civic Engagement. The links between these elements occur when students explore shared readings, identify points of connection across experiences, and discuss similar ideas through diverse disciplinary lenses. For instance, students in English, History, and Political Science read texts by Frederick Douglass included in the Common Readers published by Baylor University Press. By examining

Douglass’s texts from different vantage points, students arrive at a deeper understanding of his contributions and the meaning of his work. In this way, the courses in the Core interanimate each other, contributing to a greater range of possible discoveries than any one course has on its own.

We might also think of interdisciplinarity “within” each Common course. ENG 2310: American Literary Cultures is a prime example. When Dr. Ryan Sharp teaches American literature, he brings in scholarship from history, ethnic studies, archival studies, psychoanalytic criticism, and anthropology—not just literary theory. He explains, “In order to think critically and read critically, we can’t think in these silos. A lot of my teaching is me trying to reflect how I see the scholarly conversation. In order for us to read a text, we need to have the context and an understanding of tools and tactics. And that means understanding the text itself as well as being able to read between its lines.” For instance, Dr. Sharp prepared his students to study Beall Poetry Festival poet Layli Long Soldier’s collection *WHEREAS* by reading from Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz’s *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States*. This historical context “gave students language to engage with *WHEREAS* in a more critical way and write in a more scholarly fashion.” He hopes that assigning texts from these other academic disciplines

can “scratch the surface to help students further their research in these other fields.” The courses in the core curriculum at Baylor link with other disciplines, and faculty draw on insights from other disciplines as they teach their areas of expertise.

Between and within, the unified core curriculum at Baylor presents students with opportunities to investigate some of the most complex challenges of our time by pulling together insights from diverse academic disciplines. Although the Common courses are thematically interconnected by text and context, interdisciplinarity in the Core is not limited to these five courses. The Distribution List Scientific Method II: Grand Challenges in Science is designed to provide opportunities for students to study vexing questions of science from theoretical perspectives informed by different academic disciplines. The Core Curriculum Advisory Committee is currently accepting proposals for team-taught courses from faculty in different departments for this intentional site of interdisciplinarity. If faculty are interested in learning more about the requirements and would like to propose courses for consideration in this DL, please contact AS_Core@Baylor.edu.



Highlights from the First Two Seasons

Charles Weaver: What Works and What Doesn't

(Season 1, Episode 3)

"I just loath using PowerPoints...[because it] locks you into 'Here's the way I'm going to tell that story.'"

Laine Scales: Know Thyself as Teacher

(Season 1, Episode 7)

"One of the most important lessons that...I didn't learn until I had been a faculty member for some time was to find your authentic self, to find your own way of packaging your gifts and the things that you're good at and turning that into a teaching self."

Robert Darden: Telling Stories

(Season 1, Episode 11)

"Don't be afraid to make yourself look foolish if it shows that you care."

Kara Poe Alexander: Writing to Learn

(Season 2, Episode 2)

"When we teach writing across the board in every class...students start seeing how writing is much more contextual."

DeAnna Toten Beard: Learning in a Foreign Land

(Season 2, Episode 3)

"[Studying abroad is] like all the pores of our intellect are open, things can come in more easily."

Listen to our episodes on the ATL Website or on Apple Podcasts



Interdisciplinary Groups for Graduate Students

19th Century Research Seminar (19CRS)

19CRS brings together professors and graduate students working in any area of nineteenth century American, British, or global studies. According to 19CRS coordinator Dr. Kristen Pond, the goal of the seminar is to “build community across campus” as “we sometimes get so siloed into our separate departments and programs...scholarship and teaching is made richer through dialogue with people who use different methodologies, explore different mediums, and approach similar issues from different angles.” To facilitate this interdisciplinary dialogue,

19CRS typically hosts two to three speakers each semester. These events often include a lunch or dinner component that promotes small group discussion. Speakers come from within and beyond Baylor with leading figures in various fields including English, history, religion, great texts, philosophy, and art sharing their research. Pond believes this interdisciplinary exposure is beneficial for everyone but particularly graduate students who have “formed connections with visiting scholars in their disciplines or in other disciplines with intersecting interests” through their participation in the group.

Baylor Women in Science and Engineering (WISE)

WISE connects women in STEM departments at Baylor. Separate faculty and graduate student groups both emphasize mutual support, but the graduate student group specifically focuses on providing a platform for graduate students to showcase their research and other accomplishments. One way WISE accomplishes this is through hosting a graduate student seminar series where a student from each of the STEM fields at Baylor presents research to the larger interdisciplinary group. According to WISE coordinator Dr. Rizalia Klausmeyer, “There





are many benefits to presenting to an audience that may not understand everything that you are saying. For starters, the questions you get asked come from a place of wanting to know more about the subject you are presenting and not so much about testing your expertise on the subject. That teaches you to simplify some explanations—not in a condescending way, but to truly explain a concept simply.” The group additionally highlights undergraduate, graduate, and faculty research on social media through their Spotlight Series and hosts a professor panel to address the unique challenges women face within STEM fields

Conyers Scholars

Named after A.J. Conyers, a founding member of Truett Seminary, the Conyers Scholars program brings together doctoral students from various

disciplines including history, English, political science, religion, philosophy and many STEM fields who are interested in questions concerning faith, learning, vocation, and the university. Students who are accepted to the program must demonstrate academic excellence and interest in faith-informed scholarship. Katherine Goodwin, a participant in the group, comments that “talking with students and faculty from all different corners of Baylor really helped me expand my own definitions of vocation and even see where my field/ research (history) fits into the larger vocational project of the Christian university.” The group meets two to three times a semester at the homes of pastoral leaders or faculty members to discuss books or articles concerning the relationship between scholarly disciplines and the Christian faith.

Ramm Scholars

Named after Bernard Ramm, an influential voice in twentieth century religion and science dialogues and a prominent Baylor faculty member during the 1950s, the Ramm Graduate Scholars Program brings together doctoral STEM students and M. Div. students who are interested in conversations concerning the engagement between Christianity and science. Throughout the academic year students selected for the program attend dinners and seminars where participants are introduced to a variety of historical and contemporary issues related to Christian faith and science. The overall goal of the program is to generate interdisciplinary discussions that will help future scientists and ministers develop informed and sympathetic views of these issues.

Interdisciplinary Programs

Women's and Gender Studies

Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary minor at Baylor that encourages students to think critically about the human experience by placing women and gender at the center of scholarly inquiry and conversation. Students who choose to minor in Women's and Gender Studies take introduction to Women's and Gender Studies plus five electives from courses representing fourteen disciplines.

How does Women's and Gender Studies Benefit Students?

"I was able to tailor my program to my specific interests and career pursuits. Gender is intertwined in pretty much everything in our everyday lives, and I love being able to explore how that impacts our society in various ways. I feel equipped to have conversations about my beliefs with people from any background. In my minor, I have explored a diverse set of topics that are applicable to the ethical decisions I will be making as a voting citizen." - Trinity Long, psychology major

Baylor Interdisciplinary Core

The Baylor Interdisciplinary Core was established in 1995 to provide students with an alternative to the general education core curriculum. Students in BIC engage in a fully integrated and challenging curriculum that connects the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences to help students better understand the contemporary world and participate in the global community. The program furthermore fosters active learning, emphasizes the reading of primary sources and writing, and encourages the establishment of an interdisciplinary community of students who work together through a series of course sequences including World Cultures, Examined Life, World of Rhetoric, Social World, and Natural World during their first two years at Baylor. BIC classes are also team taught by professors from different disciplines ensuring that students get several different perspectives when it comes to any given text or topic discussed in each course.

"BIC made me more well-rounded and intellectually curious by providing me with a better understanding of history and culture. Through the program, I was introduced to different perspectives and became more aware of cultural nuances. I have a greater appreciation for works of art and literature and their historical contexts." - Sofie Sonner, 2018 Baylor graduate and Fulbright recipient

Medical Humanities

Established in 2004, the Medical Humanities Program at Baylor is one of handful of programs of its kind in the country. The mission of the program is to provide a transformational education for students hoping to pursue careers in healthcare that equips them with a solid foundation in the sciences and the humanities. Students who major in medical humanities take courses taught by faculty members in departments such as English, religion, history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. This wholistic education encourages students to consider the ethical and spiritual issues encountered in medicine, focus on the changing nature of medicine in the 21st century, reflect on the relationship between patient and practitioner, explore the deepest meanings of health and healing, and embrace the sacred nature of a vocation in medicine.

"A lot of people go into college thinking they have to major in one of the traditional sciences to be a good candidate for professional school. However, my background in medical humanities helped me learn the vital art and skills of caring for humans—and that is invaluable training for anyone in healthcare whether they plan to be in pharmacy, medicine, nursing, etc." - Daniel King, PharmD, BA medical humanities 2015.

American Studies Minor or Major/ MA Program

American Studies is an interdisciplinary program that offers students the opportunity to thoughtfully reflect on American society, institutions, and culture. Students can tailor their program, based on their career goals, and take courses across a variety of disciplines including English, history, philosophy, political science, religion, sociology, anthropology, music, art, journalism, and communication. Students who choose to minor, major, or pursue a Master's degree in American Studies are prepared to take on leadership roles in their communities and excel at careers in education, public history, law, government, and journalism.

“When I discovered the American Studies program through the graduate school, I knew I had found a perfect fit for me. As a non-traditional student, juggling life, work, and other responsibilities while also taking classes was a challenge but worth it. American Studies allowed me to explore and examine a variety of topics while putting my life experience to good use.” - Robbie Rogers, MA in American Studies

Emerging Programs

Military Studies

Military Studies is a new minor offered to Baylor students that currently allows them to take courses in the history, political science, religion, philosophy and classics departments. However, any professor who teaches a class with a significant military emphasis, regardless of discipline, can request to join the minor's offerings. This program is designed to encourage students to think about the military from a variety of perspectives. According to the director of the program, Dr. Julie Sweet of the history department, Baylor's program is different from other programs like it across the country because “it is open to all students, not just those in ROTC” and “contains an ethical component that requires students to think about the moral ramifications of military issues as well as its traditional historical and diplomatic ones.” The overall aim of the program is to develop well-informed leaders for service not just in the military but a wide array of different careers in government, law, education, business, the health industry, and ministry.

Environmental Humanities

Environmental Humanities is an emerging minor at Baylor that will challenge students to question how the humanities can partner with the sciences to analyze the cultural sources of our environmental crises and imagine regenerative responses to those environmental issues. Currently there are two departments involved in the development of the program: English and environmental science. However, professors working to establish the program hope to include other disciplines including biology, geology, religion, philosophy, political science, history, journalism, anthropology, business, and the various fine arts programs at Baylor. According to Josh King, professor of English and one of the lead developers of this program, the long-term vision of Environmental Humanities is to “tie Baylor's dedication to multidisciplinary study of health and human flourishing more explicitly to ecological flourishing. Students will learn to apply insights from the humanities to such pressing issues, both on campus and in the wider community.” The program will focus on fostering experiential learning opportunities for students with local environmental and food justice programs, opportunities that will pave the way for students to pursue careers in the non-profit sector, in public education, pastoral care, environmental law and in state and federal environmental organizations. Dr. King will undertake curricular planning and partnership building this spring with the support of a University Teaching Exploration Grant.

Message from the Provost: Interdisciplinarity and Illuminate

Nancy Brickhouse, Provost



When I first read the *Illuminate* plan, I was surprised and impressed by the inclusion of Materials Science as one of the five academic initiatives. I was surprised because it is a new field that had minimal work in it. What I learned was that the field was rapidly growing, and that Baylor wanted to be at the forefront of that growth. I also learned that it reached across interdisciplinary lines including biology, chemistry, biochemistry, and engineering. As I began working on this initiative, including hiring faculty and thinking about the future of the program, it became clear that this program is setting the path for interdisciplinarity at Baylor.

The Challenge of Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinary work has been an essential part of research for many years at Baylor; however, it is challenging to create the necessary relationships for faculty to find research partners in other parts of the university. Typically, these relationships are built when

two researchers join the faculty at the same time and get to know each other through New Faculty Orientation; or they meet through the programming of the Academy on Teaching and Learning (ATL) on the Baylor campus. Sometimes those relationships develop as faculty members meet each other at the faculty center or as their families connect through church and other unusual ways. Regardless, we know that promoting interdisciplinarity on a campus as large as Baylor is dependent on building strong relationships between faculty and staff as they find ways to engage in each other's teaching and research.

Three Recommendations

When the Baylor faculty took the nationwide faculty satisfaction survey, the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE), in the spring of 2021, the need to support interdisciplinarity came up as one of the most needed university-wide initiatives. The Provost's Office has begun working on solving this problem, following the guidelines of the faculty working group that studied ways to solve this problem. They had three recommendations: First, the need for additional communication to connect and promote interdisciplinarity. Second, integrate interdisciplinary research into tenure guidelines and train department chairs on how to evaluate interdisciplinary

teaching and research. And third, create institutional support and guidance for interdisciplinary endeavors. All of these are important steps that Baylor plans to include in the future as we begin to transition into our new R1 designation.

That transition is going to include the work of the Academy for Teaching and Learning as an integral connection for our faculty. The ATL's leadership in "promoting the integration of teaching, scholarship, collegiality, and service" has the potential to change the face of interdisciplinarity at Baylor. I am personally grateful for the work the ATL does every day to help this community flourish and grow. My goal is for the ATL to be at the center of much of the interdisciplinary work at Baylor over the next few years.

Going Forward

As we move forward, I ask all faculty to work with your colleagues to find new ways to focus on interdisciplinary research. Seek out those who you can collaborate with and who can help you to expand your research in new ways. This is how Baylor will continue to stay at the forefront of Christian education and research in the coming years.

Digital Scholarship Opens New Paths for Teaching and Research

By Hannah Norman-Krause, ATL graduate fellow

When the University announced its plans to pursue Research 1 status—R1—Baylor University Libraries jumped at the chance to help faculty. The Data and Digital Scholarship program (DDS), housed within Baylor's library, had already been providing data support to the whole campus. Digital Humanities—an area of scholarship that employs data sciences—had been a part of that data support, but not many humanities faculty had employed data science for their own research. The university's academic strategic plan *Illuminate* gave the library an opportunity to showcase its interdisciplinary approach to scholarship through Digital Humanities.

To some, digital humanities may seem like an oxymoron. How could an English scholar researching, say, the Victorian era benefit from data sciences? The interdisciplinary field uses scientific methods, processes, and algorithms to mine "data"—in this case, Victorian literature—for specific topics. This approach to research helps scholars go deeper—faster—than they ever could before. Whereas a researcher might spend hours poring over a single text, Digital Humanities at Baylor enables scholars to search an entire database in nearly an instant.

Josh Been, director of DDS, explained the impetus for developing Digital Humanities

at Baylor. Research on the cutting edge, especially research concerning past traditions, requires innovative approaches. This is precisely what Digital Humanities offers. And its wide applicability makes it accessible to nearly every discipline. "Trying to define Digital Humanities is sort of like trying to catch a moving target," Been said. "It uses 'big data' and tools to analyze content in non-traditional means."

What does forgiveness mean to you?



Data visualization from Anne Jeffrey's project, 'Promoting Virtue in Adolescents through Participatory Action Research'

Within the research and engagement department of Baylor's library, Been creates tools for faculty to partner with and use for research. Assistant Professor Jennifer Hargrave specializes in British Romanticism and has taught many British Literature courses in the English department. Wanting her class to explore notions of sympathy and female maturation within Victorian literature and culture, she reached out to DDS. The Victorian Popular Culture

Collection Data Base and the Digital Humanities Program enabled her and her students to engage with this literature in ways they could not have otherwise. Students entered terms and phrases into a search bar to search for all terms associated with sympathy and female growth—from individual losses to novel forms of education. This allowed them to contextualize these particular topics appearing in thousands of texts all with the push of a button.

Every summer, the library hosts a Fundamentals of Data Research Fellows program for humanities faculty to engage with digital scholarship. This past year fifteen faculty members participated. Anne Jeffrey, assistant professor of philosophy, wanted to research the ways in which adolescents grow in virtue.

Collecting her own data through qualitative interviews, she was then able to use the Digital Humanities Program to track trends in community thought concerning the ways virtue is cultivated in children.

Digital Humanities is an exciting interdisciplinary venture that Baylor faculty should consider for their own scholarship. Applying data sciences to the humanities can help take Baylor to R1 status. To find out more, contact Josh Been at joshua_been@baylor.edu, or visit blogs.baylor.edu/digitalscholarship/.

A Faith-Focused Model for Addressing Wicked Problems

Suzanne Nesmith, Associate Professor of STEM Education

A cool September morning found a group of Baylor students and faculty members launching canoes into the Brazos River and embarking on an eight-mile river trip. A sandbar served as a setting both for lunch and a discussion of John Graves' *Goodbye to a River* (1960). The students and faculty members were not part of a canoe club or participating in a special river event. They were, instead, members of a unique interdisciplinary course: *Water, Rivers, and Community*. The river trip and course represented the culmination of a year-long effort by nine faculty members to envision, develop, and implement an interdisciplinary, community-based course designed to address the wicked problems of water quantity and quality.

The problems associated with water are difficult to define, without clear solutions, socially complex, and involve many interdependencies. On local, national, and global scales, water is inextricably linked to critical social issues such as energy use, health and human development, poverty, food scarcity, and environmental degradation. As such, water represents a wicked problem that is complex in scope and requires technological solutions alongside economic, equity, and ethical considerations. Additionally, water presents an environmental conflict that is often so heavily value-based that not even strong evidence can settle stakeholder differences and

avoid conflicts (Crowley & Head, 2017). As stated by Ban Ki-moon, former United Nations Secretary-General, "Water is the classic common property resource. No one really owns the problem. Therefore, no one really owns the solution."

Recognizing the wickedness and complexity of the problem of water, a small group of faculty members came together to discuss the matter. United in our dedication to the University's mission of educating men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment, the group's first decision was to approach the course through an interdisciplinary, community-based lens. Community-based learning provides opportunities to strengthen the connections between schools and the

surrounding community, make learning more meaningful, and develop skills for acting on community issues. In fact, community-based experiences are so important that Melaville et al. determined that "the education system faces irrelevance unless we bridge the gap between how students live and how they learn" (2006, p. 1). The utilization of an interdisciplinary approach within community-based learning experiences results in students' wider, more realistic views of local environments, enhanced worldviews, and better solutions to wicked problems by connecting the transfer of knowledge, concepts, models, and methods from, between, across, and beyond several disciplines.

The original team of five subsequently expanded to a team of nine that included faculty from museum studies, education,



economics, science, religion, English, and the Center for Reservoir and Aquatic Systems Research. Monthly team meetings resulted in a course designed to submerge students in the wicked problem of water through exposure to multiple perspectives as a means of examining the problem and envisioning solutions. The twelve students enrolled in the course represented majors in political science, education, museum studies, environmental studies, English, and university scholars. Through course experiences that included the river trip, community education events, explorations of the natural history collection at the Mayborn Museum Complex, utilization of a Contingent Valuation Method survey, a visit to the city's water treatment plant, and discussions with local, state, and national water management experts, students and faculty members emerged from the course with an enhanced understanding and expanded perspectives toward water and the relationships between water, rivers, and communities.



By their nature, wicked problems are the opposite of ordinary problems that, however challenging, can eventually be resolved by applying standard problem-solving techniques. Not only will conventional approaches fail, but they may exacerbate the problem by promoting adverse outcomes. The best approach for confronting wicked problems is to invite as many people as possible into the conversation, create a shared understanding, and foster a joint commitment to addressing the problem. Adopting an interdisciplinary course approach guaranteed the integration of multiple voices and perspectives,

and the implementation of the course within Baylor's Christian environment assured the inclusion of faith-focused perspectives in consideration of the stewardship of God's creation.

Wicked problems and their solutions are not the sole domain of Christians because they affect everyone, yet Christians' contributions to these problems should be unique because they are offered in humble faith, practical love, and informed hope. Though we are finite with a massive ignorance and limited capacity, God is not. Wicked problems remind us of our reliance on God

and how the future is not solely in our hands. This should cause us neither distress nor despair but, instead, propel us to examine wicked problems and suggest solutions through a faith-focused lens.

Crowley, K., & Head, B. W. (2017). *The enduring challenge of 'wicked problems': Revisiting Rittel and Webber*. *Policy Sciences* 50, 539–547.

Melaville, A., Berg, A. C., & Blank, M. J. (2006). *Community-based learning: Engaging students for success and citizenship*. *Partnerships/Community* 40.

Interdisciplinary Team-Teaching

Interview with Stephanie Clintonia Boddie, Assistant Professor of Social Work

This interview has been edited for length.

ATL: What should other instructors know about teaching interdisciplinary courses?

SB: I would invite any instructor considering teaching an interdisciplinary course to see it as a great opportunity to help students address complex challenges and prepare for a post Covid-19 world. I view this kind of teaching as a gift that unlocks the door to a richer and more integrated learning experience. I also share two warnings: 1) You will need to hold your discipline more loosely to make space to learn from other disciplines, and 2) you will need to recalibrate your expectations because teaching interdisciplinary

courses can sometimes require more time, energy, and creativity. However, the rewards will be well worth the investments. I found it quite liberating to release the expectation of being the source of all knowledge for the class and to work with a colleague and students to expand our knowledge base and skills bank. Your world may be turned upside down as the other discipline(s) may challenge everything you think you know. Ultimately, it can be a transformative experience for both students and instructors. To seize this opportunity, I recommend:

1. Connecting your course content to a current complex challenge that cannot be easily solved by one discipline.

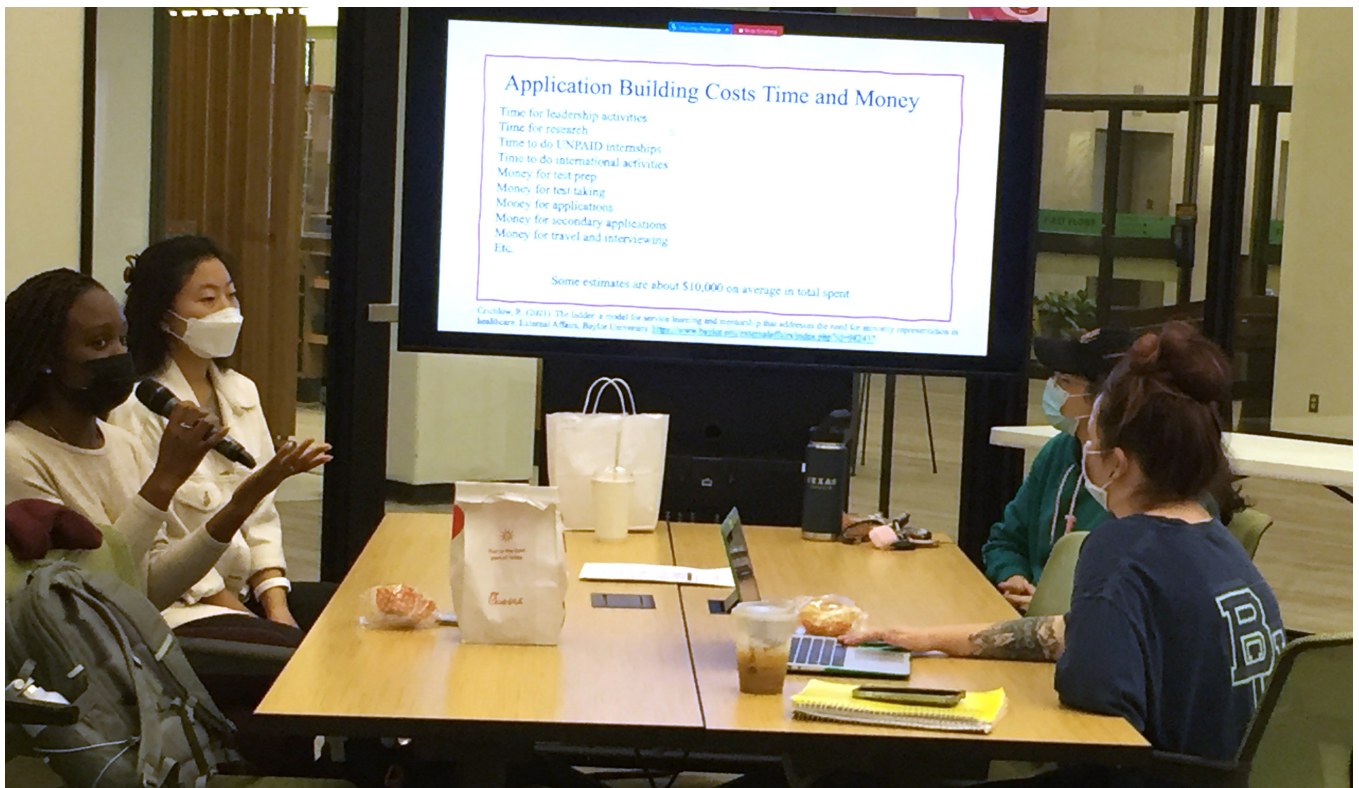
2. Blocking out time for planning and debriefing.

3. Identifying your own strengths and growth edges to bring the best to your students while exploring ways you can acquire new knowledge, skills, perspectives, and professional networks.

4. Modeling and clearly stating for students your process for interdisciplinary thinking.

5. Developing course materials and assignments that prepare students for interdisciplinary work and assess their ability for interdisciplinary thinking.

6. Celebrating the ways students have synthesized knowledge and created solutions that address the complex challenge.



ATL: What did you learn about teaching from your interdisciplinary course?

SB: This semester I taught *Disrupting Racial Disparities in Health Care* with Dr. Barron, the chair of the Medical Humanities Department. Teaching with a new colleague and getting to know medical humanities students was a new and rewarding experience. It was much like learning a familiar song in a different language. You still have the benefit of knowing the melody—in this case the art and science of teaching. However, now you are introducing a new element and singing something that at first sounds foreign. Once you learn the new words, you can improvise. Teaching this semester was much like this. I entered the process with a topic that I know and love teaching, yet it would not be the same as teaching it alone. I would be bringing my social work person-in-environment lens, and my colleague would be operating from her medical model. Together we were able to create something new and more beautiful. I learned about all of the beautiful ways my colleague greets the students and learns about their weeks, the ways she builds her lectures, Canvas pages and quizzes for the readings to help the students build a common language, the ways she maps out each session, and her attentiveness to the small things that make students feel valued and noticed. She has an innate way of making the students feel good from the moment they walk into the classroom! Now, I am much more aware of the ways that I structure classes, present content, engage with students, and assess their work.

Now that I have learned a new language and stepped into a new culture with my co-instructor, I am seeing new possibilities for supporting whole person learning. For example, in the past, I have included self-care each week on my Canvas page. Now teaching with a medical doctor, it seemed important to start classes with a breathing exercise to help students experience the value of short self-care activities as we delve into related topics or difficult cases. Together, we decided to give students five minutes in their groups to share about the day's topic or a related experience before beginning. Students valued the sense of belonging and active class engagement from these interactions. With minor changes like these, I believe my co-instructor and I have been able to practice teaching that takes into account the cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions of our students. I hope it is not too far reaching to say that the students are now singing in multiple languages, so to speak, and have embraced learning from us across these two disciplines as well as learning from their peers, guest lecturers, and community partners.

ATL: Did having multiple disciplines affect your designs for projects and assessments?

SB: Project design and assessments were the most challenging aspect of the course for me. Over the years, I have become more accustomed to using assignments like in-class case studies and exercises, film reviews, and project/skill development-based work centered on a community challenge. My co-instructor uses very different

assessment tools. This is where it was most important for me to recognize that in the end, we wanted to create a beautiful new experience. My colleague took the lead to create a rhythm for the assignments so that students could anticipate the work and would not feel overwhelmed. The weekly assignments included two quizzes and a reflection. We also found ways to engage students in methods used in social work like photovoice and data-driven problem-solving using maps.

ATL: How do you think this experience will affect your future teaching?

SB: Teaching this course with Dr. Barron has been one of the best teaching experiences of my career. I will be forever grateful for her invitation to work with her in this course. Our approaches to our work and our personalities are so very different. I find that it is when you place yourself in contexts that challenge you and surrender to what the challenge has to offer that you are transformed. I have always known that conflict and difference are great loci for change and growth. Interdisciplinary teaching allowed me to have more time to study alternative perspectives and facilitate critical conversations with students. Moving forward, I will be active in presenting these perspectives from other disciplines in ways that help students better understand their discipline while exploring other disciplines as they think through problems and seek more integrative and holistic solutions. I will be more explicit about the value and limitations of each discipline as we move toward outlining solutions.

Baylor Teaching Awards



2020-2021 Awards for Outstanding Teaching

Keith Schubert, Ph.D., professor, electrical and computer engineering, School of Engineering and Computer Science

Mark Long, Ph.D., associate professor and director of Middle East studies, Honors College

Julie Anne Sweet, Ph.D., professor of history, College of Arts & Sciences

Lokia Scott, Ph.D., assistant professor, curriculum and instruction, School of Education

Elon Terrell, Ph.D., senior lecturer, mechanical engineering, School of Engineering and Computer Science

Laila Sanguras, Ph.D., lecturer, curriculum and instruction, School of Education

Yuko Prefume, Ed.D., senior lecturer, Japanese, College of Arts & Sciences



2021 Collins Teaching Award

Paul Zinke, Ph.D.
senior lecturer of chemistry and biochemistry

2021 Cornelia Marschall Smith Professor of the Year Award

Mia Moody-Ramirez, Ph.D.
department chair and professor of journalism, public relations, and new media

2021 Centennial Professors

Michael-John DePalma, Ph.D.
associate professor of English and coordinator of professional writing and rhetoric

Lesley McAllister, Ph.D.
professor of piano and director of piano pedagogy

2021 Outstanding Graduate Instructors

Jonathan Stanfill
Department of Mathematics

Christina Lambert
Department of English

Nate Scholten
Department of Curriculum & Instruction

From the Director:



Scott Carlson's timely *Chronicle* essay, "How the Coronavirus Tests Higher Ed's Disciplinary Fault Lines" (March 24, 2020) appeared as the first variant of the Coronavirus circulated around the globe. His thesis remains apt: Covid-19 may have started as a concern of doctors and scientists, but the virus has since produced sociological, economic, and political concerns (we could rightly add moral concerns to this list). Carlson's underlying claim—complex concerns require interdisciplinary thinking—has re-emerged as a valuable educational position. Interdisciplinary research initiatives, curricula, and special programs have become increasingly popular over the past decade. High-profile centers and institutes ranging from interdisciplinary medical groups to social policy teams have sought to build bridges across disciplinary fault lines and expand the world's horizon of knowledge. Baylor is no exception.

Dr. Robert Baird, professor emeritus of philosophy and Master Teacher, led a University Self-Study in 1984-86 in the wake of four national studies of undergraduate education in the United States. All four studies emphasized the need for colleges and universities to reexamine their core curricula and called for a commitment to interdisciplinary teaching and learning. In response, Baylor's undergraduate curriculum committee called for a reexamination of Baylor's core curriculum and for the creation of an interdisciplinary core (the Baylor Interdisciplinary Core was formed and admitted its first class of students in the fall of 1994). Carlson's essay echoes the arguments Baird made in support of the BIC's creation: "When students graduate, they will not make decisions as students of philosophy or Spanish or biology. They will make decisions as human beings, as human beings integrating all that they have learned. They will make interdisciplinary decisions."

Baylor faculty continue to advance interdisciplinarity in important and innovative ways. Danielle Williams, senior lecturer in the department of English and the director of the Core in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S), nicely elucidates the practice of interdisciplinarity: interdisciplinarity occurs "between" courses in the shared elements, themes, and readings students encounter in different disciplines and "within" common courses in the multi-disciplinary material introduced in core courses. Paul Martens, associate professor of ethics in the department of religion and director of interdisciplinary studies in A&S., disentangles the related concepts of interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinarity. Most crucially, Martens explains that "interdisciplinarity is trying to integrate [the disciplines] into a whole...to find bridges...and ways of seeing a challenge or problem." He reminds us that "None of us experience our life through a single discipline," so our work as educators involves helping students "become whole people who integrate these multiple perspectives...and become human beings that are navigating a world we couldn't have imagined when we were their age."

This issue of the Review challenges us to think and teach beyond disciplinary boundaries, not just in response to Covid-19 but also out of our common commitment to Baylor's mission. Preparing students for worldwide service and leadership requires the integration of disciplinary knowledge and skills and a profound desire to keep caring for a hurting world.

SET

Seminars for Excellence in Teaching

January

24 **Technology-Enhanced Engagement and Feedback**

Jon Eckert (Educational Leadership)
2:30-3:30 PM

February

15 **Technology with Heart: How to Harness What You See in Navigate to Steer Every Student Toward Success**

Carroll Crowson (Student Success Initiatives), Jeffery Olafsen (Physics), Jeff Strietzel (Educational Leadership), Meaghann Wheelis (Institutional Research)
3:30-4:30 PM

22 **Intentional Online Teaching: Lessons from Learning Design Fellows**

Paul Anderson (Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate), Maria De Mesa (Chemistry and Biochemistry), Nicole Kenley (English), Karenna Malavanti (Psychology and Neuroscience)
11:00 AM-12:00 PM

March

1 **Fraternity and Sorority Life: What Every Baylor Professor Needs to Know**

Tranquility Cowan (Senior Coordinator for Fraternity and Sorority Life)
11:00 AM-12:00 PM

17 **Outside the Assessment Box: Experiments in Alternative Assessment**

Monique Ingalls (Church Music), Sarah Kientle (Biology), Moises Park (Spanish)
3:30-4:30 PM

March cont.

22 **Teaching with Special Collections**

Holly Spofford (English), Sam Young (History), Kazuyuki (Kaz) Hayashi (Religion), Jon Snyder (School of Music), Lauren Weber (Theatre Arts), Benjamin Leavitt (History), Julie deGraffenried (History), Luke Sayers (English), T. J. Geiger (English), Ryan Sharp (English)
3:30-4:30 PM

28 **Diversity in the Foreground: Course Content Decisions that Matter**

Julie DeGraffenried (History), Stephen Sloan (History), Elizabeth Dell (English), Joe Fulton (English)
2:30-3:30 PM

April

7 **Award-Winning Faculty Perspectives on Teacher Authority**

Nathan Alleman (Educational Leadership), Sarah Madsen (Educational Leadership), Byron Newberry (Mechanical Engineering)
11:00 AM-12:00 PM

May

4 **Synthesizing the Research for Timely Teaching Guidance**

Graduate Students in EDL 6302: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
2:30-3:30 PM

For more information about each SET, to register for upcoming SETs, or to watch recordings of past SETs, visit www.baylor.edu/ATL/SET

OUR MISSION:

To support and inspire a flourishing community of learning.

