

CALLINGS: THE HUMANOMICS OF SPECIALIZATION

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“College students today experience pressures and expectations from many directions. Recovering an understanding of vocation as our multiple callings to responsible relationships and action within the world – and educating students to engage these callings thoughtfully and with humility – are among the essential tasks of higher education.”

Kathryn A. Kleinhaus (2016)

Questions and goals

How do we find our places in the world? The ECON 101 answer is “specialization and exchange” – letting market forces guide our talents and interests toward their most profitable uses. But how does specialization work on a personal level? How do we discover where, how, and to whom we and our contributions are “special”? What calls us toward the positions and duties that make us who we are? What rewards do we receive and what sacrifices do we incur as we enact these specialized roles? What social or psychological barriers limit our vocational freedom? How can we expand vocational freedom, in our own lives and in the lives of others?

In this Honors colloquium, we explore the specialization/vocation process (defined as the lifelong quest for agency, purpose, identity, and belonging, including but not limited to one’s job or career), seeking to gain greater understanding and integration of ourselves:

- academically, socially, ethically, and spiritually;
- as individuals with “multiple callings to responsible relationships and action”;
- as evolving constellations of our past, present, and future selves; and
- as culturally enmeshed beings, shaped by the matrix of norms and expectations into which we’ve been socialized but never wholly defined by what others want or perceive us to be.

Through 15 weeks of reflective reading, writing, and conversation, we will learn a great deal about calling and vocation as we examine diverse life stories from the varied perspectives of philosophers, educators, psychologists, theologians, filmmakers, journalists, historians, physicians, social justice advocates, economists, and social entrepreneurs. Above all we will learn to be more creative, responsible readers and composers of our own vocational journeys.

Learning outcome

All University Honors colloquia have two broad aims: (1) to enable students to integrate different forms or domains of learning and (2) to help students develop coherent perspectives on course-specific questions, perspectives grounded in academic knowledge but shaped by students' identities and values. As a student in this course, you will achieve both goals by working to (re)formulate your vocational vision – the unique capabilities and commitments (social, intellectual, ethical, moral) that define you as an individual – and by producing this self-understanding in dialogue with the perceptions and expectations of others. In other words, you will learn to acknowledge, assess, and integrate competing views of who you are, what you value, and how (and with/for whom) you want to live.

Required texts

Callings course reader (fall 2021)

An Ordinary Age: Finding Your Way in a World That Expects Exceptional, Rainesford Stauffer (2021)

Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation, Parker Palmer (2001)

Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone, Brené Brown (2019)

When Breath Becomes Air, Paul Kalanithi (2016)

Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, Debby Irving (2014)

The course reader is available for purchase (\$17) at TCU Printing & Copying (2865 West Bowie Street, on the north side of the GrandMarc building). The five books can be purchased inexpensively (\$70 total) from online retailers.

Grades

Your course grade will be determined by your combined performance on the following:

Reading, writing, and conversation

Daily attendance and participation (25% of course grade)

Weekly reading responses (25% of course grade)

Special projects

Interview/essay 1 (15% of course grade)

Interview/essay 2 (15% of course grade)

Final essay (20% of course grade)

Course grades will be assigned on the following scale (rounding to the nearest whole number):

92% - 100%	A	80% - 81%	B-	68% - 69%	D+
90% - 91%	A-	78% - 79%	C+	62% - 67%	D
88% - 89%	B+	72% - 77%	C	60% - 61%	D-
82% - 87%	B	70% - 71%	C-	Below 60%	F

Attendance and participation

University Honors colloquia are discussion-centered seminars. Free-flowing conversation among all participants is vital, as it pulls us deeper into each topic and forces us to examine and potentially rethink preconceived ideas. Everyone is therefore expected to attend every class, to complete all assigned readings in advance, and to participate thoughtfully in every discussion.

To encourage a high level of engagement and dialogue, 25% of your course grade will be based upon (1) class attendance and (2) the quality and quantity of your contributions to class discussions. Your attendance and participation will be assessed twice: once after Fall Break, based on your attendance and participation during the first half of the semester; and again in December, based on your attendance and participation during the second half of the course.

Attendance

The University absence policy states that regular and punctual class attendance is essential and that no assigned work is to be excused due to absence. Official University Absences (formally acknowledged by the Office of Campus Life, including absences due to COVID-19) will not count against your attendance grade. However, all other absences will adversely affect your grade @ 4% per absence.

Participation

My rubric for assessing the quantity and quality of contributions to class discussions will be:

- A **always** – always prepared; contributed generously, thoughtfully, and often (but not too often); consistently assumed responsibility for keeping discussion going and maintaining a high level of discussion
- B **often** – usually prepared; contributed often and thoughtfully; aided in keeping discussion moving but did not consistently assume responsibility for doing so
- C **sometimes** – usually prepared; sometimes assumed responsibility for discussion
- D **rarely** – contributed occasionally but never assumed responsibility for discussion

In making these assessments, I will not rely on daily tallies (which I find cumbersome and counterproductive). Instead I will keep weekly notes which allow me to form reasonable judgements about the average level of each student's informed, thoughtful contributions to class discussions.

Weekly reading responses

Once each week, typically on a Monday, you will submit a written response to that day's assigned readings. The purpose of these assignments is to encourage careful reading and personal engagement with each author's ideas while providing the instructor with a better sense of how each student is responding to the readings.

Due dates for these assignments are shown in yellow on the Course Calendar below. All reading responses must be submitted by 11:00 am on each designated class day.

All reading responses should be at least 400 words and organized in a two-paragraph “they say, I say” format:

- (1) An opening paragraph in which you summarize, in your own words, a major idea or theme that cuts across the entire reading
- (2) One paragraph in which you offer a thoughtful response to the major idea/theme you’ve identified – for example:
 - exploring how it illuminates your own lived experience;
 - exploring connections to the ideas of other authors, from this or another course;
 - critically analyzing the author’s reasoning (e.g., the author’s stated or unstated assumptions, ways in which the author’s reasoning strikes you as valid or invalid, or what you see as the implications or significance of the author’s argument); or
 - some other form of thoughtful engagement.

The grading criteria for these assignments are:

- Did you submit it on time and satisfy the minimum required word count?
- Does your reflection show a perceptive understanding of the author’s ideas?
- Does your reflection show thoughtful, personal engagement with the author’s ideas?

Late submissions **will** be accepted but with a 20% penalty and **only until 1:00 pm**. Submissions after class time will not be accepted. At the end of the semester, your lowest reading response score will be dropped.

Interview/essay 1

During week 5 (the week of September 20), you will interview a significant adult in your life, seeking to understand their view of you and your callings. You will design and conduct the interview using ideas from class readings and discussions, then produce an essay of at least 1200 words in which you narrate and reflect upon the interview. Further details and grading criteria will be distributed in class two weeks before the essay is due.

Interview/essay 2

During Thanksgiving week (the week of November 22), you will interview a significant adult in your life, seeking to understand their callings, broadly defined: (1) their loves (the people, projects, duties, causes, or activities they care most about; the “parts that make them whole”); and (2) their journey (how they discovered or developed their callings, including any significant barriers or difficulties they faced or any regrets they may have). You will design and conduct the interview using ideas from class readings and discussions, then produce an essay of at least 1200 words in which you narrate and reflect upon the interview. Further details and grading criteria will be distributed well in advance of the due date.

Final essay

Your final assignment will be a reflective essay (at least 1200 words) in which you address two fundamental questions about your callings based on everything you currently know:

- (1) Who are you? What unique capabilities and commitments (social, intellectual, ethical, moral, or otherwise) define you as an individual?

- (2) What internal and external voices or signals give you confidence about your current commitments? Which give you pause?

Further details and grading criteria will be distributed well in advance of the due date.

University policies and procedures

College during COVID-19

We are grateful for the opportunity to gather and learn together this semester, despite the ongoing difficulties and disruptions caused by COVID-19. The health and safety of students, faculty, and staff is Texas Christian University's highest priority. Safety protocols may change during the semester and may result in modifications or changes to the teaching format, delivery method, or the course schedule (e.g., altering meeting times or frequency; changing beginning or ending dates for a term; or partially or completely moving from a face-to-face classroom teaching to an online teaching or remote learning format). Any changes in teaching format, delivery method, or course schedule will not impact the credit hours for the course. Increased flexibility, kindness and grace will be needed from each and all of us as we work to support each other and create meaningful community during these challenging times.

Face masks in the classroom

Due to the current Tarrant County Community Spread Level of "High Transmission," TCU requires that face masks covering the nose and mouth be worn in all classrooms and other indoor campus spaces. Moreover, to help protect ourselves and the health and safety of our loved ones, I will insist that we maintain social distancing in our classroom (students at least three feet apart from each other and the instructor at least six feet from the students at all times) and that we continue to wear face masks in the classroom even if TCU suspends its indoor mask requirement. Disposable masks are available at all primary building entrances. Students who do not comply with classroom face mask requirements will be referred to the Dean of Students.

If you feel ill

If you are experiencing possible symptoms of COVID-19 (fever or chills, dry cough, shortness of breath, etc.) or are concerned that you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you should:

- Contact me immediately so I can work with you to maintain instructional continuity;
- Self-quarantine and consult with the Brown Lupton Health Center (817-257-7949) for further guidance; and
- Notify the Campus Life Office (817-257-7926) or the TCU COVID-19 Self-Report Hotline (817-257-2684) so they can send official notifications to all of your professors.

If you are unwell but are **not** exhibiting potential COVID-19-related symptoms, please notify your instructor as soon as possible that you are ill and will not be attending class.

Alternative learning options in the event of illness

Alternative learning options will be provided for students who are unable to attend multiple class periods due to illness or if the instructor is unable to attend class in person due to illness. These alternative options will be designed and communicated as circumstances dictate but every effort will be made to ensure that all students have the opportunity to complete course assignments and participate in course activities in a timely manner. However, online learning options will **not** be provided to students who are not in isolation or quarantine or otherwise seriously ill.

Academic conduct policy

To encourage and preserve the honor and integrity of our academic community, TCU expects its students to maintain high standards of personal and scholarly conduct. Any student found guilty of an act of academic misconduct (including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, or theft of an examination) may be subject to having his or her grade reduced in the course, to being placed on academic probation, or being suspended from the University. Please see Section 3.4 in The Code of Student Conduct for specific rule information.

Any act that violates the academic integrity of the institution is considered academic misconduct. The procedures used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the offices of Academic Deans and the Office of Campus Life and are listed in detail in the Undergraduate Catalog. Specific examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Cheating:** Copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files and listings; using, during any academic exercise, material and/or devices not authorized by the person in charge of the test; collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or laboratory without permission; knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in its entirety or in part, the contents of a test or other assignment unauthorized for release; substituting for another student or permitting another student to substitute for oneself.
- **Plagiarism:** The appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another's work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one's own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another's work without giving credit therefore.
- **Collusion:** The unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing work offered for credit.
- **Abuse of resource materials:** Mutilating, destroying, concealing, or stealing such material.
- **Computer misuse:** Unauthorized or illegal use of computer software or hardware through the TCU Computer Center or through any programs, terminals, or freestanding computers owned, leased or operated by TCU or any of its academic units for the purpose of affecting the academic standing of a student.
- **Fabrication and falsification:** Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification involves altering information for use in any academic exercise. Fabrication involves inventing or counterfeiting information for use in any academic exercise.

- **Multiple submission:** The submission by the same individual of substantial portions of the same academic work (including oral reports) for credit more than once in the same or another class without authorization.
- **Complicity in academic misconduct:** Helping another to commit an act of academic misconduct.
- **Bearing false witness:** Knowingly and falsely accusing another student of academic misconduct.

Additional classroom policies

Classroom technology policy

Please talk to me in advance if you would like to use a personal electronic device in the classroom. In general, personal electronic devices should not be used during class unless requested by the instructor. Violation of this policy will result in a lower participation grade.

TCU e-mail

I will send important announcements and occasional course materials to you via e-mail. You are responsible for checking your TCU e-mail to keep up with these communications.

TCU Online

I will use TCU Online (D2L) to post all course grades and assignments and will expect you to submit all of your assignments via D2L.

Support for TCU students

Student Access and Accommodation

Texas Christian University affords students with disabilities reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To be eligible for disability-related academic accommodations, students are required to register with the TCU Office of Student Access and Accommodation and have their requested accommodations evaluated. If approved for accommodations, students are required to discuss their official TCU Notification of Accommodation with their instructors. Accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. The Office of Student Access and Accommodation is located in The Harrison, Suite 1200. More information on how to apply for accommodations can be found at <https://www.tcu.edu/access-accommodation/> or by calling Student Access and Accommodation at (817) 257-6567.

Anti-Discrimination and Title IX at TCU

TCU is committed to providing a positive learning, living, and working environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and retaliation. In support of this commitment, in its policy on "Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and

Retaliation,” TCU has a range of prohibited behaviors, including unlawful discrimination and harassment and related sexual and other misconduct based on age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, predisposing genetic information, covered veteran status, and any other basis protected by law. The Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) is responsible for responding to all reports of discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct and retaliation. To make a report, you may call OIE at 817-257-8228, email oie@tcu.edu, visit us at The Harrison, Suite 1800.

TCU’s Title IX Coordinator is Andrea Vircks-McDew. You may call 817-257-8228 to make a report or to obtain additional Title IX information and resources, email oie@tcu.edu or a.vircks@tcu.edu.

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep any information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, I have a mandatory reporting responsibility under TCU policy and federal law and are required to share any information we receive regarding sexual harassment, discrimination, and related conduct with TCU’s OIE.

Should you wish to make a confidential report, the Title IX Office will seek to maintain your privacy to the greatest extent possible, but cannot guarantee confidentiality. Reports to law enforcement can be made to the Fort Worth Police Department at 911 for an emergency and (817) 335-4222 for non-emergency or TCU Police at (817) 257-7777.

COURSE CALENDAR

Introducing ourselves and the course

- M 8/23 Three short pieces to launch our conversation:
- Frederick Buechner, "Vocation" (1973)
 - David S. Cunningham, "Vocation: A Once and Future Language" (2017)
 - Reverend Eric D. Williams, StoryCorps conversation (2016)

- W 8/25 Three more short pieces:
- Gary D. Badcock, "Choosing" (1998)
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Place of Responsibility" (1940-1943)
 - Will Campbell, "Vocation as Grace" (1974)

Finding Ourselves in Emerging Adulthood

- F 8/27 Rainesford Stauffer, *An Ordinary Age: Finding Your Way in a World That Expects Exceptional* (2021), Ch. 1, "On Being Ordinary"

- M 8/30 Stauffer, Ch. 11, "The Best Four Years of Your Life" and Ch. 2, "For the Experience"

- W 9/1 Stauffer, Ch. 3, "A Waiting Room"

- F 9/3 Stauffer, Ch. 4, "Finding Yourself, Commodified" and Ch. 7, "Online in Real Life"

- M 9/6 No class (Labor Day)

- W 9/8 Stauffer, Ch. 5, "Cracks"

- F 9/10 Stauffer, Ch. 6, "Good Little Catholic Girl"

- M 9/13 Stauffer, Ch. 8, "Heartsick" and Ch. 9, "When Self-Care Doesn't Care About Us"

- W 9/15 Stauffer, Ch. 10, "Who Answers When You Call" and Ch. 12, "A Note on Growing Up"

- F 9/17 Conversation with Rainesford Stauffer + receive instructions for interview/essay 1

Who am I?

- M 9/20 *Good Will Hunting* (1997) – begin in class, finish later (via Zoom or on your own)

- W 9/22 Discuss film and prepare for interview/essay 1

- F 9/24 No class meeting; students conduct interviews during class time

- M 9/27 Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (2001), Chs. 1-3: "Listening to Life," "Now I Become Myself," and "When Way Closes"

- W 9/29 Palmer, Chs. 4-6: "All the Way Down," "Leading from Within," and "There is a Season"

- F 10/1 Interview/essay 1 due (sharing/discussion of your interview experiences in class)

- M 10/4 Marcia Baxter Magolda, *Authoring Your Life: Developing Your Internal Voice to Navigate Life's Challenges* (2009), "Introduction" (pp. 1-17 only)

- W 10/6 Baxter Magolda, [one chapter TBD – one of her case studies, from Chs. 2-7]

- F 10/8 Baxter Magolda, Ch. 8, "How to Be Good Company for Your Own Journey"

Who am I – and who are my people?

- M 10/11** Brené Brown, *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone* (2019), Chs. 1 and 2: “Everywhere and Nowhere” and “The Quest for True Belonging”
- W 10/13 Brown, Chs. 3-5: “High Lonesome: A Spiritual Crisis,” “People are Hard to Hate Close Up – Move In,” and “Speak Truth to Bullshit – Be Civil”
- F 10/15 No class (Fall Break)
- M 10/18** Brown, Chs. 6 and 7: “Hold Hands – With Strangers” and “Strong Back, Soft Front, Wild Heart”
- W 10/20 Use Brené’s ideas to think about the overlay of self, family, and society – in response to two short pieces:
- Bonnie Miller-McLemore, “Generativity Crises of My Own,” from *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma* (1994)
 - Elizabeth Gaskell, “The Life of Charlotte Brontë”
- F 10/22 Paul Kalanithi, *When Breath Becomes Air* (2016), Part I, “In Perfect Health I Begin,” plus “Foreword” by Dr. Abraham Verghese and the author’s Prologue
- M 10/25** Kalanithi, Part II, “Cease Not Till Death,” plus “Epilogue” by Lucy Kalanithi
- W 10/27 Use Baxter Magolda’s framework to think about Paul’s self-authorship, based on his memoir and these two short pieces:
- Paul Kalanithi, “How Long Have I Got Left?” *New York Times*, January 2014
 - Katie Hafner, “Keeping Dr. Paul Kalanithi’s Voice Alive,” interview with Lucy Kalanithi, *New York Times*, January 2016
- F 10/29 Class conversation with Dr. Lauren Mitchell, TCU and UNT School of Medicine

Who am I – and who are my people? (continued)

- M 11/1** Calls to heroism
- Zeno Franco and Philip Zimbardo, “The Banality of Heroism” (2010)
 - David Bornstein, “The Fixed Determination of an Indomitable Will – Florence Nightengale” (2007)
- W 11/3 Calls to heroism, continued
- Albert Schweitzer, “I Resolve to Become a Jungle Doctor” (1931)
 - Vincent Harding, “I Hear Them . . . Calling (and I Know What it Means)” (1974)
- F 11/5 Class conversation with Dr. Vanessa Bouché, Founder and CEO of Savhera, an essential oil company whose Hindi name means “new beginnings,” expressing the company’s mission to provide meaningful employment to survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation
- M 11/8** Drew Gilpin Faust, “Living History: A Schoolgirl’s Letter to ‘Mr. Eisenhower’ Illuminates a Childhood in the Segregated South.” *Harvard Magazine* (2003)

- Debby Irving, *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (2014), "Introduction" and Chs. 1, 2, and 5: "What Wasn't Said," "Family Values," and "Within the Walls"
- W 11/10 Irving, *Waking Up White*, Chs. 6, 8, 11, 12, 17, and 18: "From Confusion to Shock," "Racial Categories," "Headwinds and Tailwinds," "Icebergs," "My Good People," and "Color Blind"
- F 11/12 No class (Dr. G. attending professional conference) + receive instructions for interview/essay 2
- M 11/15** Irving, *Waking Up White*, Chs. 25, 30, 32, 34, 41, and 46: "Belonging," "Feelings and the Culture of Niceness," "Getting Over Myself," "Becoming Multicultural," "From Bystander to Ally," and "Whole Again"
- W 11/17 Write questions for interview/essay 2 – drawing ideas from Baxter Magolda, Ch. 11, "Mapping Your Journey" and previous readings/discussions
- F 11/19 Dr. G. provides feedback on interview questions

Thanksgiving holiday

- M 11/22 No class (Thanksgiving week)
- W 11/24 No class (Thanksgiving week)
- F 11/26 No class (Thanksgiving week)

Integrating our circles, our stories, ourselves

- M 11/29** Mary Catherine Bateson, "Composing a Life Story" (2004)
- W 12/1 Interview/essay 2 due (sharing/discussing your essays in class)
- F 12/3 Finding our roles and purposes in the web of human cooperation:
- Donald J. Boudreaux, "Comparative Advantage" (2008)
 - Russ Roberts, "Understanding Emergent Order in Our Daily Lives" (2017)
 - Dylan Winter and the Starling Murmurations: <https://tinyurl.com/wp9dwkdw>
 - BBC One, "How do starling birds flock?": <https://tinyurl.com/ht2txt2t>
- W 12/1 Vocational roundtable – sharing thoughts about ourselves and our callings, in preparation for final essays
- W 12/8 Paper meetings during class time (groups of 2 students @ 15 minutes each)
- M 12/13 Final essays due by 5:00 pm

Schedule Disclaimer

The above calendar will be revised as necessary during the semester. It will be your responsibility to check D2L and your TCU email regularly and to keep track of these changes as they are announced.