TEXAS
The University of Texas at Austin

I 303: Ethical Foundations for Informatics

27860

Spring 2022

CLASS MEETS: Plenary: Asynchronous, online via Canvas; Section: Thursdays 11 am – 12:30 pm, SZB 2.222

Instructor: Dr. **Ken**neth R. Fleischmann
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Course Description

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Survey the ethical foundations for informatics, incorporating non-Western and feminist perspectives. Apply these ethical foundations to contemporary problems in informatics. Examine confrontation of ethical dilemmas in the workplace, including recognizing value trade-offs, affected stakeholders, and potential solutions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Gain awareness of a wide range of ethical theories and how they apply to key problems in informatics
2. Learn how to identify ethical challenges in informatics and how to consider diverse perspectives
3. Improve your ability to articulate your own values and to understand and appreciate others' values

ETHICS AND WRITING FLAGS

- This course carries the Ethics Flag. Ethics courses are designed to equip you with skills necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from a paper involving applying ethical reasoning to a practical informatics challenge.
- This course also carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester by working on an ethical dilemma paper, and receive instructor feedback to help you to improve your writing. The paper will be iterative, and you will also be able to learn from giving and receiving peer feedback. Please note that your ethical dilemma paper will constitute 50% of your overall class grade across multiple parts.

How Will You Learn?

STATEMENT OF LEARNING SUCCESS

- You will learn from the readings, which will cover ethical approaches and their application to informatics
- You will learn from the asynchronous online videos, which will cover course content via multiple formats
- You will learn from the online quizzes, which will allow you to reflect on your learning from the videos
- You will learn from the class discussions, which will cover reading topics as well as academic writing
- You will learn from the ethical dilemma paper by exploring an informatics issue from multiple perspectives

TEACHING MODALITY AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Each week, you will need to complete assigned readings, quizzes, and videos prior to the section meeting
- Each week, you will attend a section meeting to discuss the topic for the week as well as the writing studio
- Over the semester, you will iteratively develop an ethical dilemma paper with instructor and peer feedback
- Please make sure to complete all readings/quizzes/videos prior to class and all assignments by the deadlines
- Please make sure to come into class discussions with an open mind, and to develop your own perspectives
- Please make sure to be respectful during all class discussions, and to appreciate others' perspectives
- Please be prepared to give, receive, and address constructive feedback on the ethical dilemma paper

COMMUNICATION

The course Canvas site can be found at utexas.instructure.com. Please email us through Canvas. You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses.

ASKING FOR HELP

Please email both the lead and section instructors via Canvas if you have any questions or need any help.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

We are committed to creating an inclusive and equitable course experience for students with a wide range of intersectional identities and lived experiences. It is critical to us that everyone has the opportunity to learn from us and from each other. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let us know if you experience any barriers to learning so we can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to us as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

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Course Requirements and Grading

REQUIRED MATERIALS

All course materials (readings, videos, quizzes, and assignments) will be available via the course Canvas site.

REQUIRED DEVICES

You need to have access to high-speed internet and a suitable device to view videos and complete assignments.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Class attendance Because the vast majority of the learning in this class will occur in the classroom and via Canvas, you are required to attend class regularly and to complete all Canvas assignments including all videos. Attendance will be taken during each class period. Absences will only be excused in situations following university policy (illness, family emergency, religious holy days, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling absences beyond your control) with proper documentation and timely notification (prior to class for non-emergencies). Excessive tardiness may be considered as an unexcused absence except in situations following university policy.

Class participation Class participation is a critical element of this course. The effectiveness of the course will be significantly impacted by the quality of your participation. Class participation is not merely attendance, but rather factors in your overall contributions to the collaborative learning environment, based on both the quantity and quality of your interactions in all aspects of the course. Discussion of class participation with the instructor is encouraged in order to ensure that you are making the most of the classroom experience and the accompanying opportunities for learning. You are expected to participate in all aspects of class discussion. You should come to class prepared to discuss the required readings, as well as your perspectives on these readings. You should strive for balance in your contributions, and your participation will not be based on who speaks the loudest or the longest, but on consistent participation of significant quantity and, most importantly, quality.

Behavior expectations Creating and maintaining a learning environment that accommodates and includes a diverse range of learners and learning styles is an important shared responsibility. Our class relies upon having open and supportive dialog. As such, we have a zero-tolerance policy toward any kind of personal attacks, discrimination, or hate speech. Please contribute to the shared responsibility to create an environment that is open and welcoming to everyone, and which helps everyone to be respected and appreciated.

Professional Standards Learning to cite sources appropriately is an important part of becoming a professional. When you are unsure about citation, you are encouraged to ask your instructor what is appropriate in the context of your assignment. Consultants at The University Writing Center can also help you determine whether you are citing sources correctly—and they have many helpful guides online. Reviewing those skills will help you feel confident that you are handling sources professionally in your writing. Plagiarism is a serious form of academic dishonesty that can result in severe penalties. Depending on the circumstances and severity, plagiarism may result in not getting credit for the assignment, or for the course. You can read the University's definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in Sec. 11–402 of the Student Conduct Code.

Plagiarism Detection Software

All assignments in this course may be processed by TurnItIn, a tool that compares submitted material to an archived database of published work to check for potential plagiarism. Other methods may also be used to determine if a paper is the student's original work. Regardless of the results of any TurnItIn submission, the instructors will make the final determination as to whether or not a paper has been plagiarized.

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Attendance and Participation

Your attendance and class participation grade will be calculated by multiplying the numerical assessment of your class participation by the percentage of classes that you attend (with exceptions for documented, university-recognized absences). Please note that regular attendance and active participation in each class session are critical for receiving a good grade in this course. For example, by actively participating in each class, you will receive a full letter grade higher than if you were to skip half of the classes or to be half-awake for every class.

Assignment 2: Online Quizzes

Plenary content for the course will be delivered asynchronously, online, allowing you to access the content at a time and location of your choosing. To measure your attendance and participation in the online plenary content, as well as to evaluate your attentiveness to and understanding of the course content, most videos will include embedded quizzes that will evaluate your comprehension of the content covered in the video. These are not designed to be trick questions, but rather should be fairly straightforward and easy to complete if you have been paying careful attention to the video and completing the class readings. Please make sure to completely watch all videos prior to the corresponding class meeting, and to answer all quiz questions embedded in videos.

Assignment 3: Discussion Questions

Each week, you will prepare and submit to Canvas a discussion question about the assigned reading for that week. Discussion questions are due in Canvas exactly 24 hours before your class section meeting for the week. The discussion question should be focused on either or both of the required readings and should make it clear that you have read and thought about the assigned material. Your instructor will select a few of the discussion questions to guide the discussion of the week's readings in the discussion section. Discussion questions are an opportunity for you to bring your own particular point of view and interests to the material we cover in class, and you are encouraged to connect the material to current events and prior learning both in this class and other courses you may have taken. Discussion questions should be conversation starters. It might help for you to look for an idea or assertion in the reading that you found interesting and would like to talk to your peers about in class. Discussion questions should invite an interesting conversation, not just end in a simple yes or no answer.

Assignment 4: Ethical Dilemma Paper

Throughout the semester, you will choose an informatics ethical dilemma and apply three ethical perspectives covered in the class to explore potential solutions to your selected dilemma. You are required to apply readings from the course as well as readings from outside of the course. We will devote approximately half of the class time each week to collectively brainstorming how to develop and improve everyone's papers. You are ultimately responsible for your own paper, but there will be many opportunities to get formal and informal feedback on your ideas and writing. Please take full advantage of this mini writing studio component.

(a) *Paper Proposal*: Your paper proposal must include the proposed **title** of your paper as well as a one-page description of the **informatics ethical dilemma**. At this stage, you are not required to have settled on your ethical theories yet. Please make sure to include your **strategy for finding appropriate outside readings**. Paper proposals will be graded according to the following criteria: suitability of the dilemma, creativity of the dilemma, and appropriateness of the plan for finding outside readings.

(b) *Paper Outline*: Your paper outline will typically include **bulleted lists**, filling in as much detail as you have ready at this point, and **incorporating feedback from the paper proposal**. Your paper must be broken into sections, and you need to include your three planned ethical theories as part of your paper outline. You also need to include a list of at least **10** potentially relevant references, including at least **5** references that are peer-reviewed journal articles, refereed conference proceedings papers, or academic books or book chapters from beyond the course syllabus. Citations must follow APA Style (there are many useful online resources available; we recommend: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/). Paper outlines will be graded according to the following criteria: suitability of the dilemma, suitability of the ethical theories, clarity of the plan; appropriateness of the plan; and appropriateness of the references.

(c) *Paper Rough Draft*: Your rough draft must be at least a **half-complete version of your final paper** and must **incorporate feedback from the proposal and outline**. You may choose to what extent and in what ways you develop the paper; for example, you can provide the first half of the paper, or half of each section of the paper. The more complete your rough draft is, the more useful the feedback you receive from the instructor and your peers will be. The rough draft should be **1,000-2,500 words**. You must cite at least **10** sources, including at least **5** outside scholarly readings, and **all citations must follow APA Style**. Paper rough drafts will be graded according to the following criteria: clarity of the dilemma, quality of the analysis, suitability of the writing, creativity of the writing, and overall coherence and clarity of writing.

(d) *Peer Reviews of Rough Drafts*: You will be selected to peer review two papers written by peers. Please prepare one-page reviews of each paper, including a brief summary of the purpose and content of the paper as you understood it, the strengths of the paper, and constructive feedback on how to improve it. Peer reviews will be graded according to the following criteria: clarity, insightfulness, and helpfulness.

(e) *Final Presentation*: You will record a **5**-minute (+/- 1 minute) presentation of your paper using **Panopto**. You should use a visual aid (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, Keynote). Presentations will be graded according to the following criteria: clarity of the dilemma, quality of the analysis, conclusion, quality of visual presentation, and quality of oral presentation. Prior to the final class meeting, you will watch all of your classmates' presentations and come to class prepared to discuss each of them. Each student in the class will be assigned a "Secret Socrates" who will ask you a question about your video during class in a "lightning round" style.

(f) *Final Paper*: Your final paper must incorporate feedback from all previous stages of the paper development. Your paper must be complete, coherent, and easy to read. Please make sure to proofread your paper thoroughly prior to submission. The final paper should be **2,000-2,500 words**. You must cite at least **20** sources, including at least **10** outside scholarly readings, and **all citations must follow APA Style**. The final paper will be graded according to the following criteria: clarity of the dilemma, quality of the analysis, conclusion, suitability of the writing, creativity of the writing, and overall coherence and clarity of writing.

GRADING FOR THIS COURSE

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	Percent of Total Grade	
1. Attendance and Participation	20%	
2. Online Quizzes	20%	
3. Discussion Questions	10%	
4. Ethical Dilemma Paper	50%	
a. Paper Proposal		(5%)
b. Paper Outline		(5%)
c. Paper Rough Draft		(10%)
d. Peer Reviews		(5%)
e. Final Presentation		(10%)
f. Final Paper		(15%)

DEADLINES AND LATE WORK

Discussion questions are due 24 hours before the start of the section meeting. Online quizzes and components of the ethical dilemma paper are due before the start of the section meeting. Late assignments will be assessed a late penalty of ten points per day beyond the specified deadline (except in extraordinary circumstances such as severe and unavoidable technical difficulties (e.g., documented internet outage) or emergency situations (e.g., documented illness)). We will allow each student to drop your lowest Discussion Question and Quiz grades from your overall average at the end of the semester.

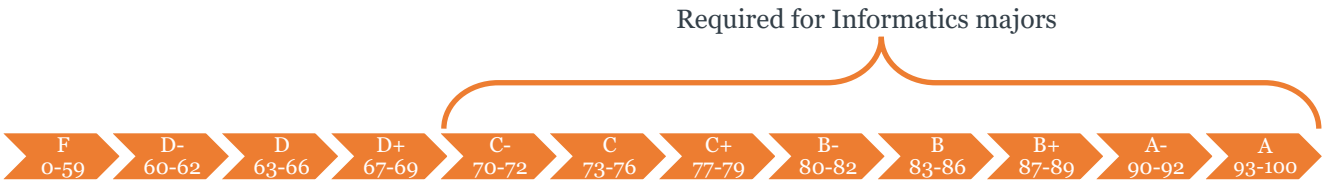
GRADING

Grades for essays, quizzes, participation, and weekly discussions will be posted in Canvas. It usually takes us one week to finish grading each assignment that was submitted by the deadline, with larger assignments graded within two weeks. Please let us know if you have any questions.

GRADING POLICY

Grades will be assigned based on the following grade cutoffs. All informatics majors must earn a grade of at least a C- or higher to fulfill the requirement. Students earning a D+ or lower will be required to retake the course.

GRADE CUTOFFS



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Course Outline

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website at utexas.instructure.com. Check Canvas regularly. **Changes** to the schedule may be made at our discretion if circumstances require. We will announce any such changes in class and we will also communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and we will do our best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible.

Week	Date	Class Topic	Out of Class Activities	Assignments Due
1	1/20/22	Introduction / Choosing an Ethical Dilemma	Class Syllabus	Attendance & Participation (AP)
Unit 1: Ethical Foundations				
2	1/27/22	Hindu Ethics and Classical Chinese Ethics Writing a Paper Proposal	Readings Videos	Discussion Questions (DQs) Quizzes AP
3	2/3/22	Buddhist Ethics and Islamic Ethics Peer Feedback on Proposals	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes **Proposal** AP
4	2/10/22	Kantian Ethics and Consequentialism Organizing a Paper	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes AP
5	2/17/22	Distributive Justice and Virtue Ethics Searching for Literature	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes AP
6	2/24/22	Ethics of Care and Ubuntu Peer Feedback on Outlines	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes **Outline** AP
7	3/3/22	Human Values and Value-Sensitive Design Considering Ethical Dilemmas	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes AP

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8	3/10/22	Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct Applying Ethical Theories	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes AP
Unit 2: Applying Ethical Theories to Informatics				
9	3/24/22	Intellectual Property Drawing Conclusions	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes AP
10	3/31/22	Privacy Writing Peer Reviews	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes **Rough Draft** AP
11	4/7/22	Security Peer Feedback on Drafts	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes **Peer Reviews** AP
12	4/14/22	Digital Inequity Revising Based on Feedback	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes AP
13	4/21/22	Algorithmic Bias Giving a Presentation	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes AP
14	4/28/22	Research Ethics Finishing the Paper	Readings Videos	DQs Quizzes **Presentations** AP
Unit 3: Final Presentations				
15	5/5/22	Discuss Final Presentations	Watch Presentations	**Final Paper** AP

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Course Policies and Disclosures

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY EXPECTATIONS

Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct.

GETTING HELP WITH TECHNOLOGY

Students needing help with technology in this course should contact the ITS Service Desk or the Information Commons team by sending an email to help@ischool.utexas.edu.

SHARING OF COURSE MATERIALS IS PROHIBITED

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, videos, quizzes, discussion questions, papers, or other course materials, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without explicit, written permission of the lead instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. The University is well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure of the course.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

By UT Austin policy, you must notify us of your pending absence as far in advance as possible of the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

NAMES AND PRONOUNS

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. We will all do our best to honor your request to address you by your chosen name and by the gender pronouns you use. We use the information available to us via Canvas. So, if you wish to provide or update a chosen name, that can be done easily at this page, and you can add your pronouns to Canvas.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what now is called North America. Moreover, we would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo/Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

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University Resources for Students

COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH CENTER (CMHC) AND CARE COUNSELING

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Know you are not alone. If you or anyone you know is experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, academic concerns, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, or any other concern impacting your wellbeing – you are strongly encouraged to connect with CMHC. The Counseling and Mental Health Center provides a wide variety of mental health services to all UT students including crisis services, counseling services with immediate support and well-being resources. For more information on CMHC, visit https://cmhc.utexas.edu or call 512-471-3515. Outside CMHC business hours (8a.m.-5p.m., Monday-Friday), you can contact the CMHC 24/7 Crisis Line at 512-471-2255. If you are struggling for any reason and believe that it might impact their performance in the course, please feel free to reach out to us. This will allow us to provide any relevant and appropriate resources or accommodations. We also recommend that you conider contacting Bryce Moffett, LCSW (iSchool CARE counselor) at 512-232-2983.

UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES (UHS)

Your physical health and wellness are a priority. University Health Services is an on-campus high-quality medical facility providing care to all UT students. Services offered by UHS include general medicine, urgent care, a 24/7 nurse advice line, women's health, sports medicine, physical therapy, lab and radiology services, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and much more. For additional information, visit https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu or call 512-471-4955.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

We strongly encourage you to use the services offered by the University Writing Center. The UWC offers 45-minute, one-on-one consultations with UT students on any piece of writing. You may visit up to three times per short paper (8 pages or less). The consultants are well trained, and the cost of the service is covered in your tuition. If you wish to make an appointment, you may do so through the UWC website: https://uwc.utexas.edu/

SANGER LEARNING CENTER

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc

STUDENT EMERGENCY SERVICES (SES)

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to crisis or an emergency situation, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/ or by calling 512-471-5017.

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Important Safety Information

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or professors, contact BCCAL (the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line) at https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line or by calling 512-232-5050. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, however the university may be required to release some information to appropriate parties.

CLASSROOM SAFETY AND COVID-19

To help preserve our in-person learning environment, the university recommends the following.

- Adhere to university mask guidance. Masks are strongly recommended inside university buildings for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.
- Vaccinations are freely and widely available. The vaccine will help protect against the transmission of the virus to others and reduce serious symptoms in those who are vaccinated.
- Proactive Community Testing remains an important part of the university's efforts to protect our community. Tests are fast and free.
- We encourage the use of the Protect Texas App each day prior to coming to campus.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms or feel sick, stay home and contact the University Health Services' Nurse Advice Line at 512-475-6877. If you need to be absent from class, contact Student Emergency Services and they will notify us. In addition, to help understand what to do if you have been had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, see this University Health Services link.
- Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line (BCCAL) remains available as the primary tool to address questions or concerns from the university community about COVID-19.
- Students who test positive should contact BCCAL or self-report (if tested off campus) to University Health Services.
- Visit Protect Texas Together for more information.

CARRYING OF HANDGUNS ON CAMPUS

Texas' Open Carry law expressly prohibits a licensed to carry (LTC) holder from carrying a handgun openly on the campus of an institution of higher education such as UT Austin. Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to review the university policy regarding campus carry.
- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.
- Per our rights, we prohibit carrying of handguns in our personal offices.

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TITLE IX DISCLOSURE

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **We are Responsible Employees and must report any Title IX-related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu For more information about reporting options and resources, visit the Title IX Office or email titleix@austin.utexas.edu

CAMPUS SAFETY

The following are recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767,

- Students should sign up for Campus Emergency Text Alerts at the page linked above.
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus must evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- For more information, please visit emergency preparedness.