

Dr. Sarah Beth Kitch on SCL Convocation

Welcome! Welcome to the **School of Civic Leadership Convocation**. I'm Sarah Beth Kitch. I teach political theory and serve as associate dean of undergraduate studies here in the SCL at the University of Texas at Austin.

We've gathered tonight for **SCL's first Convocation**. *Con-vocare*—to call together, to summon to meet. **Abraham Joshua Heschel** lived through the cataclysm of the 20th century and marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Alabama. Heschel says that we each want to be **called upon**; each of us wants to be **summoned**.

Tonight your dean and faculty will call upon you to take up the disciplines and the joy of study as majors in the School of Civic Leadership. What does it mean to study? What does it mean to take up this task with others? What is the point of these years? How will you know if you lived them well?

The summons you'll hear tonight will take you into these questions. To begin, I'm pleased to introduce **Justin Dyer, professor and dean of the School of Civic Leadership**.

Justin Dyer is dean of the School of Civic Leadership, professor of government, and Jack G. Taylor Regents Professor at The University of Texas at Austin. He writes and teaches in the fields of American political thought, jurisprudence and constitutionalism, with an emphasis on the perennial philosophical tradition of natural law. Dean Dyer attended the University of Oklahoma on a wrestling scholarship. He then completed his M.A. and Ph.D. in Government here, at The University of Texas at Austin.

I am grateful to work alongside Dean Dyer and the outstanding faculty here at UT Austin. In that work, I've observed that Dean Dyer's academic life reflects his sense that the questions that we ask in a university matter to our lives as friends, citizens, and members of families. In this year's Dean's Welcome video, you heard Dean Dyer speak about legacy. The attention he gives to academic study comes out of his conviction that how we conduct ourselves matters—for our own lives, for the people around us, for the people who will come after us. We are responsible for the American story—to study it, to preserve what is good, to improve what needs reform (as he often says).

Dean Dyer exemplifies the virtue of hope. Where it's easy to be embittered by institutional failure, Dean Dyer seeks to renew important institutions—like this one—so that they are worthy of our trust and affection. He models the discipline of paying attention to what matters. In a world where it's easy to be distracted, he focuses on what's worth doing with our limited time.

I am honored to introduce to you Dean Dyer.