

Research Ethics in Psychology
UN1910
4 points
Course Syllabus, Spring 2019
Department of Psychology, Columbia University

Instructor: E'mett McCaskill, Ph.D.

Date/Time: Thursday 6:10-8pm

Location: 405 Schermerhorn

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Bulletin Description: This course explores the ethical theory, principles, codes and standards applicable to research in psychology and the complexities inherent in ethical research practice.

Course Description:

Research ethics involves the analysis of ethical issues raised when humans and animals serve as participants/subjects in research studies. *What is the system of moral values that distinguish right from wrong in scientific investigations?* Through inquiry, debate and practice, research ethicists seek to: protect research participants, assure that research is in the best interest of individuals, groups and society, define ethical standards and conduct post-investigation critiques for their ethical soundness.

Research Psychologists are called to uphold ethical principles at each stage of the scientific investigation. Current standards have evolved out of a complex and controversial history within the broader discipline of ethics. Despite these well-defined professional and institutional codes of ethics, researchers routinely face ethical dilemmas in research design, data collection and data interpretation. This course will provide students with a review of ethical theory, principles, codes and standards applicable to the research investigations in psychology and address the complexities inherent in ethical research practice.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to introduce students to the broad discipline of research ethics with specific emphasis on issues relevant to research in the field of psychology. The course will critically review several controversial studies in the history of psychology including: *The Milgram Experiment, The Stanford Prison Study, Little Albert and Learned Emotion*. Next, students will review philosophical theory which informs current ethical principles including: respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence and justice. This background will guide the development of a structured approach to ethical decision making and practice. Current professional codes of ethics will also be reviewed to deepen understanding of the application of theory to practice. Throughout each phase of the course, student self-reflection on research engagement and/or observation is encouraged to nurture a personal ethical posture.

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of ethical theory relevant to social science research
- Apply ethical theory to social science research design, methods and interpretation
- Write summary critiques of primary resources
- Engage in ethical debate and formulate ethical justification
- Define an ethical posture as a researcher

Role in the Psychology Curriculum:

This course is an elective course, intended for undergraduate students pursuing the Psychology major or concentration or the Neuroscience & Behavior major, and for students in the post-baccalaureate certificate program in Psychology.

Prerequisites: PSYC UN1001 The Science of Psychology or an equivalent introductory psychology course.

Readings:

American Psychological Association. (2017). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct (2002, Amended June 1, 2010 and January 1, 2017). Posted on CANVAS.

There are two texts required text for the course. Both may be purchased at Book Culture.

Beauchamp, T.L. & Childress, J.F. (2017). *Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 7th Edition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Israel, M. (2014). *Research Ethics and Integrity for Social Scientists: Beyond Regulatory Compliance, 2nd Edition*. New York, NY: Sage Publications.

Selected readings will also be taken from primary research articles and posted on CANVAS.

Course Requirements:

Presentation and Reading Assignments

Students should read the assigned articles and book chapters prior to our weekly meeting. Each student should come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Following the initial class sessions taught by the professor, two or three students will serve as discussion leaders each week. The presenters will read the assigned readings, as well as additional articles which will add more

depth to the discussion. Presenters will meet with the instructor one week prior to the presentation to review the supplemental readings. Professor McCaskill will work closely with your group on your presentation.

Presentations should be more than a summary of the reading assignment. The presenters should raise interesting discussion questions, present relevant case studies and encourage critical analysis and discussion.

Reflection Papers

Students will submit a reflection essay each week. The primary objective is to develop skills in formulating a critical analysis of several resources. The assignment will require completion of two parts. In Part I, students will be given a structured format with prompts to be answered prior to the class discussion on the topic. Part I should be uploaded to CANVAS prior to the class session dedicated to that topic. Following the class discussion, in Part II students will reflect on the class session and expand on their initial analysis. The final essay must be uploaded to CANVAS any time prior to the following class session. Essays are typically 3-4 pages. Late papers will not be accepted. Students are not required to submit a reflection paper on the week of their presentation. I will provide short written feedback on these papers via CANVAS, so that students understand expectations and have the opportunity to develop their skills in critical analysis.

Final Paper

Students will write a comprehensive ethical analysis or research proposal on a topic relevant to the course. This final paper should be written in a format consistent with the guidelines set in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. A proposal, including at least 4 relevant citations will be due March 14th. The final paper should be 12-15 pages, double-spaced, not including figures, supplements, or references. Detailed information on this assignment will be provided later in the course.

Personal Reflection

The study of Ethics is both scholarly and experiential. In the first week of class, students will be asked to write a brief reflection on one experience in which they felt confronted by an ethical dilemma relevant to research and their cognitive, emotional and behavioral response. These will be posted to CANVAS and discussed in class.

Class Participation

This class will be taught in seminar format. Student participation is a key factor in nurturing an enriching learning environment. It is expected that all students will contribute to each week's discussion. Students will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions. Evaluations of class participation will be based on the following:

- Has the student demonstrated knowledge of the reading assignments?
- Has the student provided new insight which builds on information in the readings?
- Is the student a good listener, addressing and integrating comments from classmates?

- Are the student's comments relevant, on track and non-tangential?
- Does the student limit advance beyond personal feelings, and also offer theory and principle as components of his/her defense?

Attendance

One **excused** absence is allowed during the semester. Please email me before the missed class.

Final Grades

Your final average will be calculated as follows:

Personal Reflection Paper	10%
Weekly Reaction Papers	20%
Participation	10%
Presentation	20%
Final Paper	40%
(Proposal	5%)
(Final Draft	35%)

Classroom Etiquette

It is important to nurture and maintain a seminar classroom environment that encourages thoughtful, respectful, active engagement without distractions. Use of cell phones are not allowed during class. Please turn off your phone and **DO NOT TEXT** during class. Laptops may be used for note-taking and review of posted readings only. If you use a laptop, please turn off all social media and chatting options prior to class.

Thank you in advance for respecting this policy. Active use of electronic devices during discussions creates distraction for me, presenters and classmates.

Discussion Topics and Readings

In addition to the readings listed below, additional articles from primary sources will be posted on CANVAS.

January 24th: Introduction

No readings required.

January 31st: Introduction to Research Ethics for Psychologists

Reading Assignment:

Celia B. Fisher, Adam L. Fried & Lindsay G. Feldman (2009). Graduate socialization in the responsible conduct of research: A national survey on the research ethics training experiences of psychology doctoral students, *ethics & behavior*, 19:6, 496-518, DOI: [10.1080/10508420903275283](https://doi.org/10.1080/10508420903275283)

Israel, Chapter 1: Why Care About Ethics?

Resnick, D.B. (2011). *What is ethics in research and why is it important?* National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

February 7th: Ethical Theory and Principles

Reading Assignment:

Beauchamp and Childress, Chapter 9: Moral Theories

February 14th: Professional Codes of Ethics

Reading Assignment

Israel, Chapter 3: Codes and Principles

Selections from the American Psychological Association Code of Ethics

February 21st: Research Methods: Subject Recruitment, Incentives

Reading Assignment

Grant, R.W. & Sugarman, J. (2004). Ethics in human subjects research: do incentives matter?, *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 29(6), 717-738, DOI: [10.1080/03605310490883046](https://doi.org/10.1080/03605310490883046)

Israel, Chapter 2: Ethical Approaches

Youngpeter, K. (2008). Controversial psychological research methods and their influence on the development of formal ethical guidelines. *Student Journal of Psychological Science*, 1(1), 4-12.

February 28th: Informed Consent and Autonomy

Reading Assignment

The Evolution of Consent Forms for Research: A Quarter Century of Changes. *IRB: Ethics & Human Research* Vol. 32, No. 3 (May-June 2010), pp. 7-11 Issue 3, 1 December 2001, Pages 450–461, doi.org/10.1086/323732.

Beauchamp and Childress, Chapter 4: Respect for Autonomy

Israel, Chapter 5: Informed Consent

Peterson, R.A. (2001). On the use of college students in social science research: Insights from a second order meta-analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Volume 28.

March 7th: Do No Harm: Nonmaleficence, Deception and Risks

Case Analysis: The Milgram Studies

Reading Assignment

Baumrind, D. (1985). Research using intentional deception: Ethical issues revisited. *American Psychologist*, 40(2), 165-174.. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.40.2.165>

Beauchamp and Childress, Chapter 5: Nonmaleficence

Burger, J.M. (2009). Replicating milgram: would people still obey today? *American Psychologist*, 64(1), 1-11.

March 14th: Do No Harm: Nonmaleficence, Deception and Risks (continued)

Case Analysis: The Stanford Prison Study

Christensen, L. (1988). Deception in research: when is it ethically justified? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167288144002>.

Israel, Chapter 7: Avoiding Harm, Doing Good and Seeking Justice

Miller, G. (2011). Using the psychology of evil to do good. *Science*, 332(6029): pp. 530-532.

March 21st: Spring Break

March 28th: Confidentiality

Reading Assignment

Israel, Chapter 6: Confidentiality

April 4th: Research with Vulnerable Populations

Reading Assignment

Case Analysis: Conditioned Emotion and Little Albert

Beck, H. P., Levinson, S., & Irons, G. (2009). Finding little Albert: A journey to John B. Watson's infant laboratory. *American Psychologist*, 64(7), 605-614.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0017234>

Case Analysis: The Preschool ADHD Treatment (PATs) Study

Fisher, C. B., Hoagwood, K., Boyce, C., Duster, T., Frank, D. A., Grisso, T., . . . Zayas, L. H. (2002). Research ethics for mental health science involving ethnic minority children and youths. *American Psychologist*, 57(12), 1024-1040.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.57.12.1024>

Kollin, S., Greenhill, L et al. (2006). Rationale, design and methods of the Preschool ADHD Treatment Study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 45(11): 1275-1283.

April 11th: Personal and Sociopolitical Bias in Interpretation and Publication-Just Practice?

Case Analysis: Research Addressing the Prenatal Effects of Cocaine: A Rush to Judgment

Reading Assignment

Beauchamp and Childress, Chapter 7: Justice

Mayes, L., Granger, R.H., Bornstein, M.H. et. al. (1992). Prenatal cocaine use: a rush to judgment. *JAMA*.(3):406-408. doi:10.1001/jama.1992.03480030084043

Rosenthal, R. (1979). The file drawer problem and tolerance for null results. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86(3), 638-641, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.86.3.638>.

April 18th: Ethical Issues in Research with Animals

Fitzpatrick, A. (2003). Ethics in animal research. *Journal of laboratory and clinical medicine*, 141(2): 89-92.

Rollin, B.E. (2006). The Regulation of Animal Research and the emergence of animal ethics: a conceptual history. *Theoretical medicine and bioethics*, 27: 285-304.

April 25th: Nurturing an Ethical Posture: Do Good

Reading Assignment

Beauchamp and Childress, Chapter 2: Moral Character

Israel, Chapter 8: Integrity and Misconduct

May 2nd: Nurturing an Ethical Posture: Do Good (continued)

Beauchamp and Childress, Chapter 6: Beneficence

Israel, Chapter 9: Relationships

Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia

Please refer to <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

Rights and Responsibilities

Students, instructors, and Disability Services (DS) all have rights and responsibilities in the process of ensuring that students receive the reasonable accommodations necessary for their full participation in their academic program. This page provides a brief oversight of these rights and responsibilities, but for more information you are referred to [Disability Services](#).

Student Rights and Responsibilities

In order to ensure their rights to reasonable accommodations, it is the responsibility of students to report any learning-related disabilities, to do so in a timely fashion, and to do so through the Office of Disability Services. Students who have documented conditions and are determined by DS to need individualized services will be provided an DS-certified 'Accommodation Letter'. It is students' responsibility to provide this letter to all their instructors and in so doing request the stated accommodations.