

SS8805: METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Methodology and Ethics in Social and Behavioural Sciences

Subject Code

SS - Social and Behavioural Sciences

Course Number

8805

Academic Unit

Social and Behavioural Sciences (SS)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

2

Level

R8 - Research Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course is designed to provide a general and practical overview of research method and ethics, with particular attention to research conduct of social scientists. Using a combination of reading assignments, lectures, case analyses and discussions, the course is designed for research students who are undertaking or preparing to undertake research in the social or behavioral sciences.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 app.)		DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Understanding major philosophical approaches that guide the modern-day research environment.	30	x		
2	Identify ethical issues in research protocol design and practical ways in which they may be resolved.	30	x	x	
3	Apply ethical principles and regulatory requirements to their own current and future research program.	40		x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Class lectures on relevant topics	1, 2, 3	2 hours
2	Case discussions	Discussion of real case where ethical issues have been potentially relevant to our students' research	1, 2, 3	
3	Quiz	A pool of quiz items to test the general and specific understanding of the student on methodology and ethics	1, 2, 3	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Quiz	1, 2, 3	40	-	No
2	Term paper: mock application for ethical clearance**	2, 3	60	-	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Additional Information for ATs

**The essay writing is not a replicate of the ethics application of the student's own doctoral research and did not use the standard forms of the University.

4.1 Quiz (40%)

A quiz in the format of short-answer questions will be given to students to test their basic knowledge of research ethics in general and in relation to specific research methods/contexts.

4.2 Term paper (60%)

No later than the last day of the semester, student will be given a specific topic and provide the following sections for assessment:

- A simplified research protocol of not more than 3 pages;
- A section on chosen method and procedures;
- To draft an information sheet with invitation to the proposed study;
- To design a consent form and consent taking process (if applicable);
- To address possible loopholes in privacy, and measures to safeguard participant welfare and rights, the keeping and disposal of research data, and other relevant issues.

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1.Quiz (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Understanding of the subject matters

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Demonstrate excellent understanding of the subject matters.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Demonstrate good understanding of the subject matters, though missing some of the points.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Demonstrate adequate understanding of the core of the subject matters.

Marginal

(D) Demonstrate limited understanding of the subject matter and can only recall limited content.

Failure

(F) Unambiguously poor understanding of the subject matter.

Assessment Task

2.Term Paper (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Quality of writing

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Passed with no or very few minor ethical concerns. Able to demonstrate extreme care to research participants.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Passed with a few rectifiable ethical concerns. Able to demonstrate good care to research participants.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Passed with some rectifiable ethical concerns. Able to demonstrate some considerations on research participants.

Marginal

(D) Showed some ethical loopholes, which may become a major threat to research ethics; no sufficient justification for the choice of research design and procedures.

Failure

(F) Showed major faults, wrongdoing or loopholes that may hinder the well-being or rights of the research participants.

Assessment Task

1. Quiz (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Understanding of the subject matters

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Demonstrate excellent understanding of the subject matters

Good

(B+, B) Demonstrate good understanding of the subject matters, though missing some of the minor points

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Demonstrate limited understanding of the subject matter and can only recall limited content.

Failure

(F) Unambiguously poor understanding of the subject matter.

Assessment Task

2. Term Paper (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Quality of Writing; application of principles of research ethics to a mock application for ethical clearance

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Passed with no or very few minor ethical concerns. Able to demonstrate extreme care to research participants.

Good

(B+, B) Passed with a few rectifiable ethical concerns. Able to demonstrate good care to research participants.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Showed some ethical loopholes, which may become a major threat to research ethics; no sufficient justification for the choice of research design and procedures.

Failure

(F) Showed major faults, wrongdoing or loopholes that may hinder the well-being or rights of the research participants.

Part III Other Information**Keyword Syllabus**

Philosophical principles; privacy and confidentiality; informed consent; deception; ethics of E-research; cost-utility analysis; ethics of qualitative and intervention research; research with vulnerable populations; survey research; randomized controlled trials; practice research; ethnography; scientific integrity, research conduct.

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Bolland M. J., Avenell A., Gamble, G. D., & Grey, A. (2016). Systematic review and statistical analysis of the integrity of 33 randomized controlled trials. <i>Neurology</i> 87(23), 2391-2402.
2	Bos, J. (2020). <i>Research ethics for students in the social sciences</i> . Springer, Switzerland. (e-book; chapters 3-4)
3	Brooks, R., te Riele K., & Maguire, M. (2014). <i>Ethics and education research</i> . Sage Publications Ltd. (e-book; chapters 2 and 6)
4	Childress, C. A., & Asamen J. K. (1998). The emerging relationship of psychology and the internet: Proposed guidelines for conducting internet intervention research. <i>Ethics & Behavior</i> 8, 19-35.
5	Clark, J. J., Walker, R. (2012). Research ethics in victimization studies: Widening the lens. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 17 (12), 1489-1508.
6	Duneier, M. (2011). How not to lie with ethnography? <i>Sociological Methodology</i> 41(1), 1-11.
7	Field, C., Archer, V., and Bowman, J. (2019). Twenty years in prison: Reflections on conducting research in correctional environments. <i>The Prison Journal</i> 99 (2), 135-149.
8	Kimmel, A. J. (2012). Deception in research. In S. J. Knapp (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Ethics in Psychology: Vol. 2. Practice, Teaching, and Research</i> (pp. 401-421). American Psychological Association: Washington, DC.
9	Koepsell D. (2017). <i>Scientific integrity and research ethics: An approach from the ethos of science</i> (SpringerBriefs in ethics). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. Chapters 2-5.
10	Milgram. S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. <i>Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology</i> 67(4), 371-378.
11	Milgram, S. (1964). Group pressure and action against a person. <i>Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology</i> 69(2), 137-143.
12	Moher, D., Hopewell, S., Schulz, K. F., Montori V., Gøtzsche P. C., Devereaux, P. J., ... & Altman, D. G. (2010). CONSORT 2010 explanation and elaboration: updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials. <i>Journal of clinical epidemiology</i> 63(8), e1-e37.
13	Nagy, T. F. (2011). <i>Essential ethics for psychologists: A primer for understanding and mastering core issues</i> . American Psychological Association: Washington, DC.
14	Nosek B. A., Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2002). E-Research: Ethics, security, design, and control, in psychological research on the internet. <i>Journal of Social Issues</i> 58, 161-176.
15	Rosenthal, R., Rosnow R. L. (1984). Applying Hamlet's question to the ethical conduct of research: A conceptual addendum. <i>American Psychologist</i> 39, 561-563.
16	Rosnow R. L. (1990). Teaching research ethics through role-play and discussion. <i>Teaching of Psychology</i> 17, 179-181.

17	Rosoff C. B. (2017). Ethics in college sexual assault research. <i>Ethics & Behavior</i> 28 (2), 91–103.
18	Schlenker B. R., Forsyth, D. R. (1977). On the ethics of psychological research. <i>Journal of Experimental Social Psychology</i> 13, 369-396.
19	Singer, E. (2008). Ethical Issues in Surveys. In <i>International Handbook of Survey Methodology</i> (edited by De Leeuw/Hox/Dillman), pp.78-96. Routledge.
20	Stines L. R., & Feeny N. C. (2008). Unique ethical concerns in clinical trials comparing psychosocial and psychopharmacological interventions. <i>Ethics & behavior</i> 18(2-3), 234-246.
21	Zhang, S. (2019). Unresolvable tensions and ethical dilemmas: Reflections on the experience of doing "prison research" in China—A research note. <i>The Prison Journal</i> 99 (6), 662-682.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Nakray K., Alston, M., & Whittenbury K. (2016). <i>Social science research ethics for a globalizing world: Interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives</i> (Routledge advances in research methods vol 16). New York, NY: Routledge.
2	Koepsell D. (2017). <i>Scientific integrity and research ethics: An approach from the ethos of science</i> (SpringerBriefs in ethics). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
3	Jones, J. (2016). <i>Research ethics in practice</i> (Fundamentals of applied research). London; Los Angeles: SAGE Reference.