# A Basic Guide to Course-Based Research Ethics
# for CSL Instructors and Community Mentors

(Please note that these are guidelines only;
individual instructors are responsible for knowing U of A ethics protocols.)

## What is course-based research ethics?

The University of Alberta has a policy on research involving human participants (http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm) that is also governed by TCPS 2 - the 2nd edition of *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (see http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/).  All research conducted by members of the University of Alberta, including students, must adhere to these policies. Their purpose is to ensure that the dignity and well-being of human participants is fully respected.

Research involving human participants, including when conducted as part of a course, needs approval by a Research Ethics Board (REB).  This document serves as a general guideline for understanding and applying for ethics approval when students' CSL placements will involve human research (as assigned/requested by the instructor and/or by the community partner).  CSL Instructors whose students will be involved in data collection and analysis involving human participants must apply for course ethics approval via HERO – Human Ethics Research Online (http://hero.ualberta.ca). *NOTE:  All course-based student research ethics applications will be reviewed by Board 1.*

Please note that while instructors are responsible for completing course-based ethics applications, it is important that all participants in CSL – instructors, community mentors, and students – understand and address ethics issues in community settings.

## When do CSL courses "not usually" require ethics approval?

- When students engage in informal observations and general reflections on their CSL experiences for course assignments (e.g., in journals or short written papers).
- When, as a part of their placement work, students engage in research that does not involve human participants (for example, gathering published resource materials, or doing literature reviews, media analysis and analysis of government documents).
- When students are helping an agency conduct a needs assessment or "quality assurance study" that may involve interviews, questionnaires or formal observation but is for internal purposes only.

While the above situations do not "usually" require that an instructor seek course-based research ethics approval, they still raise ethical issues, including the privacy and confidentiality of agency staff, volunteers and clients.

- Many community partners ask students to sign a confidentiality agreement and/or address concerns related to confidentiality and safety in training CSL students.
- Instructors should work to ensure that students doing CSL placements are mindful of the need for respect and confidentiality both in their placement work and in their reflections on this work. One instructor includes the following instructions for students doing a journal assignment:

    "You need to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of all individuals with whom you come in contact.  So, don't "name names"—instead, refer to events in a broader context; focus on the social circumstances of situations rather than the individual; analyze your own experience of these events. This practice demonstrates respect for the individuals you come in contact with, and actively performs academic integrity and self-reflexivity."

## When do CSL courses require ethics approval?

CSL courses require ethics approval in two situations:

1. **When course assignments involve students in research with human participants.** *Example: As a part of their course research paper assignment, students conduct interviews or administer a survey to agency staff or volunteers at their CSL placement.*
2. **When, as part of their CSL placement work, students conduct research involving human participants that is under the supervision and direction of community agencies**. *Example: As a part of their placement at an agency working with seniors, students administer a survey on the housing needs of seniors in Edmonton that the community agency intends to report in the media and/or use as the basis for government lobbying.*

## What should instructors do if they are not sure if their course requires ethics approval?

Sometimes CSL projects fall into a gray area and instructors may not be sure if a placement really involves "research with human participants." If any instructor is not sure whether their course requires ethics approval, please contact the Director of the CSL Program.

**What kinds of research can CSL students NOT do?**

Undergraduate students may only be involved in research projects that are classified as "minimal risk" (there is more flexibility for graduate students). This means two things:

• **The University of Alberta's policies do not allow undergraduate students to conduct research with subjects who are members of vulnerable groups**. Vulnerable populations are those who are thought to be unable to give full informed and voluntary consent to be involved in a research study. *Examples of "vulnerable populations" include (but are not limited to) minors, incarcerated people, and people with moderate or severe developmental disabilities.*

• **Undergraduate students cannot engage in research activities that create more than minimal physical, emotional or psychological risks to themselves or to research participants**. *Examples of research activities that would usually be considered to pose too great a risk of harm include: interviewing child abuse survivors about their experiences (because of risk of trauma for participants) or administering a questionnaire to people involved in drug-related gang activities( because of a risk to both students' and participants' physical safety and potential legal liability).*

**What are the instructors' responsibilities when students are doing research with human participants, whether because of course requirements or because of work in CSL placements?**

• **You must apply for and receive course-based ethics approval**. *Submit your application as soon as you receive your "Placement" list from the CSL Program (normally 6 weeks before the beginning of term).* Once you consult a model ethics application (see Appendix I: "Sample CSL Course Ethics Application"), it is usually straightforward to complete your own application. Please use the sample as a guide for creating an ethics application that fits the goals and activities of your specific course. If you think the circumstances of your course pose unique issues or problems, please contact the Director of the CSL Program.

• **Once you receive REB approval, you, as instructor, are responsible for ensuring that research projects carried out by students adhere to ethics standards.** (Instructors are officially the Principal Investigator on research projects covered by a course-based ethics applications.) You must ensure that students obtain informed written consent from research participants that includes the right to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw at any time (see Appendix II "Sample Consent Form"). See pp. 31-32 of TCPS 2 for full information on what should be included in a consent form. You must also ensure that students respect anonymity and confidentiality in carrying out the research project (by protecting the identity of any participant in written materials and carefully and securely storing research data).

- **If your students are doing research involving human participants for a course requirement, you must ensure that the community partners assigned to your course are fully informed of this**. You should ask the community agencies assigned to your course about their own policies regarding research, and should only proceed with their permission. You should tell your students to inform their community partners about the research they are doing and ensure that students are aware of their organizations' policies regarding research.
- **You should spend time in class educating students about research ethics and the rules that they must adhere to if their coursework and/or CSL placements involve research with human participants**. This is a good learning opportunity for students. Spend time in class discussing what informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality mean in practice. Have students submit a short ethics statement where they outline how they will ensure that research ethics guidelines are respected. Hand out a sample consent form (see Appendix II) and make sure that all students understand that they must review ethics and consent procedures with research participants and also ask them to sign a consent form. Note that in the case of survey research, participants must still give informed and voluntary consent, but may demonstrate consent by completing the survey instrument (See Appendix III). Give students a handout that outlines ethics requirements and concerns (see "Sample Handout on Ethical Guidelines for Research" below).

## What does this mean for community partners?

- Community partners need to be aware that **there are some kinds of research that students cannot do** in their placement work (see above).
- You need to be aware that if you are asking students to do research involving human participants, those **students will need to receive formal consent from participants** – usually by having participants sign a consent form – for the purposes of adhering to the University of Alberta's guidelines.
- You should take the opportunity to **educate students about your own policies on research and on confidentiality and safety**. Your policies may be attentive to concerns and issues that are not covered by the University's policies and students should adhere to your rules as well.

## Using HERO (http://hero.ualberta.ca)

Note that HERO does not work properly in Safari; you will need to use Explorer or Firefox or another browser.

**Sample Handout**

# Ethical Guidelines for Research

All student research assignments at the University of Alberta must follow the ethical guidelines outlined in TCPS 2 - the 2nd edition of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. Further details of these guidelines are available at: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/.  Also see Section 66 of the U of A GFC Policy Manual at: http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm.

The summary below highlights key principles that will be discussed in further detail in class and as they relate to the various assignments and in-class activities.

**Summary of Guiding Principles from TCPS 2**

**Respect for Human Dignity**: This principle serves as the basis for all others and includes respect for the multiple and interdependent interests of the person from bodily to psychological to cultural integrity.

**Respect for Free and Informed Consent**: Individuals are presumed to have the capacity and right to make free and informed decisions. Consent includes engaging in a dialogue about rights, duties and responsibilities to ensure free and informed consent by the research subject.

**Respect for Vulnerable Persons**: Special attention must be paid to maintaining the human dignity of vulnerable persons such as children, institutionalized persons, etc. Special procedures to protect their interests might be required.

**Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality**: Standards of privacy protect access, control and dissemination of personal information. Includes use of pseudonyms, obscuring details so people cannot be identified.

**Respect for Justice and Inclusiveness**: No segment of the population should be unfairly burdened with the harms of research nor should those who benefit be discriminated against.

**Balancing Harms and Benefits**: This principle recognizes that harms and benefits must be balanced and that some harms may be unforeseen. In social sciences, the reputation of organizations, communities and individuals should be considered.

**Minimizing Harm**: Participants should not be exposed to unnecessary risk and their participation must be essential to the social importance of the work.

**Maximizing Benefit**: Research must be directed towards social benefits and the advancement of knowledge.

**Appendix I: Sample HERO Application [to be retro-fitted to your individual course]**

<u>1.1  Study Identification</u>
*All questions preceded by a red asterisk \* are required fields. However, answering only the required fields may not provide sufficient information for the  REB in order to evaluate your application.*
*Please answer all presented questions that will reasonably help to describe your study or proposed research.*

1.0 \* **Short Study Title** *(restricted to 250 characters)***:**
COURSE-BASED RESEARCH IN SOC 3XX

2.0 \* **Complete Study Title** *(can be exactly the same as short title)***:**
APPLICATION FOR COURSE-BASED RESEARCH
in
SOC 3XX GENDER AND THE LIFE COURSE, WITH A COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING (CSL) COMPONENT

3.0 \* **Select the appropriate Research Ethics Board (***Detailed descriptions are available by clicking the HELP link in the upper right hand corner of your screen***):**
REB 1

4.0 \* **Is the proposed research:**
Unfunded

5.0 \* **Name of Principal Investigator** *(at the University of Alberta, Covenant Health, or Alberta Health Services)***:**
Sara Dorow

6.0 **Investigator's Supervisor** *(required for applications from undergraduate students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and medical residents to Boards 1, 2, 3. HREB does not accept applications from student PIs)*

7.0 \* **Type of research/study:**
Instructor Course-based (where all students in a class, individually or in groups, conduct the same or similar MINIMAL risk research assignments, following project guidelines provided by instructor)

8.0 **Study Coordinators or Research Assistants:** People listed here can edit this application and will receive all HERO notifications for the study:

| Name | Employer |
| --- | --- |
| There are no items to display | |

9.0 **Co-Investigators:** People listed here can edit this application but do not receive HERO notifications unless they are added to the study email list:

| Name | Employer |
| --- | --- |
| There are no items to display | |

10.0 **Study Team** *(Co-investigators, supervising team, other study team members):* People listed here cannot edit this application and do not receive HERO notifications:

| Last Name | First Name | Organization | Role | Phone | Email |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| There are no items to display | | | | | |

## 1.7  Instructor-led Course-based Application

Frequently, undergraduate courses incorporate class projects and other activities for the purposes of developing research skills. These projects may be carried out by individual students, small groups or as a single class project.

Examples of course-based research activities include:

- Having students conduct interviews, administer standard tests, or distribute questionnaires to develop interview or questionnaire design skills, or
- Conduct "mini" research projects where students pose research questions, gather data from human participants, and analyse data for presentation

Regardless of the activities, course-based student research assignments must be no more than minimal risk and the participants must be drawn from the general population and be capable of giving free and informed consent. In addition, the student projects must not involve deception, personal or sensitive topics, or physically invasive contact with the participants.

*NOTE:  All instructor-led course-based student research ethics application will be reviewed by Board 1. Please ensure you have selected Board 1 in the first page of this application.*

1.0

* **Provide Course Title:**

Gender and the Life Course

* **Provide Course Number:**

Soc 3XX

* **Provide a brief description of the research component in the course assignment(s), including the nature of the involvement of human participants** (*i.e., methods, procedures, and work that students will hand in)*:

GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course introduces students to the gendering of life scripts and the historical construction of the gendered life course, especially in Canada. It includes an optional community service-learning (CSL) component.  In addition to course readings, lectures, and discussions, students choose to do a library research assignment OR to do a CSL placement.

2.0

COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING:
CSL is a pedagogical practice that integrates community-engaged voluntarism and social action into academic courses, and is facilitated by the CSL Program (based in the Faculty of Arts). CSL involves students in 20 hours of service and action in projects of relevance to course goals (organizations working with women and men at different stages of the life course). Students who
choose the CSL component in SOC 3XX will be matched with one of four organizations in projects developed through the CSL Program. In two of those placements, students will be conducting research for the organization. In all CSL placements, the instructor is also requiring students to interview one staff person in order to better understand the context of their work.

RESEARCH COMPONENTS:
There are two distinct aspects of research in the CSL stream of SOC 3XX:
Research for Community Partners
In two of the community placements, students will work closely with community partners, under the supervision of community mentors, to conduct small research projects. At Housing for Seniors, 2-3 students will conduct semi-structured oral histories with several senior residents for a booklet being produced by the organization. At Changing Futures, 1-2 students will design and distribute a one-page survey with women who are receiving support from this organization as they return to school mid-life.

Research on Community Partners
All CSL students in the course will be asked to conduct one short (20-30 minute) semi-structured interview with a staff member at their organization that addresses several questions: What specific stage(s) in the life course are being addressed by the organization? How are these particular life course experiences gendered? What are the social policies and practices that especially affect the stages of the life course most of their clients are currently in?

Research Assignments
• By the fourth week of the term, and before they have conducted any research, all students conducting research must hand in (as part of their journal) a short description of their Research Plan: questions they plan to ask, and ethics issues they must consider
in their particular context including minimizing risk, informed and voluntary consent, and confidentiality and anonymity. They must demonstrate having discussed these issues with their community partners.
• Journal is handed in twice during the term – students are expected to keep a log of their research activities, to include anonymized interview notes, and to attach any survey or interview instruments they develop along with the consent form they will use (based on the sample one distributed in class - see section 7.1).
• Final Paper handed in at the end of the term – students are to integrate what they learned from their interviews in the final paper, properly anonymizing and citing their findings.
• Throughout the term, students will sometimes share their research experiences and findings in class discussion, and will be instructed to do so respecting the privacy and confidentiality of their participants.

* **What is the goal of including research assignments in the course?**

3.0 CSL aims to engage students with course material in meaningful ways by linking it to hands-on community experiences. When those experiences include research, students build valuable research skills while also contributing to the self-identified needs of community partners. The community-based research projects also give students experience working collaboratively. In the case of interviews with organization staff, the goals are to help students develop contextual understanding of their CSL projects and to link literature-based and practice-based forms of knowledge.

**If there is a possibility that the research will involve participants who might not be capable of providing informed consent, provide details:**
4.0 Students will be given clear instructions to only include participants who can provide informed consent. In community partnerships where some clients may be considered part of a 'vulnerable' population, professional staff from those organizations will help to identify individual clients whom they know to be capable of informed consent based on their experience of working with them. This is the pool of people the students will invite to participate in the study.

**Will any of the research study specifically target the involvement of**
5.0 **Aboriginal People?**
HTMLDirect ◯ Yes  HTMLDirect ◉ **No**


1.8  Student Policy Education

**\* Explain how you will prepare your students to comply with Tri-Council Policy Statement** *(TCPS 2)* **guidelines and the University Human Research Ethics Policy in completing the course assignment(s). Attach any relevant materials to Section 7: Documents section of this form.**

At the beginning of each term, all participating CSL students receive a copy of the CSL Student Guidebook, outlining basic ethics and safety guidelines. Instructors review these guidelines with all CSL students.  In addition, the CSL Program and individual instructors communicate with community partners about ethics issues, including where students are involved in research with human participants.
• All participating CSL students are required to complete a CSL Student Agreement with their community supervisor, in which they briefly consider ethics issues that may arise during their course of their CSL placement.
• Students conducting research with human subjects will submit to the instructor a written statement discussing the potential risks to human subjects and the manner in which these risks will be handled (journal assignment).
• Students will work with their community supervisors to ensure that research participation is voluntary, anonymous and confidential. No vulnerable populations will be involved.
• Students will be given a sample consent form to be used in interviews and/or to be attached to survey instruments.
1.0 * In cases where students are recruiting participants, they will be required to submit a draft recruitment letter and protocol to the instructor for approval before it is implemented.
• As part of required written reflection on their experiences at their community organization, students may include anecdotal information drawn from their experiences at the organization, but they will be informed that they must take steps to avoid any identifying information.

The following class activities will be employed to help students learn about research ethics issues (especially regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity) and ways to minimize risks to themselves and the people with whom they conduct research:
• Distribution and review of summary of TCPS 2 guidelines (see attachment)
• Large and small group work/discussion focused on research scenarios that illustrate issues of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity
• Regular sharing/de-briefing sessions throughout the course
• Individual consultation with instructor as needed

In addition to university and course ethics requirements, information will be available in class that emphasizes to students that they must agree to and comply with any confidentiality and/or participation waivers required by their assigned CSL community organizations.

## 7.1  Documentation

Add documents in this section according to the headers. Use Item 11.0 "Other Documents" for any material not specifically mentioned below.
Sample templates are available in the HERO Home Page in the **Forms and Templates**, or by clicking HERE.

**Recruitment Materials:**

1.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Letter of Initial Contact:**

2.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Informed Consent / Information Document(s):**
**3.1  What is the reading level of the Informed Consent Form(s):**
Grade 9
**3.2  Informed Consent Form(s)/Information Document(s):**

3.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| CONSENT FORM.doc | History | 0.01 | 8/11/2011 12:23 PM | |

**Assent Forms:**

4.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Questionnaires, Cover Letters, Surveys, Tests, Interview Scripts, etc.:**

5.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Protocol:**

6.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Investigator Brochures/Product Monographs** *(Clinical Applications only)***:**

7.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Health Canada No Objection Letter** *(NOL)***:**

8.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Confidentiality Agreement:**

9.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

**Conflict of Interest:**

10.0

| Document Name | Version | Date | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| There are no items to display | | | |

11.0 **Other Documents:**
*For example, Study Budget, Course Outline, or other documents not mentioned*

**Appendix IIa: Sample Consent Form [students doing research for community partner]**

## [Name of Research Project]

This project is being conducted for [Name of Community Organization] by U of A students enrolled in the course Soc 3xx: Gender and the Life Course.

[Insert here a paragraph inviting participants into the study that describes in plain language the purpose of the research project, who is conducting it, what participants are being asked to do, and what will be done with the results. Explain any risks and/or benefits of participating. Indicate any funding that supports the project]

Please initial each line if you agree with the statement and sign at the bottom:

**\_\_\_\_\_ I am at least eighteen years old.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ The project has been explained to me and the researcher has answered any questions I have about the research.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my participation in the interview is completely voluntary.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ I am free to withdraw from the research project, and to have any information I provided deleted from the study before December 2011, when the results will be compiled and published.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ I am under no obligation to disclose information that I do not want to disclose.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ I may refuse to answer any questions.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ I may withdraw from the interview at any time.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ Information gathered will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Only the interviewer will know which interview**
**\_\_\_\_\_ Information will be stored in a secure location. Only the researcher will have access to any notes or recordings from the interview. Interview transcripts will be anonymized before information is shared with any other members of the research team.**
**\_\_\_\_\_ I agree / don't agree [please circle one] to have the interview recorded.**

[Insert here the name and contact information for the instructor of the course, as principal investigator for the project, and invite people to contact him/her if they have questions or concerns. The name and contact information for the student may also be inserted here.] You may also contact the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta at 780-492-0459 with any concerns.


_____  _____
**Signature of the Participant**                          **Date**

_____
**Printed Name of Participant**

_____  _____
**Signature of Interviewer/Student**                     **Date**

_____
**Printed Name of Interviewer/Student**

**Appendix IIb: Sample Consent Form [students doing research on community partner]**

**Voluntary Sector Supports to People Across the Life Course**

This interview is part of a research project on non-profit sector workers' perspectives on supporting men and women at different stages of their life course. I am conducting this interview as part of a course assignment in Sociology 3XX: Gender and the Life Course. The interview will ask you to reflect on how the work of your organization addresses concerns at particular stages in people's life course, to explain relevant policies, and to discuss how those concerns and policies might be gendered. I hope that your participation in this research will contribute to general understanding of these issues; it will also contribute to the development of my research skills. I will include the results of the interview in my class journal and final paper.

Interviews will be conducted by [student name]. The interview uses a semi-structured approach, and will take about 30 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded only with your permission, and will be held in a space where you feel comfortable. Your participation is completely voluntary; deciding not to participate will have no negative consequences for you or your relationship to the University of Alberta.

All information from this interview will be kept confidential, and your anonymity protected by changing names and other identifying information in transcripts, field notes, and any class reports or presentations. You may also want or agree to have your name used in publications; the researcher will offer to send a transcript of the interview for you to review and edit if you choose this option. Please note that because there are only a few organizations in Edmonton that do the kind of work you do, there is a small chance people can guess at your identity.

Audio recordings and any written or types notes and transcripts from this interview will be kept in a secure location, and only myself and the course instructor will have access to them. You have the right to opt out of particular questions or withdraw from the study at any time before publication of materials resulting from the study (December 2011). If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project as a whole, please ask the interviewer at the time of the interview, or contact my instructor, Imelda Academic, at (780) 492-0000 or at imacademic@ualberta.ca. You may also contact the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta at 780-492-0459 with any concerns.

Consent
By signing below, I am indicating that I have read and understood the above information, and that I consent to participate in this research project.

_____     _____     _____
Interviewee's Name               Interviewee's Signature                          Date

_____     _____     _____
Researcher's Name                Researcher's Signature                          Date