SOCI 362: Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research

Fall Semester 2016  
Scott Engineering Center (SEC) 241  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
MWF 2:30-3:20 p.m.

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Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:30 P.M. or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides a comprehensive overview of key subject areas involved in ethical and responsible decision making in the conduct of research. It is designed to help students learn relevant guidelines, policies and codes relating to ethical research. We will identify, define, and analyze ethical issues and explore emergent areas of human subjects in an interdisciplinary context; we will examine ethical decision-making, civic responsibility, and stewardship in the human subject research. The course will provide the knowledge and skills for identifying and resolving ethical conflicts that may arise in the course of research. The core elements of this course focus on issues related to research misconduct, protection of human subjects, the welfare of animals used in research, conflicts of interest and data management practices, mentor and mentee responsibilities, collaborative research, authorship and publication, peer review, and responsibilities to society.

Achievement-Centered Education (ACE) Student Learning Outcomes

The University of Nebraska—Lincoln seeks to provide quality education to all of its students. To that end, it has designated certain classes as ACE certified. These classes provide and assess specific learning outcomes. As an ACE class, SOCI 362: Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research, will facilitate Learning Outcome #8 (Explain ethical principles, civics, and stewardship, and their importance to society.). This class will:

- Foster student understanding ethics and ethical decision making in research.
- Facilitate students learning how ethical considerations inform the responsible conduct of research including civic responsibility and stewardship.
- Assist students to develop problem-solving skills involved in applying ethical standards, and identifying potential responses, to human subject research case studies.
- Provide the student with the information needed to analyze how ethical standards are translated into civics, stewardship, and responsible conduct guidelines as applied to human subject research.
- Facilitate these goals through lecture, readings, class discussion, and in-class activities.

ACE learning outcomes in this class will be assessed by:

- Exams, class discussions, and written assignments.
Upon completing this course, students in this class will be able to explain the major concepts and issues in responsible conduct of research by having (1) increased awareness of the ethical dimension in conducting research, (2) a greater sense of personal and social responsibility for resolving ethical conflicts in conducting research, and (3) improved knowledge and skills in analyzing ethical conflicts. To achieve these learning goals, the instructor’s teaching pedagogy includes lectures, video clips, case studies, class discussions, and small group work.

**Required Texts**


Additional readings including articles and book chapters relevant to class topics will be posted on the course Blackboard website as necessary. As a student enrolled in this course, you are allowed to print these materials off for your own use in this class but are encouraged *not to* distribute these materials to others.

**Course Requirements**

**Blackboard Discussion Forums**

A significant part of the learning experience in this course includes the use of seminar format for discussion. There will be about ten discussion forums that take place on Blackboard. The instructor will post a set of guiding questions that provide a framework for class discussion and to guide students in their readings and writings. Students are expected to contribute to discussions and participate in the lively exchange of ideas and experiences. Participation in Blackboard discussion accounts for 30% of your final grade. To receive full credit on your discussion, you are required to post your responses to the guiding questions/instructions; about 400 words in length for each discussion forum.

**Examinations**

There will be one take-home examination (mid-term) and one in-class examination (comprehensive final), accounting for 30% of your total grade. Examination weeks are listed later on this syllabus. Make-up examinations provoke serious fairness issues and therefore will be given only in extreme circumstances, such as in the case of serious medical or family emergency. Students, in this case, must notify the instructor as soon as possible either in person or through e-mail. Students must also provide written documentation of the incident.

**Case Study**

There will be four written assignments involving the analysis of ethical issues in case studies. The case studies will be selected to reinforce core areas of ethical standards, civics, and
stewardship in the responsible conduct of research. The assignments require that you identify the ethical issue(s) involved in the case studies, provide recommendations for how the ethical issue could have been avoided, examine civic and stewardship implications, and present an approach to resolve ethical issues given the decisions that have already been made. More detailed instructions will be posted on Blackboard. Case study analyses and interpretations are due on September 16, October 12, November 11, and December 2 and account for about 20% of your final grade.

Group Presentation
You will be assigned to a group of two or three students. Each group will summarize the Blackboard discussion of a specific week, present the summary in class, and lead the following wrap-up discussion by asking and/or answering questions. More detailed instructions will be posted on Blackboard. This group presentation accounts for 10% of your final grade.

Class Attendance and Pop Quiz
Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and come prepared. Each student will be expected to have read all the required reading for a given class session and pay close attention to the class lectures. Attendance will be taken every class session along with frequent pop quizzes. Class attendance and pop quizzes will account for 10% of your final grade. In class discussions, you should be prepared to answer questions posed by the instructor and your classmates and provide comments about your classmates’ discussions about the assigned reading materials. Positive and negative critiques of the readings, the presentations, and the positions taken by other class participants are part of the academic experience. Criticisms should be made and received in a professional manner; that is, class participants are colleagues within a professional community whose members share the goal of developing a more systematic understanding of class topics. It is your responsibility to take appropriate measures to ensure that you keep up with the materials when you are unable to attend class; please feel free to contact me for any help as needed.

Incomplete Grades
A grade of incomplete is a courtesy extended to students who are prevented from completing the course by events out of students’ control (e.g. serious accident or illness). Any student wishing to receive a grade of incomplete must make a request in writing to the instructor by the next to the last class session, specify the reason that the course requirements cannot be completed as scheduled, and state the expected date of completion of the course requirements. All work necessary to remove a grade of Incomplete must be delivered to the instructor by no later than three weeks before the end of the next concurrent semester.

Grading and Evaluation
Your final grade will be based on the number of points you accumulate in this class. Grades will be assigned on a strict point basis.
- **Blackboard Discussion Forums:** 3 points × 10 = 30 points
- **Exams:** 15 points (mid-term) + 15 points (final) = 30 points
- **Case Studies:** 5 points × 4 = 20 points
- **Group Presentation:** 10 points × 1 = 10 points
- **Class Attendance & Pop Quiz:** 10 points
The points that correspond to each grade are listed below:

A+ = 97 or above; A = 93 to 96.99; A- = 90 to 92.99; B+ = 87 to 89.99; B = 83 to 86.99;
B- = 80 to 82.99; C+ = 77 to 79.99; C = 73 to 76.99; C- = 70 to 72.99; D+ = 67 to 69.99; d
= 63 to 66.99; D- = 60 to 62.99; F = Below 60

More details on the grading criteria (rubrics) for the blackboard discussion assignments, exams, case studies, group presentation, and class attendance and pop quizzes will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity
When you place your name on an assignment or exam, I interpret this to mean that you have received no unauthorized assistance on an assignment or test. Unauthorized assistance includes but is not limited to: cheating on an exam, turning in assignments/exams as your own work when it is not, and plagiarism (presenting someone else’s published ideas as your own). These acts will not be tolerated and will be handled according to university policy. If you are even unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or if you just want a refresher, please take advantage of this resource (see under 4.2 Academic Dishonesty): http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml

Student with Disabilities
UNL encourages all students to participate fully in the academic opportunities, cultural enrichment, and the wide array of social activities offered. A student desiring reasonable accommodations for his/her documented disability should visit http://www.unl.edu/ssd for more information. Please notify me as soon as possible of any accommodations you may need for the course.

Instructor Availability
I will be available throughout the week and even over the weekend as necessary. A meeting will be arranged at your convenience as long as you let me know reasonably in advance (at least 24 hours before). If you need additional help, please email me or make an appointment in advance to see me. If you do not officially make an appointment with me, I will assume you do not need special help from me. When making an appointment, let me know the focus of your questions and requests so that we can spend our meeting time efficiently and effectively. If you have materials that you would like me to look at, it would be best to send them to me before the appointment time. All written communication will be made by University email, and this is encouraged even if I have posted my office telephone; I check email several times a day. Please note that I am in and out of the office.

Student Responsibility
It is your responsibility to seek help if you need it. Beware that some topics covered one week may serve as the foundation for materials covered the following week. Because of this, it is very important that you stay on top of the readings. Although this will help tremendously, some students may still have difficulties with certain topics. If this happens to you, it is your
responsibility to let me know so that we can get you back on track as soon as possible. It will serve your interests better to seek help when you first detect a problem instead of waiting until after you have done poorly on an assignment.

**Classroom Conduct**
All students are expected to treat each other and the instructor with respect at all times. We all have to create a good learning environment for each other. Approximately half of class activities take place in class. Classes will start on time and will not run over. Please strive to be on time. Entering the room late disrupts the class. If you have an ongoing reason for lateness (e.g., transporting children) check with me in advance. Continual tardiness will affect your grade. Like coming in late, cell phones interrupt and disrupt the class. Turn your cell phones off in class. If you must monitor your cell phone, place it on vibrate, and if a call comes in, exit the class to take the call.

**Blackboard Policy**
Approximately a third of class meetings will take place on Blackboard. I will post readings, cases, and guiding questions to help you understand key concepts and issues. You are required to post your discussions as guided by instructions, make comments/questions on the other students’ posts, and respond to the comments/questions addressed to your posts. In addition to this, Blackboard will be the primary means of communication between you and me about such items as grades and major changes in class assignments, etc. I will post your grades on Blackboard, put up assignment information, and links to information that may be helpful to you as a student in this course. I will make announcements as necessary about these activities and use your email address listed in the Blackboard to communicate with you. You are responsible for checking for updates in Blackboard each week.

**Tentative Course Schedule**

The following course schedule is tentative. If necessary, it will be changed, including due dates, to accommodate changes in the pace of the course. Some additional materials like video clips will be added as necessary. It is your responsibility to keep apprised of schedule changes.

**Week 1: The week of August 22**
**Orientation and Introduction to the Course**
- Review syllabus and discuss the logistics of the class activities.
- Making sense of the class topics ahead.

**Week 2: The week of August 29**
**Research Values**
- Text 1, Chap 1 Rules of the Road
- Text 2, Introduction, The Social Foundations of Science (pp.1-3)
- Blackboard Discussion Due on August 31 at 2:30 PM
- Group 1 Presentation on September 2
Week 3: The week of September 5

**Research Misconduct**

No class on September 5 (Labor Day)
- Text 1, Chap 2 Research Misconduct
- Text 2, Experimental Techniques and the Treatment of Data, Values in Science (pp.4-7), Error and Negligence in Science, Misconduct in Science (pp.15-17)
- Optional Additional Materials: [http://research.unl.edu/orr/docs/PolicyforRespondingtoAllegationsofResMisconduct.pdf](http://research.unl.edu/orr/docs/PolicyforRespondingtoAllegationsofResMisconduct.pdf)
- Blackboard Discussion Due on September 7 at 2:30 PM
- Group 2 Presentation on September 9

Week 4: The week of September 12

**Protection of Human Subjects**

- Text 1, Chap 3 The Protection of Human Subjects
- Blackboard Discussion Due on September 14 at 2:30 PM
- Group 3 Presentation on September 16
- Case Study Assignment 1 Due on September 16 at 2:30 PM (Submit the assignment on Blackboard)

Week 5: The week of September 19

**The Welfare of Animals Used in Research**

- Text 1, Chap 4 The Welfare of Laboratory Animals
- Blackboard Discussion Due on September 21 at 2:30 PM
- Group 4 Presentation on September 23

Week 6: The week of September 26

**Conflicts of Interest**

- Text 1 Chap 5 Conflicts of Interest
- Text 2 Conflict of Interest (p.8)
- Optional Additional Materials: [http://research.unl.edu/researchresponsibility/conflict-of-interest/](http://research.unl.edu/researchresponsibility/conflict-of-interest/)
- Blackboard Discussion Due on September 28 at 2:30 PM
- Group 5 Presentation on September 30

Week 7: The week of October 3

**Data Management Practices**

- Text 1 Chap 6 Data Management Practices
- Blackboard Discussion Due on October 5 at 2:30 PM
- Group 6 Presentation on October 7
Week 8: The week of October 10

Take-home Mid-term Examination on Blackboard
- Case Study Assignment 2 Due on October 12 at 2:30 PM (Submit the assignment on Blackboard)
- Mid-term Exam Due on October 14 at 5:00 PM

Week 9: The week of October 17

Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities
No class on October 17: Enjoy the fall break
- Text 1, Chap 7 Mentor and Trainee Responsibilities
- Blackboard Discussion Due on October 21 at 2:30 PM
- Group 7 Presentation on October 24

Week 10: The week of October 24

Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities (Con’t)
- Group 7 Presentation on October 24

No class on October 26 & October 28 due to the instructor’s conference attendance & presentations

Week 11: The week of October 31

Collaborative Research
- Text 1, Chap 8 Collaborative Research
- Blackboard Discussion Due on November 2 at 2:30 PM
- Group 8 Presentation on November 4

Week 12: The week of November 7

Authorship and Publication
- Text 1, Chap 9 Authorship and Publication
- Text 2, Publication and Openness (p.9-11), The Allocation of Credit (p12), Authorship Practices (p. 13-14)
- Blackboard Discussion Due on November 9 at 2:30 PM
- Group 9 Presentation on November 11
- Case Study Assignment 3 Due on November 11 at 2:30 PM (Submit the assignment on Blackboard)

Week 13: The week of November 14

Peer Review
- Text 1, Chap 10 Peer Review
- Blackboard Discussion Due on November 16 at 2:30 PM
- Group 10 Presentation on November 18

Week 14: The week of November 21
Special Topic: Professional Ethics
No class on November 23 & 25: Happy Thanksgiving Holidays!!

Week 15: The week of November 28
Responsibilities to Society (Thursday Oct 8)
- Text 2, Responding to Violations of Ethical Standards (p. 18-19), The Scientist in Society (p.20-21)
- Blackboard Discussion Due on November 30 at 2:30 PM
- Case Study Assignment 4 Due on December 2 at 2:30 PM (Submit the assignment on Blackboard)

Week 16: The week of December 5
Prep Week

Week 17: The week of December 12
Comprehensive Final Examination
December 12: Final Exam

Important dates

- Blackboard Discussion Assignments Due Most Wednesdays (Refer to the course schedule for specific weeks)
- Your Group Presentation as Scheduled (will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard)
- September 5 No Class - Labor Day
- September 11 Case Study 1 Due
- October 12 Case Study 2 Due
- October 14 Exam 1 (Mid-term) Due
- October 17 No Class - Fall Semester Break (UNL Offices Open)
- October 26 & 28 No Class - Instructor’s Conference Travel
- November 11 Case Study 3 Due
- November 23 & 25 No Class - Thanksgiving Holidays
- December 2 Case Study 4 Due
- December 12 Exam 2 (Final)