Course description:

The purpose of this seminar is to examine ethical issues that arise in the conduct of psychological research. Issues covered will include those common to all sciences (e.g., scientific integrity, data manipulation, intellectual property) as well as those more specific to psychological research (e.g., protection of and respect for diverse human and nonhuman research participants). Classic yet ethically controversial studies in the history of psychology will be critically examined. In the latter part of the course, students will engage in in-depth analysis of specific topics of research in psychology with ethical implications (e.g., effects of poverty on brain development, development of lie detection measures, studies of prisoner interrogation) with the aim of gaining insight into both the beneficial and malevolent applications of research.

Course objectives:

Students will gain an appreciation of the societal context in which psychological research is conducted, and will deepen their understanding of the principle that to do research well means to do research ethically.

Grading requirements and expectations:

30% discussion questions for each class period

- Students will be expected to submit an original discussion question based on the reading by noon the day before the seminar meets. These student-generated DQs will be used to guide discussion in class. Students must submit DQs for 22 of the 27 class periods (student's choice). DQs will be graded on a 3-point basis (3 points = original/insightful; 2 = satisfactory; 1 = shows little evidence of reflection on reading).

30% participation in discussion

- 15% leading discussion for assigned class periods (2 per semester for each student); graded on normal 4.0 scale
- 15% active participation in all other class periods (graded on 3-point scale; 3 = consistently engaged and reflective; 2 = generally good but inconsistently engaged, or reflections are not consistently pertinent or clearly expressed; 1 = not much contribution to discussion)

40% final project

- 25% paper; approximately 10-12 pages, graded on normal 4.0 scale
- 15% presentation; graded on normal 4.0 scale
Schedule and Reading List

I. Fundamentals

A. Scientific Integrity

- Introduction: Why Do We Need Ethics Training in Science? (1/22)

- Plagiarism (1/24)

- Data Fabrication and Misrepresentation (1/29)

- Authorship, Intellectual Property, and Peer Review (1/31)

- Open Science Movement (2/5)
B. External Forces Operating on Science

- Political Pressures (2/7)

- Industry and Economic Pressures (2/12)

- Science and the Media (2/14)

C. Human Research Participants

- Regulatory Oversight – IRB and its History (2/19)
• Informed Consent, Deception, and Vulnerable Populations (2/21)

• Diversity in Research Participants (2/26)

• Ethical Issues in Cross-Cultural Research (2/28)

D. Non-Human Research Participants

• Ethics of Animal Research (3/5)
II. Applications

A. Classic controversial studies

• Milgram/Zimbardo studies (3/19)

• Harlow’s monkey studies (3/21)

• Rind’s sexual abuse research (3/26)
• Patient H.M. (3/28)

B. Specific research topics and applications with ethical implications

• Guest speakers/interviews:
  o 4/4, Dr. Geoff Aguirre, Penn: Uses and misuses of brain imaging
  o 4/16, Dr. Anjan Chatterjee, Penn: Cosmetic neurology
  o 4/30, Dr. Martha Farah, Penn: Neuroethics, effects of poverty on brain
    (Skype interview during class time)

• Remaining dates: student presentations
  (4/2, 4/9, 4/11, 4/18, 4/23, 4/25, 5/2)

*Each student will select a topic for a major research project and class presentation. Sample topics are listed below, but this list is meant to be illustrative and not exhaustive. After choosing a topic, students will be expected to research and select readings for the class. The student’s responsibility in the presentation and the major paper will be not only to outline the scientific facts of the research or application, but also to identify and debate the key ethical issues raised by the research or application.*

• end-of-life issues, dementia/vegetative states
• traumatic brain injury and football
• genetic testing for psychological disorders
• Bucharest Early Intervention Project on orphanage/foster care
• daycare research
• controversial therapies
• competency/insanity defense/criminal culpability
• lie detection
• prisoner interrogation/APA complicity
• military/national security applications