Research Ethics for Beginners

Online course learning objectives

This course equips you with the skills and knowledge you need to engage with historical and contemporary research ethics and consider procedural research ethics codes. It teaches you to recognize what the expectations for a researcher are regarding research ethics. This will help you reflect on your identity and take steps to develop an aspirational research ethics stance.

This course will help learners to:

- Recognize the foundational importance of conducting ethical human research and differentiate between varying ethical concepts across cultures and groups.

- Investigate the historical context of formalized human research ethics, including instances of research misconduct, to contextualize the significance of ethical research practices.

- Acquire knowledge of how research ethics are implemented throughout the research process, including before, during, and after conducting research, focusing on adherence to mandated procedural ethics codes from relevant disciplines and governmental regulations.

- Apply guiding principles in research ethics, such as beneficence, autonomy, and justice, to ensure research contributes positively to humanity.

- Develop an aspirational higher-level research ethics stance by reflecting on personal identity and considering the identities of research groups, aiming to integrate a culturally responsive approach into research practices.

Language: English
Time to complete: 4 hours
Level: Beginner
Instructor: Maria Lahman

Online course full syllabus

MODULE ONE: WHAT ARE RESEARCH ETHICS?

Considering how to conduct ethical human research is foundational to quality research. Ethics are not innately known. Instead, they are taught and may change somewhat from culture to culture, group to group, and person to person. This module will introduce what research ethics are and several significant areas of ethics researchers must engage with or may aspire to.

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This module will help you to:

- Evaluate what research ethics are and the varying types of research ethics
- Identify research ethics guidelines to draw on as you create research proposals and research ethics review requests

MODULE TWO: THE HISTORY OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS

This module will walk through how the beginning of formalized human research ethics occurred within the context of horrific research misconduct. Understanding this context will help researchers work against unethical research and toward following mandated research ethics.

This module will help you to:

- Recognize what the expectations for a researcher are regarding research ethics
- Navigate the unethical history of human research
- Recognize and appreciate the need to commit to ethical research

MODULE THREE: THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS

This module will explain how research ethics are engaged with before, during, and after research, considering mandated procedural research ethics codes from the disciplines they belong to (e.g., psychology association, teaching association) and governments of the countries they conduct research within. This module will help learners understand and follow guiding principles where researchers must demonstrate their research has beneficence for humanity, autonomy, and justice.

This module will help you to:

- Describe the importance of beneficence, autonomy, and justice in Western human research ethics
- Describe what a research ethics board is and its role in research
- Identify the presence of REBs (research ethics boards), or IRBs (institutional review boards) or RECs (research ethics committees) in your country
- Locate adjacent, relevant research ethics guidance if REBs are not established where you conduct research
- Attend to the importance of staying abreast of changing research areas and the possible impact on ethical conduct (e.g., technology, biological developments)

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MODULE FOUR: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE RESEARCH ETHICS

This module will help researchers aspire to a higher-level research ethics stance, reflecting on their identity and those of the research groups they work with to bring a culturally responsive stance to their research.

This module will help you to:

- Recognize the variety of established research ethics researchers can draw on

- Use culturally responsive research ethics as an example of what one may aspire to as a researcher

- Consider your identities and culture and the identities and cultures of the people you conduct research with

- Explore how these identities are a valuable part of the research process

- Think about research ethics with people who are underrepresented or potentially vulnerable to better consider possible requirements for the groups you conduct research with

- Take steps to develop an aspirational research ethics stance

- Write reflexively about aspirational research ethics