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Project Title: WEB-BASED ETHICS COURSE IN RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS

Abstract: The title of our course is "Scientists and Subjects: A Web-based Seminar on the Ethics of Research with Human Subjects" (<http://www.indiana.edu/~poynter/sas/index.html>). In offering the Teaching Research Ethics Workshop (<http://www.indiana.edu/~poynter/tre.html>) annually for the last six years, we have often heard researchers and administrators opine that time pressures make it difficult or impossible for researchers to undertake extensive ethics training: "I can't be away from the lab that long." We are seeking to address this constraint by offering asynchronous but highly interactive training via the World Wide Web. Participation in the seminar is limited to 15 researchers per cohort to promote interaction and cohesion. Most participants are expected to come from the member universities of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (<http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/index.html>, the academic consortium of the Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago) and the MEDIC-B Partnership Program (a group of seven Minority-Serving Institutions, <http://www.indiana.edu/~grdhouse/mdpartn.html>). Potential participants complete an application form describing their research focus, teaching focus, and concerns and interests in the ethics of research with human subjects. The application form also asks potential participants to certify that they are committed to contributing actively to the seminar and that they have the necessary computer technology to do so. Our experience has shown that it is essential for participants to meet in a face-to-face venue for an electronic conference to be successful. Therefore, the seminar begins with a short, intensive retreat where seminar staff will offer overview presentations on ethical, legal, and social issues in research with human subjects. In addition, each participant will make a short presentation on her or his concerns in the ethics of research with human subjects. Participants will receive instruction and practice in using the electronic conference software. At least one-fourth of the retreat will be dedicated to discussion and interaction. Following the retreat, the course coordinators will design a three-month seminar, customized to the needs and interests of the cohort, to be delivered via the World Wide Web. The Web-based portion of the seminar will begin three or four weeks after the retreat. Most seminar modules will be directed - that is, we will identify a reading and ask specific questions designed to elicit discussion. Some, however, will be more free form. We intend to be as responsive as possible to the needs and interests of the cohort by offering as much direction as necessary and no more. We hope and believe that, for at least portions of the seminar, the participants themselves will take control. We have contracted with two evaluators, one to appraise the process and one the content of the seminar. Both evaluators will attend the opening retreat, and participants will know that they can offer confidential comments to the evaluators at any time. The evaluators will also actively solicit feedback from participants during and after the seminar. We will revise and improve the seminar - both the seminar in progress and future seminars - in consultation with the evaluators.

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