

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION POLICY REGARDING
OBSERVING HUMAN SUBJECTS FOR STUDENTS IN COURSES
CONDUCTING HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
AS A CLASS ASSIGNMENT**

The protection of human subjects from undue risk is the mandate of the federal government and the policy of Humboldt State University.

Whenever we systematically investigate human behavior--for this or any other course--we must follow the legal mandates and ethical rules for doing so.

I. WHAT YOU CAN DO.

Because we have informed the Office for Research and Graduate Studies at HSU of our intention to observe human subjects in partial fulfillment of course requirements, we may:

1. observe human behavior in public places, IF the identity of our subjects remains entirely anonymous, or we can guarantee that they will not be identified with the results of observation,
2. obtain permission to:
 - use standard educational tests,
 - conduct surveys,
 - conduct interviews,

BY submitting our procedures to the Research Office.

Participation is ALWAYS voluntary (subjects may quit at any time) and results must remain completely confidential.

II. WHAT YOU CANNOT DO.

The law does allow the study of human subjects under risky conditions, but with stringent limitations and a complicated set of procedures and permissions. Therefore, it is the policy of our department to limit students' research with human subjects in a few ways; you may not:

1. identify subjects in any way (this includes discussing their identity informally with other researchers).
2. place subjects at risk to their health, psychological and social well-being. Psychological risk may include threats to self-esteem and requests for behaviors which are discrepant with the subject's values, morals and/or ethics. Social risk may include derogatory labeling, overt hostile reactions by others, negative effects on social standing, reduced opportunity for communication, and loss of group membership.
3. study subjects from at-risk populations: children under the age of 18 and those suffering diminished mental capacities requiring special protections.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RISKS OF YOUR PLANNED OBSERVATIONS, ASK YOUR PROFESSOR OR THE OFFICE FOR RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES (phone 826-3949).