

PHIL 6000-JB1: Responsible Conduct of Research (CRN 87817) – Fall Semester 2026

Instructor: Yolande Berta

Meeting Days: 3:30-4:45 PM, MW, Aug. 24 - Sep. 25, 2026

Course Location: Mason 2117

Course Background: The primary aim of this course is to identify and discuss ethical challenges that graduate students confront relating to their research. Topics addressed include those recognized by U.S. federal agencies and Georgia Tech as crucial to being a responsible researcher. PHIL 6000 satisfies doctoral RCR course requirement in the GT RCR Academic Policy for Doctoral Students (note: laboratory safety is not covered in this course).

* If you have not yet completed the online RCR training requirement for doctoral students, refer to: rcr.gatech.edu/online-training/

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, each student should be able to:

- Identify key research ethics topic areas.
- Describe foundational concepts in the realm of research ethics.
- Describe strategies for handling ethical challenges that can arise from a research project.

Required Readings: Presentation slides will be available on Canvas (under the “Files” tab). Included in the slides are links to articles and case studies that will be discussed in the course. At least one article will be highlighted for each class meeting.

Recommended Readings:

- National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine. 2009. [On Being a Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in Research](#) (Third Edition). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. [Fostering Integrity in Research](#). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Attendance: Attendance during the course sessions is required and will be taken during each course session. You can earn a maximum of 15 points for attending the course. Missing more than one attendance sign-in for an unexcused reason will result in a zero for this portion of the course grade. Missing more than three attendance sign-ins will result in an Unsatisfactory for the course.

Course Requirements and Assignments: The course is for one credit and may be taken on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis only. 70 points or above is considered Satisfactory in the course. Students must complete all work by the assigned due date and time. If a student misses an assignment and wants to request make-up work, it is the student’s responsibility to provide information to the instructor explaining the reason (for example, missed due to illness).

- **Discussion Forums on Canvas (60 points)**

Each student must contribute to a set of seven discussion forums on Canvas either by responding to existing discussion threads or initiating new threads. *Only six* of the seven discussion forum assignments will count for a maximum of 10 points for each forum (60 points in total). Each forum will open at **9:00AM** approximately two days before it is due at **11:59PM** on the due date. A grace period will be extended for submissions until 8:00 AM the next morning. Students will be randomly assigned into groups for the discussion forums. Your discussion forum contributions will be evaluated based on:

- The originality of your posts (the posts must be written by you *only* - not generative AI - and must not repeat or reuse content)
- The number and thoroughness of posts (a minimum of one meaningful post per discussion forum)
- The relevance of your posts to the assigned topic/course slides
- Whether your posts sincerely engage with and take into account views expressed in other posts

Each student is expected to be respectful of other students in the course. Personal attacks, harassment, or other forms of inappropriate behavior will result in a reduced grade on the assignment, and depending on the severity of the misbehavior, may be reported to the Dean of Students.

- **Paper Assignment (25 points)**

Each student must write an original paper on the main ethical issues related to either the student's own research OR research in the student's field. The paper is to be submitted on Canvas; a grace period will be extended until 8 AM, the day following the due date. The paper must not repeat or reuse what has been said in a Discussion Forum. The paper should be ~250-500 words and is worth a maximum of 25 points. Standard paragraph form, grammar, margins, spacing (1.5-2), type font (11-12 point, Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman), and punctuation are required. If sources influence the paper, be sure to include complete citation information; you can use the citation format common in your field. Your paper will be evaluated based on:

1. Its relevance to the course; whether it directly discusses issues related to research ethics
2. The originality of its content and the proper attribution of credit to any relevant sources; it *will* be checked for the use of generative AI
3. The degree to which ethical concepts/principles discussed in the course are integrated into the paper
4. Organization of its content (into clear paragraphs, etc.), grammar, and clarity

Original work is required. The paper must be written by you only, - not generative AI - and you must explain ideas and concepts in your own words. You are required to limit the number/length of any quotations used in the paper (roughly meaning no more than a one-two sentence quote). Any quotations or other referenced information **must be cited properly in your paper**. Close paraphrasing/rephrasing of other's work or use of generative AI **is not permitted**. Plagiarism and/or collaboration on the paper are violations of the Honor Code and may result in an unsatisfactory grade for the course. An unsatisfactory grade for the course may also be received if the paper is not submitted on time, is difficult to follow, too informal, and/or on a topic that is not suitable for the assignment. Additional guidance for the paper assignment will be available on Canvas.

Statement on Privacy and Confidentiality: The course will cover topics, including in Canvas Discussion Forums, that may be considered controversial. It is expected that each student will respect the privacy of the other students by not sharing or using information from the discussions for purposes outside the course unless written permission has been obtained from the relevant person(s). Also, please avoid sharing confidential information, including identifying details about individuals from a case that is not publicly known, in the Discussion Forums or in the course paper.

Academic Integrity and Student Rights & Responsibilities: Each student in the course is expected to be familiar with and uphold Georgia Tech's [Honor Code](#) and [Student Code of Conduct](#). A list of [student and faculty expectations](#) is available in the GT Catalog. Consult with the instructor if you have questions about these policies.

IAC's Commitment to a Diverse Community: "The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts enthusiastically embraces the values set forth in the Georgia Tech strategic plan — a welcoming, inclusive culture; mutual respect among faculty, staff, and students; and celebration of uniqueness in thought, background, perspectives, and intellectual pursuits." For more information: <https://iac.gatech.edu/about/community>.

* The syllabus provides a general framework for the course; on rare occasions, changes may become necessary.

** If you have any learning disabilities, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563, refer to <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, and/or consult with the instructor as needed.

*** Learning is best when we feel well, physically and emotionally. If you have any personal or academic difficulties, contact the Counseling Center at (404) 894-2575, refer to <http://www.counseling.gatech.edu>, and/or consult with the instructor as needed.