

PHIL 6000-B — Responsible Conduct of Research (CRN 52534)

Location: ESM 202 Days: Mon Jun 8 & Wed Jun 10 Time: 9:30AM – 17:15PM

Prof. Andrew Buskell (abuskell@gatech.edu)
Office Hours: online, by appointment

Course Description

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 requisite 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/.

Course Materials

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.

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.

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify key research ethics topic areas.
- Describe foundational concepts of research ethics.
- Describe strategies for handling ethical challenges that can arise from research activities.

Course Requirements, Format, and Assignments

The course is for one credit and may be taken on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis only. 70 points or above (out of a possible 100 points) is considered satisfactory in the course. The course format involves a combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities. Students must complete all work by the due date and time listed in Canvas.

If a student misses an assignment deadline 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).

Course Schedule

Day 1 Monday, June 8th

- 9:30AM to 10:15AM: Introduction and Ethical Concepts
- 10:20AM to 11:20AM: Mentoring and Collaborative Research
- 11:20AM to 11:30AM: Role Play
- 11:30AM to 12:15PM: Data Management
- 12:15PM to 1:00PM: Lunch break
- 1:00PM to 2:15PM: Authorship and Peer Review
- 2:25PM to 3:25PM: Conflict of Interest and Commitment
- 3:30PM to 4:30PM: Open time to work on Canvas Discussion Forum One
- 4:35PM to 5:15 PM: Q&A about assignments

Discussion Forum One (Mentoring) closes at 11:59 PM

Tuesday, June 9th, 9 AM, Discussion Forums Two, Three and Four open.

Day 2 Wednesday, June 10th

9 AM Discussion Forums Five, Six and Seven open.

- 9:30AM to 10:15AM: Animal Subjects Research
- 10:25AM to 11:25AM: Human Subjects Research
- 11:30AM to 12:15PM Research Misconduct
- 12:15PM to 1:00PM: Lunch break
- 1:00PM to 2:15PM: Science and Engineering in Society
- 2:20PM to 4:30PM: Open time to work on Canvas Discussion Forums
- 4:35PM to 5:15PM: Q&A about assignments

Assessment

Assessment Overview

Assignment	% of total grade	Assessment
Discussion Forums	50	Discussion Post Rubric
Paper Assignment	35	Written Evaluation Rubric
Attendance	15	(More details below)

Discussion Forums on Canvas

Each student must contribute to a set of seven discussion forums on Canvas either by responding to existing discussion threads or initiating a new discussion thread within the forum. Only five of the discussion forums will count - the lowest two will be dropped. You can earn a maximum of 10 points for each forum (50 points in total).

Each forum will open at **9:00AM** approximately two days before it is due and close at **11:59PM** on the due date listed in Canvas. Students will be randomly assigned into a group for the discussion forums. The schedule for the discussion forums is as follows:

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- Discussion Forum One (Mentoring) will open on Friday, June 5 at 9:00AM and close on Monday, June 8 at 11:59pm.
- Discussion Forums Two, Three, and Four will open on Tuesday, June 9 at 9:00AM and close on Thursday, June 11 at 11:59pm.
- Discussion Forums Five, Six and Seven will open on Wednesday, June 10 at 9:00AM and close on Monday, June 12 at 11:59pm.

The discussion forum contributions will be evaluated based on:

1. The originality and coherency of your posts
Are the thoughts and writing the result of your own labor? Are your ideas cogently and coherently presented?
2. The rigor and thoroughness of the argumentation and writing
Have you considered relevant stakeholders/positions/theories? What are the implications for the issue at stake? Are there any alternatives accounts or explanations that might be better?
3. Links to course material and accurate portrayal of the issues at stake
How does the question relate to core themes and case studies discussed in the course?
Does the post highlight important and relevant aspects of the examples/case studies/issues at hand?
4. The extent to which philosophical, scientific, or otherwise technical ideas and concepts are sufficiently articulated
Is technical or specific vocabulary sufficiently explained so that others can engage? Are specific ideas and theories adequately explicated?
5. Whether your post **engages**, where appropriate, with the views expressed in other posts.

As per the policy on [privacy, confidentiality and respect](#) below, each student is expected to be considerate of other students in the course.

Paper Assignment

Each student must write an original paper on the main ethical issues related to one's own research. The paper must be submitted on Canvas no later than **11:59PM on Wednesday June 24**. The paper must not repeat or reuse what has been said in a Discussion Forum.

The paper should be ~500-600 words and is worth a maximum of 25 points. Standard paragraph form, grammar, margins, spacing, type font, and punctuation are required. If sources influence the paper, the

paper **must** include complete citation information. You can use whichever citation format is most familiar to you.

The paper will be evaluated according to five criteria. Such work should:

1. Introduce and motivates the ethical issues at stake
2. Adopt a position on the ethical issues and come to clear conclusion
3. Demonstrate rigorous and thorough argumentation and exploration of the issues
4. Accurately portray the issues at stake, making clear links to course material, and, as necessary, citing outside material where necessary
5. Be both cohesive and sensibly organized.

Make sure you check policies on academic integrity and AI below. Remember that you **must** write this paper using the online version of Microsoft Word and share the link (with "editing" access) when submitting this assignment on Canvas.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken during each course session. You can earn a maximum of 15 points for attending the course, divided equally over the sessions. Missing more than one class session will result in a zero for this portion of the course. Missing more than half of the class sessions will result in an automatic fail for the course.

Academic Integrity & Expectations

Academic Integrity:

Each student in the course is expected to be familiar with and uphold *Georgia Tech's* [Honor Code](#) and [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Honesty and transparency are important features of good scholarship. On the flip side, plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in either behavior in this course, you will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

Your work should be new material crafted and written by you for each assignment. You may talk with others about your ideas—you may even use the ideas discussed in class—but these ideas must be made your own. That means working by yourself to develop your own ideas, providing your own reasons, and explaining things in your own words.

You are required to cite all sources you use in your submitted coursework. This includes both direct quotations and cases where you use ideas published elsewhere. “Sources” thus include papers, journals, conversations, anything found on the internet, and so on. Basically, if the thought did not originate within the assignment you are producing, you should provide an in-text citation and a reference list. For the GATech's description of what counts as plagiarism, cheating, and/or the use of unauthorized sources, please see the [Academic Honor Code](#).

Note that, while not explicitly mentioned within the Academic Honor Code, self-plagiarism — where you substantially copy or duplicate your own previous work — counts as plagiarism in my classes and is taken to be a violation of the Academic Honor Code.

If you have questions about the integration of GATech's honor code into this course, please do not hesitate to ask: my aim is to foster an environment where you can learn and grow, while ensuring that the work we all do is honest and fair.

Student-Faculty Expectations:

I believe that mutual respect is at the heart of the student-teacher relationship. In general, this is characterized by respectful language, punctuality and care for others' time, clear and an openness to dialogue and debate. I am committed to such mutual respect and encourage everyone in the class to work towards the best possible learning environment so that all can meet their highest ambitions. Please explore [Tech's policies](#) this for more information.

I encourage and appreciate suggestions for ways that the classroom can better support learning, inclusion, and the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Accommodations, Extensions, & Late Assignments

Accommodations:

If you wish to request an accommodation due to a documented disability, please inform me and contact Disability Services as soon as possible. They can be reached at dsinfo@gatech.edu or 404-894-2563 (voice)/ 404-894-1664 (TDD). I encourage you to make use of the academic and pastoral resources at <https://success.gatech.edu>

I also encourage you to discuss with me what you need — I will do whatever I can to improve your ability to succeed in the course. Adjustments will often be case-by-case, but to give a sense of accommodations I have provided in the past, these include: booking additional rooms for quiet group-work, providing access to readings for speech-to-text software, and providing flexible submission schedules.

If you have any personal or academic difficulties, contact the Counseling Center at (404) 894-2575 and refer to <https://counseling.gatech.edu>.

AI & Coursework

I have two policies surrounding AI and submitted coursework.

First, the use of any standalone (e.g. ChatGPT, scite, OpenAI Research) or integrated AI tools (e.g. Grammarly, Co-Pilot, Notebook LM) is **impermissible**. It is impermissible at all points in process of producing and submitting work. This includes the stages of brainstorming, preparation, writing, and/or correction of materials. (Spelling and grammar checkers that alert you to errors are fine, so long as you don't use a tool like Grammarly or Microsoft Co-Pilot to modify your text).

You might worry about your writing, especially if English is not your first language. Know that when I read your work and evaluate it, I ignore spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. I evaluate your understanding, reasoning, and analysis — not your flair for coming up with nice metaphors or a snappy phrase. Spelling and grammatical errors only become an issue when they seriously impede my ability to understand the text, evidence, and argumentation.

Second, for submitted written work (that is, for the final essay), **you must write your work on OneDrive's Microsoft Word**. As Georgia Tech students, you all have institutional access to OneDrive and Microsoft Word. When you submit work, you must provide a link to your online file, and provide me with "editing" access to this version control document. This allows me (if necessary) to see and understand how you have written your essay and how your thoughts have developed. If you fail to do this, I will mark the assignment "0".

If you believe that an AI tool is essential to you completing your submitted work you must: (i) **check with me** as to whether the use of the tool is permissible, (ii) accept **responsibility** for all material submitted including errors, hallucinations, or outright falsehoods produced by AI tools, (iii) include a short written statement (typically around 100 words) that is **open** and **transparent** about what elements of

the essay were produced with AI tools, and (iv) **document** specific content, if any, was generated by AI tools through correct citation practices.

The unattributed use of AI tools to produce text, citations, or images will be seen as a violation of academic integrity and reported to the [Office of Student Integrity](#). Though penalties for such violations differ — and will typically be settled on a case-by-case basis (what OSI calls [Faculty Conference Resolution](#)) — it will typically result in the assignment being marked "0". If the assignment is worth less than 10 points, a minimum penalty that deducts 10 points (one grade classification) from your overall grade will be applied.

Detection tools will be used, including Turnitin, to check for plagiarism and unattributed AI-generated text and I reserve the right to employ other means of detection as needed.

Statement on Privacy, Confidentiality, and Respect

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). As a corollary, each of you should avoid sharing personally identifying information about yourself or other individuals that is not already publicly known and available.

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.

Version History

I am sometimes forced to update the syllabus during the semester to deal with unanticipated issues or to improve its clarity. I will notify you in class if the syllabus has changed, and what has changed. This syllabus is up-to-date as of 8 April, 2026.