Departmental Human Subjects Review Guide
for Sociology and Anthropology Majors

Dear Sociology/Anthropology Majors:

As you know, most of your projects for senior thesis research can be reviewed by the Departmental Review Committee (DRC). If you are a Special Major in Educational Studies and Sociology/Anthropology, your research project will be reviewed by the departmental review committee in Educational Studies.

Procedure

Submit your application and appendices (such as recruitment and interview scripts) **in one document** in Word format via email to the department administrative assistant by the specified deadline. **The application must be approved by your advisor before you submit it to the DRC.**

Please note that you must attach recruitment scripts, informed consent form, survey questionnaires, and interview scripts if you intend to use them in your research. (You may also need several different sets of recruitment/interview material if you are working with several distinct populations.) We understand that guides and scripts may evolve over the course of your research, but the DRC nonetheless needs a substantial guide to review. Once you have received approval, you should consult with your advisor about whether changes in your script and the direction of your research are so substantive that they may require additional review by the DRC. (If you have not yet taken a methods course, please be sure to consult with your advisor about interviewing best practices and how to write effective interview scripts.)

Once your application has undergone initial review, you will receive the Word document with comments and editing from the committee in tracked changes. The email from the committee will contain directions on how to proceed. **It is important that you consult with your advisor on the revisions and how to best complete them.** You may not start your research until you receive the final approval from the committee.

When you complete your thesis, please include the following statement at the bottom of your title page: "An undergraduate thesis produced in partial fulfillment of the educational requirements for a bachelor of arts degree in sociology and anthropology at Swarthmore College. Not intended for scholarly publication."

Project Description

I.A. Be brief. Describe your project in 3-5 sentences. You should include a concise summary of your research topic, its main question(s), and its conceptual framing, as well as a brief discussion of methodology.

I.B. Has anyone else done a study like yours? Cite 2-3 studies that show doing this kind of research does not cause harm to human subjects. Be sure to pick sources that use the same methodology as you plan to use, and be able to state that their research did not involve undue risk to their participants. Please provide full citations to these studies.

I.C. Clearly discuss the methods you intend to use and be as **specific** as possible about all interactions with human subjects

- How would you recruit subjects? (If you plan to "reach out" to your subjects, tell the DRC how: through Facebook posts, phone calls, emails to listservs?)
- How many subjects do you intend to interview?
- Where would the interviews take place? We recommend conducting interviews in public places like coffee shops (or the workplace, when appropriate).
- How long would the interview last?
- Etc.

Please also give us a sense of when you plan to begin and conclude your research with human subjects.

I.D. Be clear about your criteria for recruitment and do not forget to attach a recruitment script(s). Note that if you need to go through any gatekeepers to get access to potential subjects (such as the mods of a Facebook group), you need to submit the text of that email/message to the DRC for review as well.

Description of Data

II.A. Describe the type of data you'd be collecting. This includes interviews, observations, surveys, etc.

Note: If you plan to collect visual data, please consider, in consultation with your advisor, the contexts in which and purposes for which you will be collecting it. This will determine whether you need to obtain informed consent, what procedures can help minimize risk to research subjects, and whether your work should become publicly available online.

II.B. Do not store data for future use.

II.C. We suggest that you do not collect IP addresses. (If you are conducting survey research, tools like Qualtrix can allow you to collect data without IP addresses.)

IIE. We suggest that you state that you will keep the data and any backups in a password protected computer (by using your College Google Drive account, where data is not mined by Google, or in an encrypted folder on your computer (for instructions, see https://www.hongkiat.com/blog/encrypt-mac-folder/)) when you are not analyzing it. Make sure you keep your computer in a locked drawer or room. When you are uploading data or sending email related to your research, we recommend that you use the secure encrypted VPN connection provided by the College. (Visit the ITS website for more information.) We suggest that you scan or transcribe and then upload paper notes regularly and destroy them on-site.

II.F. State that you will not share your data with anyone.

II.G. Please be explicit about your plans for your data once your thesis is complete. Identifiable data MUST be destroyed or de-identified prior to graduation or otherwise leaving Swarthmore.

Informed Consent

III. A. Please be specific about the type of consent you will use. The expectation is to ask for written consent unless there are reasons for using oral consent. Be specific about why oral consent might be better in certain cases.

A sample informed consent form is provided at the end of this document. Please use it.

III. B. Please explain how you will establish informed consent with each participant. Participant observation in public spaces and at public events does not require informed consent, but you should inform participants in closed groups or smaller meetings of your research. For direct interventions, such as focus groups, you should obtain explicit informed consent.

III.C. Make sure that you agree to this and actually DO it: "I will make sure that respondents understand that they can stop the interview at any time, that they know their participation is voluntary, that they need not answer questions that they do not want to, and that they can cancel their participation in the research entirely at any time."

Risks and Benefits

IV.A. We suggest that you explain that there are no anticipated benefits to your study other than the completion of the thesis exercise.

IV.B. It is expected that risk to human subjects should not be different from the kind of discomfort/harm one would encounter in discussion with family or friends. Address any harm that could be related to data storage.

IV.C. We suggest that you do everything in your power to protect your data and your subjects. Explain that here. We expect that in most cases, student researchers will offer anonymity and protect the identity of their subjects. Make sure to address each point you mentioned in IV.B.

IV.D. The SOAN DRC reviews only projects that do not pose risks to human subjects. So please explain that there are neither anticipated benefits nor risks beyond the kind of things one would encounter in discussion with family or friends. If there are, we will recommend a full IRB review.

Appendix

[TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT]

Informed Consent
**[*Researchers: This example of informed consent can also be used in situations when research participants will not be providing a signature to denote their consent. In this case, researchers provide the participants with written study information and give them a copy.]*

You are invited to participate in a research study about... The goal of this research study is to… [*please provide a quick and clear summary, and avoid scholarly jargon or too much leading information*]

This study is being conducted by [*name of investigator*], an undergraduate student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Swarthmore College in the United States. It will serve as the core of my senior thesis, which is a requirement for my major.

There are __ qualifications to participate in this study: (1) You must be at least 18 years of age; (2) _____ (and continue as needed.)

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, you would be interviewed for about [*length of time*]. You may choose not to answer any questions, and you may discontinue participation at any time.

I do not anticipate any undue risks or significant benefits as a result of this study, but it is helping me to complete my work in college.
[Here, students should clearly explain any and all expected risks to participants of participation in the research in ways that help participants understand the risks. Consider both the risks of the interview process (is there a chance that subjects might find questions upsetting?) and the risks pertaining to data storage. Students should then clarify ways they will minimize risks, if applicable. Please fill in the details based upon your responses to the questions in section IV. An example of language pertaining to data storage is below:]

[The information you will share with me if you participate in this study will be kept anonymous. Your information will be assigned a code number that is unique to this study. The list connecting your name to this number will be stored in [explain data protection measures, such as a locked file on Google Drive or a password-protected and encrypted file on your computer] and only I will be able to see the list or your interview. No one else will be able to see your interview or even know whether you participated in this study. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list linking participant's names to study numbers will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any writing that results

from this project.]

If you participate in the study, you will receive ___ for your time [*if applicable. Note that if you choose to reimburse subjects for their participation you need to explain how undue influence/coercion would be minimized in III.C.*].

The information you will share with me will be kept anonymous. Your information will be assigned a code number that is unique to this study. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file [*specify where*] and only I will be able to see the list or your interview. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list linking participant's names to study numbers will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any writing that results from this project.

If you have any questions about this study or your rights as a research participant, please contact [*name of PI, phone number and email address*] or the Chair of my department:
        Professor [*Insert name*]
        Department of Sociology and Anthropology
        500 College Avenue
        Swarthmore College
        Swarthmore PA, 19081 USA

By signing below, you are certifying that you are at least 18 years old and agree to be interviewed.

Signature _____ Date _____

Agreement to be Audio-Recorded:
I would like to record this interview. I will store the recording in a password-protected file on my computer (or phone) and will destroy the file when my research is complete. If you do not agree to be recorded, I will simply write notes.

By signing below, you are agreeing to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature _____ Date _____