

Parents of students under 18: Please read this form and, if you agree, sign it and return it to Dr. Jeanine Skorinko via Fax (508) 831-5896 or mail to: Dr. Jeanine Skorinko, WPI Dept. of Social Science, 100 Institute Rd., Worcester MA 01609



Informed Consent Agreement: Parental Version
Research Experiments for Students in Psychology and Social Science Courses
Department of Social Science, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Introduction: Your son or daughter at the WPI is enrolled in a psychology and/or social science course where he or she is asked to fulfill a research participation requirement. Psychology is relatively unique among the sciences in that students can learn about the discipline with direct experience. Students who are under 18 years old need to have permission from a parent or guardian to participate in research studies. Students are not required to participate – there is another way to fulfill the requirement. Please read this agreement carefully to decide if you wish to give your permission.

Purpose of the research studies: Students are asked to participate in psychology experiments in return for credit toward their course grade. These experiments are designed to increase our knowledge of psychological theories and processes and to provide students with an understanding of the research methods used by psychologists.

Alternatives to participating in these studies: If you do not wish your son or daughter to participate in these experiments, alternate assignments that are equivalent in time and effort are available from the Participant Pool Chair. For example, the assignments involve reading research articles and preparing summaries for them. The instructor will explain these assignments to your son or daughter already.

What your son or daughter will be required to do in these studies: At the beginning of the term, students may be asked to fill out a set of questionnaires on the web, e.g., about their personality and attitudes. Students are not required to do this, but if they do they will receive credit towards the requirement. If they do not participate in this “pretesting”, they will be ineligible for some later experiments. They will sign up for subsequent experiments on a web page run by the Participant Pool Chair. They will be asked to sign a separate consent document for each study in which they choose to participate.

Time required: The students will need to participate in 2-5 hours (depending on the number of available studies and the professor’s requirements) of research participation and/or equivalent alternate assignments are required.

Risks to Participants: In some studies, students may be misled about the true purpose of the study or some of its procedures. This will be explained to them some time after the study in a debriefing. In other studies, they may be recorded on video or audiotape without their prior knowledge. This is sometimes necessary because people might act unnaturally if they knew they were being recorded. In these cases, they will be informed immediately after they complete the study and given the option of having their audiotape or videotape erased. Other risks will be explained in the informed consent document for each study. A WPI Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved each study considering ethical considerations and the protection of human participants.

Benefits to Participating: The major benefit of participating in these studies is to provide students with first-hand experiences in the research process and a deeper understanding of how psychological research is conducted. There is no other direct benefit of participation in these research studies.

Confidentiality: In some studies, the information students give will be anonymous. If so, they will not be asked to write their name on any form other than the consent form (which cannot be linked to research data). In other studies, the information that they give will be handled confidentially. In this case, their information will be assigned code numbers. The list connecting their names to this number will be kept in a locked file. Any data collected will be used only for statistical analyses. Names will not be used in any report. Whether the information students give is anonymous or confidential will be stated on the consent document for each study.

Voluntary participation: Your son's or daughter's participation in these studies is completely voluntary. There is no penalty if students decide not to participate. If they do not wish to participate in these experiments, students should notify their instructor who will arrange an alternate assignment that involves equivalent time and effort.

Right to withdraw from the studies: Students have the right to withdraw from any study at any time without penalty. Even if they withdraw, they will receive credit for the study.

How to withdraw from studies: The consent form students sign for each experiment will tell them how to withdraw from the study. In most cases, they simply inform the experimenter and quietly leave the room.

Obligation to appear for appointments: Once students decide to participate in a study they have an obligation to appear for the experiment at the proper time and place. If they sign up for an experiment and fail to keep the appointment, and fail to notify they experimenter 24 hours in advance, they will be penalized for an amount of time equal to the amount of time that the study would have taken. For example, if they miss a study that takes a half-hour, they will be asked to do an additional half-hour of experimentation. *Once they arrive at the study, they may withdraw at any point without penalty. This penalty applies only if they do not show up (or show up substantially late) for a scheduled appointment.*

Payment: Experimental credit is given in half-hour increments based on the amount of time each study takes. If the student does not complete the required number of hours of research studies and/or papers about journal articles there will be a penalty that has been described to the students by the instructor; for example, the student's grade may be reduced one grade step, such as from a B+ to a B.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the studies: Professor Jeanine Skorinko, Participant Pool Chair, WPI, Dept. of Social Science, 100 Institute Rd., Worcester MA 01609 Tel: (508) 831-5451, Email: skorinko@wpi.edu

Whom to contact about your child's rights in these studies: Chair of the WPI Institutional Review Board (Prof. Kent Rissmiller, Tel. 508-831-5019, Email: kjr@wpi.edu) or WPI's University Compliance Officer (Michael J. Curley, Tel. 508-831-6919).

Agreement: I agree that my son or daughter may participate in the studies described above. [If you do not agree, simply do not return this form]

Son's or Daughter's Name [printed] _____

Your Name [printed] _____

Your Relationship to this Student _____

Your Signature _____ Date: _____

<p>Approved by WPI IRB From: 09/09/2008 To: 09/08/2009</p>
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