

## WSU's Department of Communication Research Participation

### Instructions for Researchers

Research participation by students in communication courses serves two purposes. First, the student obtains a better understanding of the methods of communication research by serving as a participant instead of merely reading about research. The student is witness to current developments within the field of communication. This also allows students to better understand the process by which certain evidence for argument is generated. Second, student participation contributes to the discipline of communication by providing researchers with a valuable source of information. The satisfaction of these two objectives requires the mutual respect and cooperation of the participant and the researcher.

In the Department of Communication at Wayne State University access to students as research participants, the timing of data collection/recruitment activities, and the awarding of class credit will be left to the discretion of course instructors or course coordinator. The following general guidelines are provided as suggestions for the collection of data and student compensation for research participation.

#### A. Approval

Approval must be obtained from the HIC to conduct research using human subjects prior to advertising for a research project, recruiting subjects, or collecting data.

#### B. The Conduct of Research Sessions

1. Informed Consent. Participants first complete an informed consent form, approved by the HIC. The participant must be given the opportunity to withdraw from participating in the research project. If the participant decides to withdraw, he or she should be given the amount of credit designated in the consent form.
2. Debriefing. At the end of the session, the project is described to the participant. Please make this description as beneficial to the participant as possible. If deception was used in the project, then a description and rationale is usually included in the debriefing.
3. Education Sheet. This sheet is given to the participant at the conclusion of the session. It includes the name and address of the project's principal investigator, a research reference that the participant may use to read about the research area, and a brief description of the purpose of the research.

#### C. Student Compensation

1. As a general rule students are awarded extra credit for their voluntary participation in research studies.
2. An appropriate maximum for extra credit attributable to all research participation (or their direct substitute assignments) for a class is 3% of the final grade.

3. Additional credit up to .5% of the final grade may be, at the discretion of the researcher, awarded for participating in a study where a student will need to go to a specific campus location (ie laboratory)
4. Points awarded for participation in research will reflect the amount of time spent in a study and assigned as follows:

Study Lasts	Course Credit
under 30 minutes	.5% of final grade points
31-60 minutes	1% of final grade points
61-90 minutes	1.5% of final grade points
91-120 minutes	2% of final grade points

Therefore if a student were to participate in a study expected to last 1 hour and was in a class with 500 total points for the class, the student would earn 5 points for participation in the study.

#### D. Alternative to Research Participation

An alternative assignment shall be developed by the researcher in collaboration with the instructor for those students who do not meet the criteria for inclusion in a research project, who elect not to participate in the research, or who have already received credit for a particular research project in another class. If the instructor opts the class into the COM research subject pool this is considered one of several options that the instructor offers for extra credit and therefore the researcher is relieved from offering an alternative assignment.

#### E. Reporting of Participants

Researchers will indicate in the SONA System participants who should receive credit as soon as possible after data collection is complete. If the SONA system is not used an alphabetical list of participants for each class section will be provided to the instructor by the researcher before final exam week (preferably as soon as possible after data collection).

#### F. Participants' Rights and Responsibilities

Researchers must abide by the Human Investigation Committee's code of conduct with regards to the rights and responsibilities of research participants. These are detailed on the next page.

## **RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

When you volunteer to participate in a research project sponsored by the Department of Communication, you have specific rights. In addition, your promise to participate is associated with certain responsibilities.

Your rights revolve around the issues of “confidentiality,” “informed consent,” and “educational benefit.”

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your responses will be kept confidential. In any presentation of the results of the research project, there will be no mention of your name. Furthermore, the results of the project will be presented so that no one will be able to identify your particular performance in the project.

### **INFORMED CONSENT**

The issue of “informed consent” involves several principles that will be discussed separately. The first principle is that you must be informed of the possibility of any risks related to your participation in the project. Examples of risks include the possibility of nausea, physical pain, or unusual anxiety or stress. Unusual anxiety or stress is meant to imply more stress or anxiety than one would expect in the day-to-day activities of a student. The possibility of risk must be mentioned at the beginning of the session and you must be given the opportunity of withdrawing from the project without penalty.

The second principle is that after you have been informed about the research project, you may refuse to participate. This principle means that after the researcher has explained what the research is about and what is expected of you, you may decide to withdraw from the project. At this point, or anytime thereafter, you may opt to withdraw from participation in the project. In this case, the researcher will give you credit for the time you have spent in the project.

### **EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT**

In exchange for the time and effort you expend when you participate in a research project, you must receive some educational benefit. In addition to the actual experience, which may include observing sophisticated pieces of equipment, discovering something about yourself, or learning something new about communication, you must be told about the purpose of the research and the anticipated results. This education usually takes the form of a “debriefing” at the conclusion of the research session, when the researcher describes the project and the progress made to that point in time. The researcher should answer any questions you might have about the project or how it relates to communication as a whole. You will usually find that the researcher is eager to discuss the project with you.

In rare instances, the researcher cannot discuss the project as a whole or your performance in particular. One reason for this is that it would be unethical to reveal tentative or unreliable findings. The project might involve misinformation about which cannot be revealed at this time.

In this event, the researcher will present a general description of the project at the time of the session and will furthermore provide a fuller explanation of the research project at the conclusion of the project.

In all cases, at the conclusion of the research session, you will be given an “Education Sheet” that provides the name of the person in charge of the project, a reference so that you may read more about the project or the general area if you desire, and a brief description of the project. If you become interested in the project, be sure to talk to the person in charge of the project.

### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You have two major responsibilities once you sign up to participate in a research project. Your first is to attend the session for which you volunteered. If you must cancel, please do so in advance so that a replacement can be found. It is often the case that a research session requires a certain number of participants. Your failure to attend a scheduled session is not only an inconvenience to the researcher but it may make participation by others less meaningful.

Your second responsibility is to make every effort to arrive at the session ON TIME. Punctuality is particularly important for those projects that require that several students participate together because your late arrival will either delay others or preclude you from participating in that session. In many cases, arriving only a few minutes after the start time will preclude your participation. As a matter of caution, it is best to arrive 5-10 minutes early. If you are not sure where the study location is, be sure to locate the room before the day of the study so that you will not get lost at the last minute.

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All inquiries regarding the use of communication students as participants in research should be directed to the Department of Communication Participant Pool Coordinator (Terry Kinney PhD, [terrykinney@wayne.edu](mailto:terrykinney@wayne.edu)).