**MCMASTER UNIVERSITY**

**APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF COURSE PROJECTS BY PSYCHOLOGY COMMITTEE ON ETHICS OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ON HUMAN SUBJECTS**

This application applies to all courses requiring undergraduate research projects involving human subjects as part of the course, excluding thesis (4D6) or individual lab study (4Q3, 4QQ3) or research projects associated with a practicum (3I06).

Please complete, and submit 6 paper copies or 1 paper copy plus email attachment to Chair of Ethics Committee, D. Maurer, PC-306, maurer@mcmaster.ca

**DATE:** Nov.25/99    
**Course Name:** Animal Behaviour Lab    
**Course No.:** Psych 3S03

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<th>INSTRUCTOR(S)</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>PHONE NO.</th>
<th>E-MAIL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. Wilson</td>
<td>PC109</td>
<td>x23033</td>
<td>wilson</td>
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Please refer to the Human Ethics Guidelines for Undergraduate in Psychology (http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/Psychology/ethics/guidelines) prior to completion of form.

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<th>Has the protocol of this course project been approved by McMaster University Research Ethics Board, the Psychology or other Ethics Committee where the course will occur?</th>
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Name of Instructor who received approval: M. Wilson

Ethics Board: McMaster REB    
Contact Person: Cindy Riach    
Address: IWC-AB122_    
Phone: x23590    
Date of approval: Dec. 1998    
Approval Number: _    
Email: riachc

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<th>Is this a renewal request?</th>
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For Ethics Committee only:

**In submitting this application, I certify that the information accurately describes how the class projects will be conducted.**

**SIGNATURE:** ____________________________  
Instructor
Instructors must provide a written statement of instructions that will be given to student researchers for each type of project (or set of projects) that the students will be conducting.

These instructions should include the following information:
1. the purpose of the project
2. recruitment method including relationship of subjects to student researchers;
3. procedure for obtaining subjects’ consent (append model consent form);
4. procedure for dealing with subjects who wish to withdraw from research project;
5. the research protocol;
6. the debriefing procedure (append any debriefing statement);
7. description of possible risks (physical, psychological or social) to subjects and ways to minimize them;
8. provisions to guarantee data confidentiality;

II

Describe the procedures that will be followed to promote compliance with these instructions (e.g., lecture on ethical issues, instructor’s approval of each student protocol, sanctions for noncompliance).

III

If relevant, Instructor must also provide written evidence granting approval to carry out student research projects involving agencies other than those within McMaster University (e.g. a school, daycare center).

(YES / NO)

1. Do any of the procedures involve contact of the body (e.g. touching, attachment to instruments, collection of bodily substances)? √
2. Do the procedures involve the administration of any substance? √
3. Is there any physical risk? √
4. Is there any psychological risk? (Might a subject feel demeaned, embarrassed, worried or upset?) Could the subject become fatigued or distressed? √
5. Is there any social risk? (Possible loss of status, privacy, and/or reputation?) √
6. Are the risks similar to those encountered by the subjects in everyday life? √
7. Are the subjects competent adults freely-living in the community-at-large? √
8. Are the research methods non-invasive? (see attached) √
9. Is any deception involved? √
10. Are subjects informed of the right to withdraw at any time during the research project? (N/A)
11. Are the data anonymous? √
   If not, will the data be treated as confidential? 
12. Will subjects be fully debriefed at the end of the procedure? (N/A)

Please Note
It is not necessary to prepare a separate protocol for projects with similar risks to subjects and similar methodology (e.g. recruitment, consent procedures, research tools and protocols).
Instructions for conducting research involving *Homo sapiens*
Course: Animal Behaviour Laboratory 3S3
Instructor: M. Wilson (ext. 23033)

1. Description and Purpose of the Research Projects
Psychology 3S3 offers a small number of students the opportunity to learn about the logic and methods of animal behaviour research which typically entails naturalistic observation of individuals in their natural habitat. Ethology is the European word to describe this discipline, and there is a strong tradition of human ethology which also entails unobtrusively watching people in public situations similar to some of the methodology used by anthropologists.

Students will be offered two different projects involving unobtrusive observation and recording of behaviours of people in public spaces.

*Risk-taking as display.* It has been reported that people, especially young men, drive faster on a turn from a starting stop when their car contains other male passengers of approximately the same age class than when the passengers are female or the car is empty. The speed of a turn could be measured in a standardized way (e.g. car starting from the stoplight on the exit from Hwy. 403 onto Main St. West) and the sex and ages of the parties in the car would be recorded. This exercise introduces students to sexual selection theory, to an indirect and unobtrusive method of studying behaviour, and to evaluation of alternative interpretations of empirical findings.

*Altruism as display.* It has been reported that men, especially your men, are more likely to give money to charity and panhandlers begging on the street if they are accompanied by a woman. Students could “beg” for money for a charity in a public context somewhere on McMaster campus or a shopping mall and record the number of people donating money as a function of the sex and age composition of the party (alone, a couple, a group, etc.). The solicitation of charitable donations would be done on behalf of some official charity with their permission and cooperation. Students would set up a notice and a donation box and one or more students would be available to represent the charity and answer questions. Other students would observe the passersby and donators from a distance and unobtrusively. This exercise will introduce students to the concept of altruism as used by evolutionary biologists, psychologists, and philosophers, as well as sexual selection theory, and evaluation of research methodologies.

2. Recruitment Method.
Subjects are any adults in public spaces engaged in public behaviour. Observations would be analogous to counts of persons entering polling stations or crossing a street. They are not recruited and there is no relationship between the observer and the person being observed. There are no inducements to participate as subjects; indeed, no-one need know they are a subject-for-the-moment. The recruitment to the subject sample depends on whether the people happen to drive through a particular intersection or pass by a particular charitable-donation display.

3. Consent.
Given the anonymity and unobtrusiveness of the projects, written consent is not applicable. Subjects would be competent to consent, but will not be treated as subjects in the conventional sense.

4. Permission to withdraw from experiment.
“Subjects” will presumable engage in public behaviour as they desire. People will drive or walk away from the “experiment” as part of their ongoing activity and goals without any control by the researchers.

The class is limited to 16 persons, but these two human projects will be conducted in groups of up to 4 persons and it’s unlikely that all 16 members of the class would want to study *Homo sapiens*.

The observations are of very short duration, unobtrusive, and anonymous. One of the aims of the research exercise is to develop unobtrusive measures and methodologies in order not to have the research protocol or the observer affect the naturalistic behaviour of those being observed. As stated in section 1, in a study of risk taking as display, the speed of a turn could be measured in a standardized way (e.g. car starting from the stoplight on the exit from Hwy. 403 onto Main St. West) and the sex and ages of the parties in the car would be estimated and recorded. In a study of altruism as display students would set up a notice and a donation box and one or more students would be available to represent the charity and answer questions. Other students would observe the passersby and donators from a distance and unobtrusively record their sex and age and number of companions.
The particular details of each project will have to be approved by the instructor and the instructor or teaching assistant will observe the students’ data collection procedure *in situ* to ensure that their protocol is unobtrusive and public. Part of the point of these research projects is to give the students an opportunity to develop quantitative methodologies suitable for addressing particular questions or hypotheses. For this reason, the details of the exact study site, the name of the charity, or all dependent measures cannot be stated *a priori*.

6. **Debriefing procedure.** Subjects will not be aware of any research project, nor will observers have a change to speak with them or otherwise contact them. In the unplanned and unlikely circumstance that someone questions what the students are observing and recording, the inquirer will be informed and another anonymous public space will be selected for further observation.

7. **Description of possible risks.** “Subjects” might be embarrassed if they knew that their driving speed was recorded, but there is little possibility that subjects will know this as they will spend such little time at the “experimental” site. Their reputation as a charitable-giver might be reduced or enhanced in the eyes of the student observer but reputation is a personal attribute and nothing will be known about the person being observed nor will the observer likely recall or meet them again.

8. **Data confidentiality.** The data are anonymous and summarized in a tabular form; the data sheets will be treated as confidential and kept private and safe. Student researchers will be informed about the ethics of respecting data. In the case of observation of persons giving charitable donations on McMaster campus the student researcher/observer may know the identity of the potential donor, and while the person’s identity will not be recorded the information must be treated as confidential. Therefore, student researchers will be instructed about respecting subjects’ privacy and the need for confidential ethical consideration of people in public places.

**Promotion of compliance with ethical standards for conducting research on humans.**

Each project will be planned and discussed with the instructor. A written research protocol will be submitted to the instructor for approval. The instructor and the teaching assistants will monitor the protocol *in situ*. Group projects also allow fellow classmates to monitor each other’s behaviour. The goals of the animal behaviour laboratory include instilling respect for the subject species and its habitat, and humans are not exempt from consideration. The research projects will be communicated to the class and instructors as posters, webpages, talks, and research papers. These venues will permit scrutiny as to compliance with ethical standards.

**Written approval for research project from relevant agencies**

If the charitable donation project is conducted off campus (e.g. shopping mall) then the relevant representative of the property (e.g. Mall manager) will have to provide written approval before the project is carried out. For all charitable donation projects, written approval from the “sponsoring” charity on whose behalf funds are being solicited will have to be obtained before the project commences.

December 2, 1999
Margo Wilson