USE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS STUDY SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

The procedures outlined in this statement are designed to reduce the element of coercion or influence in any use of Columbia students as subjects in the research projects conducted by faculty, instructional staff and other researchers. These procedures DO NOT apply to students studying research techniques in courses that require them to conduct research studies; rather, they apply to research studies that employ students not as investigators, but as subjects.

The ethical principles of professional societies insist that consent to participate in research must be voluntary, and that potential subjects are to be treated as autonomous agents, with the right to choose to take part in experiments. Federal regulations (e.g., 45 CFR 46.116) are explicit: “An investigator shall seek such consent only under circumstances that provide the prospective subject or the representative sufficient opportunity to consider whether or not to participate and to minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence.”

Consequently, individual faculty members and instructional staff, students, and departments that use students as study subjects, or that maintain “subject pools” of students from which investigators may draw research participants, are asked to adopt procedures that meet the following conditions:

1. Before they enroll in a course, students must be informed of the possibility that they may be asked to serve as research subjects in studies under direction of the faculty.

2. If there is a course requirement that students serve as research subjects in such studies, then alternative ways must be provided for students to meet the requirement. During the first week of classes, students should receive a written description of the various ways to meet the requirement.

3. Each department that regularly requires students to act as research subjects should establish a committee composed of faculty and students to review the research projects involved. This committee should be responsible for hearing and acting on any student complaints in connection with the research-participation requirement.

4. All members of the faculty who invite students to act as subjects in their research must be acquainted with the ethical standards that govern such activities, such as those promulgated by the American Psychological Association (http://www.apa.org/ethics/code.html) or other discipline-related professional organizations, or those in the so-called Belmont Report of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. A copy of the latter report is available online at: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm.