RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS POLICY

Three values govern this policy:

1. The imperative that scholars in religion engage in ethical research that enriches human understanding for the benefit of individuals, faith communities, cultures, and all creation;
2. The ethical requirement that the interreligious values of engaged compassion, respectful hospitality, mutuality, and justice for all participants be evident in research conducted under the auspices of Claremont School of Theology (CST); and
3. The pedagogical importance of ensuring that students and scholars in religion understand the importance and processes of ethical research with human participants if they are to be effective as leaders in an increasingly diverse world.

The faculty of CST seeks to create a reasonable balance among these values and to minimize risk for participants and researchers in all cases. Further, we seek to provide adequate protection, responsibility, and mutual accountability for all persons at CST involved in gathering, evaluating, and publishing data from research with human participants. This is particularly important when research involves intercultural and interreligious understandings, given the gaps between human values, commitments and experiences. For these reasons an Institutional Review Board (IRB; detailed below) will guide the institution's efforts to provide this protection and accountability.

All students, staff, and faculty of CST who conduct research with human participants are required to demonstrate that they have adequately considered the following issues:

1. All methods and procedures to be employed are safe and involve no undue risk to life, health, safety, or well-being of participants;
2. Any risks to participants, which must be delineated in the informed consent document signed by participants, are clearly outweighed by potential benefits to them and to religious leaders, faith communities, cultures and societies;
3. Methods and procedures reflect respect for the dignity and privacy of participants and avoid unwarranted invasion of privacy or disregard for anonymity;
4. Participants are informed in writing of the study’s objectives, methods, risks, and issues related to data collection, storage, and disposal, and give in writing informed consent about their participation in the study;
5. If minors or other vulnerable participants are included in the research, they are given opportunity to make informed assent, but that consent in writing will be obtained from the legal parents or guardians;
6. Data collected is used only for the purposes for which consent is obtained and then appropriately reported, stored, and/or destroyed as described in the research plan.

These criteria govern all plans for research with human participants submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB; described below) and are the minimum standards by which research plans will be assessed.

Institutional Review Board (IRB): This board, a permanent review board of CST apart from standing committees, shall consist of three faculty members; one doctoral student; and at least one member from outside the CST faculty, staff and student bodies (emeriti and alumni may be included). IRB members
are appointed by the Dean for three-year staggered terms. One of the faculty members shall be designated chairperson by the Dean. The IRB shall meet as necessary during the Fall and Spring semesters. All decisions made by the IRB will be recorded and kept on file. A copy of the research plan and action by the IRB shall be kept in a permanent file of the IRB.

The complete policy for research with human subjects is included in the Degree Program Handbooks.