

Stonehill College Institutional Review Board Application Form

Please return one typewritten, signed original and seven copies of this form to:
Bonnie L. Troupe
Director, Academic Development
Duffy 119

Basic Information:

Date submitted: 7-29-10 Date approved: _____

Name of researcher: John R. Lanci

Stonehill Faculty/Staff? Yes: No:

Contact Info (phone and email): [REDACTED]

Faculty/Staff Sponsor if different: _____

Title of Research Project: Problem Based Learning in Undergraduate Religious Studies Courses

Nature of the Study:

Does the research involve:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
a. Drugs or other controlled substances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Payment or other compensation for participation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. Access to participants through a cooperating institution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d. Participants taking internally or having externally applied any substances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e. Removing any fluids (e.g. saliva, blood) or tissues from participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f. Participants experiencing stress (physical or psychological) above a level that would be associated with their normal, everyday activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g. Misleading or deceiving participants about any aspect or purpose of the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h. Participants who would be judged to have limited freedom of consent (e.g. minors, mentally retarded or ill, aged)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Does the research involve:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
i. Any procedures or activities that might place the participants at risk (psychological, physical or social)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
j. A written consent form?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Data collection over a period longer than 6 months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
l. Sensitive aspects of the participant's own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or alcohol use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Lay Summary: Please attach to this form a description of your research so that the IRB may assess its risks and benefits. Describe your research project using lay language—language understood by a person unfamiliar with the area of research. The summary should address any ‘yes’ responses in items a-l above. In addition, address each of the following areas:

- A. Rationale and Aims—the research question; why this needs to be addressed
- B. Procedure and Protocols—include a detailed description of participant's experience
- C. Description of Participants—study population, inclusion criteria, how recruited
- D. Procedures for Obtaining Informed Consent
- E. Potential Risks and Benefits
- F. Safeguards Against Risk
- G. Debriefing Procedure

Additional Items:

Please attach additional items that may help the IRB committee fully understand the research project, if applicable. These may include:

- A. Grant proposal for the research, if applicable
- B. Informed consent form—required in most cases
- C. Debriefing statement—what participants will be told after completing the procedure
- D. Agreements from other participating institutions

Certification:

- 1. I am familiar with the policies and procedures of Stonehill College regarding human participants. I subscribe to the standards in the Stonehill College IRB document and will adhere to the policies and procedures explained therein.

2. I am familiar with the published guidelines for the ethical treatment of participants associated with my particular field of inquiry (e.g., as published by the American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association, NASW Code of Ethics).
3. I am familiar with and will adhere to official policies in my department concerning research activity (e.g., Psychology Department, Biology Department).
4. I understand that upon consideration of the nature of my project, the IRB may request a full application for review of my research at their discretion and convenience.
5. If changes in procedures involving human participants become necessary, I will submit these changes in writing to the IRB for review before initiating the changes.

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____
Investigator(s)

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Investigator(s)

ALL STUDENT APPLICATIONS AND APPLICANTS FROM OUTSIDE THE COLLEGE MUST HAVE A COLLEGE SPONSOR

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____
Research Sponsor

Stonehill College Institutional Review Board Application

Proposed Project: Problem Based Learning in Undergraduate Religious Studies Courses

Researcher: John R. Lanci, Professor of Religious Studies

Lay Summary

A. Rationale and Aims

Pedagogies of engagement—among them problem based learning (PBL)—have been employed in medicine, management, and the sciences for decades as effective methods for promoting deep learning, learning that lasts. However, little research has been done to demonstrate the quality of learning that these pedagogies might bring to the humanities and I have found only a couple of articles documenting the use of strategies like PBL in the study of religion or theology. My most recent work, both in the classroom and in my research, has centered on the benefits that engaged pedagogies can bring to religion courses.

However, much of my published work so far has included only theoretical descriptions or brief anecdotal remarks concerning the success of the pedagogies of engagement I have been using for several years now. I need to provide more qualitative data to support my claims, and to do this, I will need to interview students and quote their work in the public forum. To do that, I need to be sure they are free and comfortable in agreeing to the project. Hence, this application.

B. Procedure and Protocols

PBL is, at its essence, quite simple. In this form of learning, one presents students with a complex, real-world problem that can be solved within a specifically designated time frame. To meet my learning outcomes and keep students motivated in what is for them an unfamiliar learning experience, I create problems for which neither I nor anyone else has a ready answer. That way students avoid the sense that they are “going through the motions” or being tricked into merely doing old work in new ways.

The context for the problems I develop is our college campus. Since my first project three years ago, which challenged an upper level RS class to develop a proposal for putting spiritual art in the science center, students have created, conducted, and evaluated a survey on student spirituality for the college’s mission division; challenged the president and trustees on how best to create effective engagement of students in the college’s Catholic heritage; and created an eco-spiritual religion from scratch for students uninterested in traditional religious traditions.

The students approach the problem in stages: first, they reflect on what they know about the situation and the problem; next, they figure out what they need to know in order to solve the problem; then they make a plan to fill out their knowledge and skills; lastly, they integrate new knowledge with old and present a solution to the problem. In the process, students accept ownership for their own learning; they assess their own and each others' work; they figure out how to work in groups (delegating tasks, making and keeping scheduled meetings, and challenging one another to keep commitments). Most importantly for students of religion, informed by the readings I provide, they spend a great deal of time in and outside of class thinking and talking to people about religious issues—especially the topic for the course—at deeper levels than they can in a regular seminar. In my experience, this higher-order learning, which involves analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, is learning that lasts; more than once I have encountered students a year or more after their PBL project, and they can point to specific ideas that they encountered and skills they learned as result of the experience.

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In addition to end of the semester standardized course evaluations, I offer students several other opportunities to discuss what they hope to learn or have learned in the courses I teach. In particular, students fill out two “letters to the professor,” one during the first week of class and the second at the end of the semester [**See attached sample**]; I am the only person who reads either letter. In the first, which is not graded, I ask students to discuss how they think their previous religious experience will influence their learning and I invite them to articulate their learning goals for the course.

The second letter focuses on two questions: What did you learn about religion in this course? And: What did you learn about yourself? I grade this assignment; the grade is based on the quality of the writing, the depth of reflection, and the evidence of effort, but not on the substance of what they write about, since it would be impossible to grade the particulars of the content, which consists largely of personal experience.

Administration of these assignments to date has elicited excellent qualitative material indicating the kind of learning that goes on when students engage in PBL. For purposes of publishing my experiences in using PBL in religious studies classes, I need permission from students to quote from their two letters to the professor

C. Description of Participants

The students involved in this project will be members of my GENR 100 and REL 268 classes in the Fall, 2010 semester. I will offer the opportunity for anyone who wants to, to be part of the project. However, all will be free to decline, and no one's grade will be affected, since all students, whether they participate or not, will be doing the same amount of work and completing the same assignments in the same way.

D. Procedures for Obtaining Informed Consent

After the first week of class, I plan to offer the informed consent form attached to all members of the class as part of a discussion of the project.

E. Potential Risks and Benefits

There are no benefits involved for the students, though the benefit for the field of religious studies, if my work is approved, conducted, and published, could be substantial. The only potential risk to students would be that what they have written in confidence would be seen by others without their permission; that is always a risk for the teacher, though, and I don't see that as a problem in this project.

F. Safeguards Against Risk

As always, I will not share any student writing of a personal nature with others, including my TAs.

G. Debriefing Procedure

At the end of the semester, we will meet as a class to discuss what we have accomplished during the semester, and we will discuss my plans at that point concerning how I might use what they have written. I will offer students the opportunity—after their last assignment is handed in and graded—to withdraw from the project. I will not publish any of their work without sharing with them the manuscript in which they are quoted, and will at any point allow them to withdraw permission for my including their work in mine.

Additional Items:

Please see the attached **informed consent form**.