

## **Ph.D. course 2026: Research Integrity and Ethics**

Graduate School, Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University

### **Course leaders:**

Jette Kofoed & Morten Dige

### **Teachers apart from course leaders:**

Anja Bechmann, Sara Dybris McQuaid

### **Time:**

October 5 & November 3, 2026, from 10:15 to 16:00

### **Venue:**

Campus Emdrup/Copenhagen, building 7210/A, room A403  
Tuborgvej 164  
2400 København NV

### **Language:**

English

### **ECTS:**

The course generates 2 ECTS credits.

### **Objectives**

- To introduce the basic dimensions of responsible conduct of research in the humanities: freedom of research, research integrity and ethics as these concepts are defined in central documents and guidelines and managed in the institutional framework at Aarhus University.
- To give Ph.D. students an understanding of the institutional and political embeddedness of research, its role, values, and legitimacy.
- To formulate doubts, questions about, and reflections on research integrity and ethics relevant to individual students' research projects.
- To give PhD students tools individually and collectively to reflect on research integrity and ethical dimensions of their work, as well as the broader research fields in which such dimensions are embedded.

## **The course offers**

- Insight into current standards and expectations regarding responsible conduct of research and research integrity, as stated in several central documents including the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.
- Nuanced insight into the concepts and conceptions of research ethics, and research integrity.
- A shared space for reflections on these standards, expectations, and concepts, as well as their implications for participants' own research projects.
- Frameworks for writing and reviewing reflections of each student regarding these issues.

## **Course Background**

This course is relevant at a time of increased focus on research integrity, which is the term applied in an increasing number of documents relating to ethics and the protection of responsible conduct of research. This focus is evident, for instance, in the requirement of statements of research integrity and research ethics when submitting applications and in the national *Code of Conduct*, which is converted into local policies and practices at individual Danish universities. Safeguarding research integrity and freedom of research requires overall principles for research as well as making such principles relevant, integrated into, and practiced in individual research fields and projects.

The course is based on the presumption that considerations of research integrity, freedom of research and ethics are neither a separate part of a research project nor reserved for specific authorities within research institutions but must permeate the entire research process and research community. Responsible conduct of research in the humanities, on the other hand, covers a wide range of diverse factors. Some fields of study involve close contact with everyday human practice, calling for considerations of informed consent, approval of participation, protection of vulnerable groups, protection of data etc. In other fields, different issues will be at the center of attention, e.g., ensuring validity of your analyses, how fairly to represent an extensive or contested field of research or how to bring your research results into the world in a responsible way. However, good research and research integrity in the humanities do not only focus on the challenges facing various areas of study. They also relate to the academic ethos by which we are guided. Across all these cases, research integrity, broadly conceived, involves questions about the position of researchers in relation to the groups they study, the texts they analyze, and the ways in which their research is funded and utilized politically and organizationally.

The composition of lecturers during the course indicates that we understand ethical issues and questions of research integrity as relevant concerns for all subject areas of humanistic research. The aim is to enable PhD students to identify how problems concerning freedom of research, research integrity and ethics appear in their own research fields and how they could enter into their own dissertations. Ethical issues in the humanities are as heterogeneous as are the humanities themselves. A course in ethics and research integrity crossing all subjects of the humanities makes it possible to spot and be inspired by the specific issues in various subject areas, but also to identify common issues that are distinctive for the humanities.

The course paves a way for a high standard of research integrity and ethics among the youngest of the faculty's researchers based on the national standards with respect for the various subject areas and projects of individual researchers. Responding to such questions involves developing professional virtues and good research practices and complying with principles of research ethics. But it also involves reflections on the inherent nature and meaning of these principles in individual research activities, and how to understand them considering the distinctive traditions of the various disciplines and the unique role of these disciplines and the university in society.

### **Expectations for each participant**

All participants are expected to:

- read the course material that will be distributed before the course begins
- start contemplating the dimensions of ethics and integrity emerging in their own research practice
- write, give, and receive feedback on a short reflection paper
- participate actively in discussions during the course.

Before course day 1: As part of the course application each participant must write a one-page project outline. Lecturers will use the outlines in their preparation, and outlines will also be distributed to the other course participants to make the participants' concrete challenges provide a basis for discussions.

Before course day 2: participants are expected to produce a 2-3 pages text reflecting the lectures and discussions on day one. A fellow participant will give short criteria-based feedback on 2-3 questions formulated by the author. Participants will receive instructions regarding this feedback at the end of day 1. The participants begin day 2 by discussing their reflection papers and feedback with 1 or 2 fellow students. Deadlines will be announced after admission to a course. See Brightspace and e-mail for detailed instructions.

**Course format**

The course consists of presentations, plenary discussions, facilitated group discussions, and written assignments. The course is coordinated by one/two course leader(s), who will bring the threads together, facilitate discussions, and relate the course to the students' own projects, subject areas, and reflections.