

Virginia Tech  
College of Liberal Arts  
and Human Sciences

ASPECT (The Alliance for Social,  
Political, Ethical, and Cultural  
Thought)

June 25, 2014

Dr. Karen P. DePauw  
Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education  
Virginia Tech Graduate School  
Mail Code: 0325

Dear Dean DePauw,

The ASPECT PhD program will fulfill the new Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Requirement (pursuant to the resolution adopted by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies) by implementing the plan listed below. It is also important to note that, in the context of the ASPECT PhD program, many of the stipulations listed below have been in place for years. ASPECT students have been active participants in ethics and integrity activities, inside and outside the ASPECT program, since 2008 (the year the program was launched).

ASPECT Plan for Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Activities

1. Every incoming ASPECT PhD student is asked to participate in an hour-long session led by the ASPECT Program director on matters of Scholarly Ethics and Integrity as part of the two to three-hour orientation for all incoming ASPECT PhD students that is scheduled by ASPECT every August prior to the start of the Fall semester. During this session, matters of academic and scholarly dishonesty (including plagiarism and various forms of cheating), of proper respect for professional conventions and professional etiquette (including recognized use of citations, acknowledgments of other scholars' work, and interdiction of falsification of research or findings), of ethical pedagogical standards and professional teaching criteria, and of reporting of any known ethical misconduct by other parties are introduced, explained, and discussed. Students are given copies of the Graduate Honor Code at Virginia Tech. The Graduate School document titled "Overview/Mission of the Graduate Honor System" at Virginia Tech is read to all the students during this session too. The students are also asked to sign a form (filed in the ASPECT office) stating that they have received from the ASPECT director and/or the ASPECT program assistant these documents during this pre-semester session.
2. Every incoming ASPECT PhD student, during their first Fall semester, must sign up for the required core ASPECT course ASPT 6104-Interdisciplinary Methodology in ASPECT. In this course, two sessions (of three hours each) are dedicated to scholarly/academic

research ethics and integrity in interdisciplinary social science/humanities research. One of these sessions is the first session of the semester. The second session is scheduled during the latter part of the semester. As part of this course, students must purchase and read several books on matters of ethics and integrity. Among these books are: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*; Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*; Gordon Graham, *Theories of Ethics*; and Israel and Hay, *Research Ethics for Social Scientists* (titles can vary from year to year). Rarely, an incoming ASPECT doctoral student will start the program in the Spring semester. If this is the case, this student is unable to take ASPT 6104 until her/his second semester in ASPECT. In such a situation, the student is asked to purchase two of the above-listed books (list can vary from year to year) and read them in her/his first semester in the program.

3. During what is normally their third semester of coursework in the ASPECT doctoral program, ASPECT PhD students must sign up for the required ASPT 6904 course- Professional Development in ASPECT. One of the main objectives of this course is to carefully address issues of scholarly and research integrity and ethics such as knowledge of relevant professional conventions, respect for peer work and research, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty, pedagogical ethics, procedures for reporting academic misconduct, and so forth prior to the student embarking upon the writing and defense of her/his dissertation proposal. The course is a required core course in ASPECT offered every year (once a year), in the Fall semester, and taught by an ASPECT affiliated faculty member at Virginia Tech. Full time ASPECT doctoral students normally take this course in their third semester of coursework in the ASPECT program. Part-time students may take this course later on, but always prior to writing a dissertation proposal. A minimum of three sessions (nine hours) in this course are dedicated to the Scholarly Ethics and Integrity topics mentioned above.
4. Every ASPECT PhD student must earn a passing grade in both ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904 in order to be allowed to move forward with their Program of Study in ASPECT. No ASPECT student will be allowed to defend her/his dissertation proposal if the student's plan of study is not approved by her/his proposed dissertation committee members, the ASPECT director, and the Graduate School and if the courses listed on the plan of study (including ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904) show a failing grade. For ASPECT PhD students, core courses such as ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904 cannot be taken Pass/Fail. Given that ethics and integrity activities are important components of both ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904, no ASPECT PhD student will be able to move forward to the dissertation proposal writing and defense stage without having participated in these activities.
5. The ASPECT director and/or the ASPECT program assistant will announce Scholarly Ethics and Integrity activities and events organized by the Graduate School to all ASPECT

PhD students via email (ASPECT student email listserv), provided that the Graduate School notifies ASPECT of such activities and events in a timely fashion. ASPECT PhD students are always encouraged to be active participants in those activities and events.

I believe this plan meets the Graduate School's expectations for scholarly ethics and integrity initiatives and activities as stipulated by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, Resolution 2012-13B. Please let me know if you have any question.

Sincerely,

Francois Debrix

ASPECT Program Director