# *Human Participant Ethics Protocol Submission*

*CONFIDENTIAL*

## 0 - Identification

**RIS Human Protocol Number**
**47407**

**Protocol Title**
Ctrl + Alt + Regulate: Assessing Student Perspectives on AI Governance

**Protocol Type**
**Investigator Submission**

### Applicant Information

**Applicant Name**
**Michael Cowan**

**Rank / Position**
N/A

**Department / Faculty**
UTSC:Dept-Political Science - UofT Scarborough

**Business Telephone**
647-780-0516

**Extension**

**Email Address**
M.COWAN@MAIL.UTORONTO.CA

### Faculty Sponsor Information

**Sponsor Name**
**Irma Spahiu**

**Rank/Position**

**Department**
UTSC:Dept-Political Science - UofT Scarborough

**Business Telephone**

**Extension**

**E-mail**
irma.spahiu@utoronto.ca

### Research Type

Is this course based research? ◯ Yes ◉ No

| Course Code | Title | Level | Session | Section | Start Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

**Division** **Department** **Unit Head Name**

### Collaborators/Co-Investigators



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| Name | Department | Email | Phone | Designation | Alt Contact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irma Spahiu | UTSC:Dept-Political Science | irma.spahiu@utoronto.ca | +14162085065 | Co-Investigator & Alt | X |

Projected Project Dates

Estimated Start Date
1-Nov-24

Estimated End Date
28-Feb-25

## 2 - Location

**Location of the Research:** ☐ University of Toronto ☒ Other Locations

**Other Location Details**

| Type | Name | Location | Country | Contact | Email | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Institutional Field Location | | | Canada | | | Online |

**Administrative Approval/Consent**

Administrative Approval/Consent Needed: ○ Yes ◉ No

Community Based Particatory Research Project? ○ Yes ◉ No

**Other Ethic Boards Approval(s)**

Another Institution or Site involved? ○ Yes ◉ No

## 3 - Agreements and Reviews

### Funding

Project Funded? ○ Yes ◉ No

Explain why no funding is required

Online survey with small honorarium (participant entered into a draw to win one of three $50 Amazon gift cards).

### Agreements

Funding/non-funding Agreement in Place? ○ Yes ◉ No

Any Team Member Declared Conflict of Interest? ○ Yes ◉ No

### Reviews

☐ This research has gone under scholarly review by thesis committee, departmental review committee, peer review committee, or some other equivalent

☐ This research will go under scholarly review prior to funding

☒ This review will not go under a scholarly review

## 4 - Potential Conflicts

**Conflict of Interest**

Will researchers, research team members, or immediate family members receive any personal benefit? ○ Yes ◉ No



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**Restrictions on Information**

Are there any restrictions regarding access to, or disclosure of information (during or after closure)? ○ Yes ◉ No

**Researcher Relationships**

Are there any pre-existing relationships between the researchers and the researched? ○ Yes ◉ No

**Collaborative Decision Making**

Is this a community based project - i.e.: a collaboration between the university and a community group? ○ Yes ◉ No

## 5 - Project Details

**Summary**

**Rationale**

Describe the purpose and scholarly rationale for the project

The proposed study, Ctrl + Alt + Regulate: Assessing Student Perspectives on AI Governance, aims to explore undergraduate students' perspectives on artificial intelligence (AI) and its regulation. AI is rapidly transforming numerous sectors, from healthcare and education to finance and transportation. As governments and institutions grapple with the ethical, legal, and social implications of these technologies, regulatory frameworks have emerged to address these challenges. However, much of the regulatory debate has centered on industry experts, policymakers, and corporate interests, often neglecting the voices of young adults, particularly university students, who are among the most frequent users of AI technologies and will be deeply affected by their integration into society.

This study seeks to fill a notable gap in the existing literature: the exclusion of young adults from AI governance discussions. University students are not only frequent users of AI but also future leaders, innovators, and policy influencers. Understanding their views on AI's potential impacts and governance is crucial for designing inclusive regulatory frameworks that reflect a broad spectrum of societal perspectives.

Recent literature highlights two predominant approaches to AI regulation: rules-based and principles-based frameworks. Rules-based approaches, such as those exemplified by Canada's Bill C-27 and the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, provide clear and enforceable guidelines but risk stifling innovation through over-regulation (Ferguson & Whiteside, 2022; European Parliament, 2023). Conversely, principles-based approaches, as seen in the UK's AI regulatory framework and the US Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights, emphasize flexibility and ethical values but may suffer from inconsistent application and enforcement (Hine & Floridi, 2023). Given these trade-offs, understanding how the younger generation perceives these frameworks is critical for future regulatory developments.

The study will survey Canadian undergraduate students, examining their views on the role of AI in their lives, their preferences for AI governance, and their concerns about issues such as privacy, job displacement, and equitable access to technology. By engaging a demographic that is often overlooked in regulatory discussions, this research will offer fresh insights into public perceptions of AI and provide policymakers with guidance on incorporating the views of younger citizens in AI governance.

Hypotheses/Research Questions

Research Questions:

• What relationship do undergraduate students have with AI?
• In what ways do they perceive AI influencing their social life, legal rights, and career prospects?
• Do students believe AI should be regulated, and if so, how?
• Which regulatory bodies do students consider most effective for addressing AI issues related to privacy, data security, bias, and discrimination?

Hypotheses:

- H1: Undergraduate students will have a generally positive outlook on AI's future potential, particularly in areas such as education, healthcare, and daily life conveniences.
- H2: Students will express concerns about equitable access to AI, fearing that disparities in access could exacerbate social inequalities.
- H3: Participants will exhibit significant concerns about AI's potential to cause job displacement, particularly in industries vulnerable to automation (e.g., manufacturing, customer service).
- H4: Students will prefer rules-based regulatory approaches, emphasizing clarity and enforceability, over principles-based frameworks, which focus on ethical guidelines and flexibility. This contrasts with global regulatory trends favoring principles-based regulation.

References

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**Methods**

Describe formal/informal procedures to be used

The study will be conducted entirely online using the Qualtrics survey platform, ensuring accessibility and ease of participation for the target population of undergraduate students (no face-to-face or in-person research will be conducted). This serves as a larger scale extension of our small sample pilot (n = 5, pre tested in Summer 2024).
Data Collection:
- Demographics: Basic demographic information such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, and educational background will be collected -- to segment responses and ensure that the analysis accounts for potential variations across demographic groups.
- AI Knowledge & Usage: Participants will be asked about their general knowledge of AI and their experiences using AI technologies (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini) -- in effort to contextualize their attitudes toward AI regulation.
- Sentiments Toward AI: A combination of Likert scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions will gauge participants' views on AI's societal benefits, risks, and its influence on their personal and professional lives. This section will explore ethical concerns (e.g., bias in AI, job displacement) and gauge general optimism or pessimism regarding AI's future impact.
- Regulatory Preferences: Participants will be asked to compare and contrast their preferences for rules-based vs. principles-based regulatory frameworks, and to identify which actors (e.g., government, tech companies, regulators) they trust most in AI governance. This section will also explore which issues students believe should be prioritized in AI regulation (e.g., privacy, transparency, data security).
All data collected will be anonymous, and participants will not be asked to provide any personally identifiable information during the survey. If participants choose to enter a gift card draw, they will be redirected to an external form that is separate from their survey responses.
Process:
- Participants will be recruited using university mailing lists, social media, student societies, and informal word-of-mouth. Recruitment materials will include a brief description of the study, its purpose, and the opportunity to participate in a 15-minute online survey.
- Before accessing the survey, participants will be presented with an informed consent form. This form will outline the study's purpose, risks, and benefits, as well as participants' rights to confidentiality and withdrawal at any time. Consent will be recorded digitally via a forced-choice question before the survey begins.
- Qualtrics: Participants will complete the survey remotely, and anonymously -- with no personally identifiable information collected.
Data Analysis (mixed-methods approach with analysis conducted on R-Studio):
- Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative data (from Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions) will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., means, medians) to summarize general trends in students' attitudes toward AI.
- Inferential statistical tests, such as ANOVA and logistic regression, will be used to identify significant differences in responses based on demographic variables and assess relationships between variables (e.g., attitudes toward AI and preference for a particular regulatory framework).
- Qualitative Analysis: Open-ended responses will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes in students' ethical concerns, regulatory preferences, and perceived risks. The NVivo software may be employed to aid in coding and categorizing these responses for more systematic analysis.

Copies of questionnaires, interview guided and/or other instruments used

| Document Title | Document Date |
|---|---|
| Survey Instrument | 2024-10-03 |

**Clinical Trials**

Is this a clinical trial? ○ Yes ◉ No

## 6 - Participants and Data

Participants and/or Data

What is the anticipated sample size of number of participants in the study? 300

Describe the participants to be recruited, or the individuals about whom personally identifiable information will be collected. List the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Where the research involves extraction or collection personally identifiable information, please describe where the information will be obtained, what it will include, and how permission to access said information is being sought.

The study will focus on undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Toronto (tri-campus recruitment).
Inclusion Criteria:
- Participants must be 18 years or older (to provide informed consent).
- Student Status: Participants must be currently enrolled in undergraduate programs at the University of Toronto.



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The study is designed to prioritize participant anonymity, as the focus is on aggregate trends in student perspectives (not individual response). Since no Personal Identifiable Information is necessary for the research objectives, this reduces any potential risks to participants' privacy and confidentiality. Given Qualtrics will be used to host the survey, no direct or indirect identifiers will be requested within the survey itself. Likewise, participants who wish to enter a draw for Amazon gift cards will be redirected to a separate external form, ensuring their survey responses cannot be linked to their entry for the honorarium.
A sample of this size (200-300 participants) is appropriate for identifying trends and drawing meaningful conclusions in the social sciences -- via statistical analysis. Prior studies (visible in the references) utilize samples of 100+ participants. In recruiting 300 participants, we hope to have a sufficient sample that is adequately representative, and can achieve saturation (for Nvivo analysis) while accounting for potential missing participant responses and attention check failures.

Is there any group or individual-level vulnerability related to the research that needs to be mitigated (for example, difficulty understanding consent, history of exploitation by researchers, or power differential between the researcher and the potential participant)? ○ Yes ◉ No

**Recruitment**

Is there recruitment of participant? ◉ Yes ○ No

Recruitment details including how, from where, and by whom

Participants will be recruited using university mailing lists, social media, student societies, and informal word-of-mouth. Recruitment materials will include a brief description of the study, its purpose, and the opportunity to participate in a 15-minute online survey.

Is participant observation used? ○ Yes ◉ No

Will translation materials be used/required? ○ Yes ◉ No

Attach copies of all recruitment posters, flyers, letters, email text, or telephone scripts

| Document Title | Document Date |
|---|---|
| Email Recruitment | 2024-10-03 |

Compensation

Will the participants receive compensation? ○ Yes ◉ No

Non Compensation Description

The study has a small honorarium draw and is not seeking funding from the Department of Political Science. Participants will instead have the option to enter an

Is there a withdrawal clause in the research procedure? ○ Yes ◉ No

## 7 - Investigator Experience

**Investigator Experience with this type of research**

Please provide a brief description of the previous experience for this type of research by the applicant, the research team, and any persons who will have direct contact with the applicants. If there is no previous experience, how will the applicant and research team be prepared?

(1) The applicant: successful completion of a prior ethics protocol (undergraduate Thesis protocol #46013); undergraduate responsibilities as a Research Assistance for Professor Christopher Cochrane (UTSC Political Science Department); Work Study for the CJS Lab (downtown); Certification in TCPS 2: Core 2022 (attached). Completed the University of Toronto's Division of Comparative Medicine (DCM) short course on ethics in animal research.
The applicant will remain in contact with a variety of Political Science and Statistics professors at the University of Toronto Scarborough to address suitability of questionnaire items, ethics components, and statistical analysis procedures.
(2) Professor Irma Spahiu is a faculty member of the Department of Political Science, who is overseeing the research project.

Are community members collecting and/or analyzing data? ○ Yes ◉ No

## 8 - Possible Risks and Benefits

**Possible Risks**

Potential Risk Details:

Physical Risks ○ Yes ◉ No



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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Psychological/emotional Risks | (•) Yes | ( ) No |
| Social Risk | ( ) Yes | (•) No |
| Legal Risk | ( ) Yes | (•) No |

Risk Description

The study is considered low risk given its online nature and the non-sensitive subject matter. The primary risk involves minor emotional discomfort if participants feel uncertain or concerned about AI's role in society. However, measures like voluntary participation, the ability to skip questions, and clear instructions for withdrawal minimize this risk.

Potential Benefits

Benefit Description

While there are no direct benefits to participants, their contributions will provide valuable insights into AI governance and could inform future regulatory discussions. Results will be disseminated through academic channels -- with the goal of presenting at CPSA 2025 -- potentially influencing policy recommendations.

## 9 - Consent

Consent Process Details

The Informed Consent form is presented as the first page of the Qualtrics survey. Participants are required to make a forced-selection to indicate that they consent to participate, allowing them to continue with the survey questions, or that they do not consent (which takes them to the final "thank you" page of the survey).

Uploaded letter/consent form(s)

| Document Title | Document Date |
|---|---|
| Informed Consent Form | 2024-10-03 |

Is there additional documentation regarding consent such as screening materials, introductory letters etc.: ( ) Yes (•) No

Uploaded letter/consent form(s)

Will any information collected in the screening process - prior to full informed consent to participate in the study - be retained for those who are later excluded or refuse to participate in the study? ( ) Yes (•) No

Is the research taking place within a community or organization which requires formal consent be sought prior to the involvement of the individual participants ( ) Yes (•) No

Are any participants not capable (e.g.: children) of giving competent consent? ( ) Yes (•) No

## 10 - Debriefing and Dissemination

DeBrief

Will deception or intentional non disclosure be used? ( ) Yes (•) No

Will a written debrief be used? (•) Yes ( ) No

Written Debrief Documents

| Document Title | Document Date |
|---|---|
| Debriefing Form (appears at the end of Qualtrics Survey) | 2024-10-03 |

Do participants/communities have the right to withdraw their data following the debrief? ( ) Yes (•) No

Information Feed Back Details following completion of a participants participation in the project

If participants are interested in the purpose, objectives, or methodology of the study, they have the option to contact the applicant and/or the applicant's supervisor (email information provided during Informed Consent) or they may use the External Form to request further information. Should any of the participants wish to view the results of the study, the results will be made available (via the aforementioned methods) by April 2025.



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Procedural details which allow participants to withdraw from the project

Participants are presented with the following statements in the Informed Consent form:
- "Right to Withdraw from the Study: You may refuse to participate in this study. You may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the study has started without penalty."
- "Please be assured that your participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or withdraw from participating at any time."
- "Consent: Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate or to withdraw at any point in this study without penalty (simply close to webpage to exit the survey)."
Due to the online nature of the study, withdrawal is simply closing the web-page (or skipping questions). Participants who have incomplete responses are excluded from the analysis (but to reiterate, there is no identifiable information being collected).

☐ Not Applicable

What happens to a participants data and any known consequences related to the removal of said participant

☒ Not Applicable

List reasons why a participant can not withdraw from the project (either at all or after a certain period of time)

☒ Not Applicable

## 11 - Confidentiality and Privacy

### Confidentiality

Is the data confidential? ◉ Yes ○ No

Will the confidentiality of the participants and/or informants be protected? ◉ Yes ○ No

List confidentiality protection procedures

No identifiable information is being collected within the Qualtrics survey platform (e.g., no collection of direct identifiers, indirect identifiers). If participants wish to enter the honorarium draw, the external-form link is presented (and does not connect participants with their Qualtrics responses).

Are there any limitations on the protection of participant confidentiality? ○ Yes ◉ No

Is participant anonymity/confidentiality not applicable to this research project? ○ Yes ◉ No

### Data Protection

Describe how the data (including written records, video/audio recordings, artifacts and questionnaires) will be protected during the conduct of the research and subsequent dissemination of results

Ultimately, we are not collecting nor disclosing personally identifiable or confidential data. Data collected will remain online on Qualtrics' service -- protected by their industry standard Information Security Management System (ISMS).

Explain for how long, where and what format (identifiable, de-identified) data will be retained. Provide details of their destruction and/or continued storage. Provide a justification if you intend to store identifiable data for an indefinite length of time. If regulatory requirements for data retention exists, please explain.

Data will not be retained (see above).

Will the data be shared with other researchers or users? ◉ Yes ○ No

Please describe how and where the data will be stored and any restrictions that will be made regarding access.How will participant consent be obtained? If data is to be made open access, please describe how and where they will be maintained.

Qualtrics data (downloaded to R-statistical software as .qmd/.dta) will be shared in the event that the study is re-opened for replication with a larger representative sample.

## 12 - Level of Risk and Research Ethics Board

### Level of Risk for the Project



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Group Vulnerability: Low

Research Risk: Low

Risk Level: 1

Explanation/Justification

Explanation/Justification detail for the group vulnerabilty and research risk listed above

Nature of Data Collection: the method involves an online survey administered on Qualtrics (secure research platform), marking it as inherently low-risk and non-invasive as it does not require physical interaction.
Anonymity and Confidentiality: the survey is designed to ensure individual responses cannot be linked back to participants (as there is no identifiable information being collected) -- reducing the risk of privacy breaches or repercussions based on their responses.
Non-Sensitive Topics: the subject matter of the questionnaire is predominantly non-sensitive; for those participants that may be affected by the nature of some of the questions included, we have included information in the Informed Consent procedure that addresses potential concerns.
Low Vulnerability: the target population for the survey is undergraduate students, 18 years of age and older, interested in the artificial intelligence -- a demographic capable of making informed decisions about their participation.

Research Ethics Board

REB Associated with this project: Social Sciences, Humanities & Education

## 13 - Application Documents Summary

Uploaded Documents

| Document Title | Document Date |
|---|---|
| Survey Instrument | 2024-10-03 |
| Email Recruitment | 2024-10-03 |
| Informed Consent Form | 2024-10-03 |
| Debriefing Form (appears at the end of Qualtrics Survey) | 2024-10-03 |

## 14 - Applicant Undertaking

I confirm that I am aware of, understand, and will comply with all relevant laws governing the collection and use of personal identifiable information is research. I understand that for research involving extraction or collection of personally identifiable information, provincial, federal, and/or international laws may apply and that any apparent mishandling of said personally identifiable information, must be reported to the office of research ethics.

As the Principal Investigator of the project, I confirm that I will ensure that all procedures performed in accordance with all relevant university, provincial, national, and/or international policies and regulations that govern research with human participants. I understand that if there is any significant deviation in the project as originally approved, I must submit an amendment to the Research Ethics Board for approval prior to implementing any change.

☒ I have read and agree to the above conditions



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RIS Protocol Number: 47407

Approval Date: 4-Nov-24

PI Name: Michael Cowan

Division Name:

Dear Michael Cowan:

Re: Your research protocol application entitled, "Ctrl + Alt + Regulate: Assessing Student Perspectives on AI Governance"

The Social Sciences, Humanities & Education REB has conducted a Delegated review of your application and has granted approval to the attached protocol for the period 2024-11-04 to 2025-11-04.

This approval covers the ethical acceptability of the human research activity; please ensure that all other approvals required to conduct your research are obtained prior to commencing the activity.

Please be reminded of the following points:

- An **Amendment** must be submitted to the REB for any proposed changes to the approved protocol. The amended protocol must be reviewed and approved by the REB prior to implementation of the changes.
- An annual **Renewal** must be submitted for ongoing research. Renewals should be submitted between 15 and 30 days prior to the current expiry date.
- A **Protocol Deviation Report** (PDR) should be submitted when there is any departure from the REB-approved ethics review application form that has occurred without prior approval from the REB (e.g., changes to the study procedures, consent process, data protection measures). The submission of this form does not necessarily indicate wrong-doing; however follow-up procedures may be required.
- An **Adverse Events Report (AER)** must be submitted when adverse or unanticipated events occur to participants in the course of the research process.
- A **Protocol Completion Report** (PCR) is required when research using the protocol has been completed.
- If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.



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