

Guidelines for Honors Students Sociology & Anthropology Majors

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology currently offers majors and minors in Sociology and Anthropology.

Selection of a Mentor

A successful honors thesis depends not only on a matching of student interest and faculty expertise but also on a stable and supportive mentoring relationship. In general, the department advocates a process in which the student asks a faculty member to serve as a mentor based on his or her experiences in Sociology/Anthropology courses and on meetings with potential mentors. Two restrictions on this selection process are that (1) the mentor must be a full-time continuing faculty member of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and (2) the department chair must approve the mentor selection. The department chair will also assist students who are undecided about their choice of a mentor by discussing potential projects with them and by suggesting faculty members for them to meet.

In addition to its introductory level courses – Introductory Sociology (SOC 1110) and Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (ANT 1120) – the department offers two research methods courses that provide good places for students to start thinking about a possible honors project. Qualitative Research Methods (ANT 2150/SOC 2150) focuses on the qualitative methods social scientists use to conceptualize, observe, and record information about human behavior and cultural production. Quantitative Research Methods (ANT2160/SOC 2160) focuses on research design and procedures that lead to the statistical analysis of quantitative data. Finally, the department offers theory options for each major (SOC 2610: Sociological Theory and ANT 3610: History of Anthropological Thought). These courses represent a setting where students consider the implications of the major schools of thought in each discipline. These courses – required of all Sociology and Anthropology majors - are taken ideally during the sophomore year. This sequence is encouraged especially for Honors Fellows.

Completion of the Senior Seminar in Sociology & Anthropology

The Senior Seminar course (ANT 4970/SOC 4970) focuses on the development and completion of a carefully considered research project in Sociology or Anthropology. The procedures and results of that original research are presented formally, both orally in a public setting and as a written paper that conforms to the professional standards of our respective disciplines. The Senior Seminar course explores general questions about the nature of the discipline and educates participants regarding their responsibilities to one another as professional colleagues. Normally, SOC 4970 is offered in the fall and ANT 4970 is offered in the spring.

As stated below, Honors Fellows have the option of using four semester hours of HNR 4998 as an exemption from Senior Seminar, or they can count four semester hours of HNR 4998 as a departmental elective and take the appropriate Senior Seminar for their major (SOC/ ANT). Honors Fellows who opt to substitute four semester hours of HNR 4998 for Senior Seminar must complete three Senior Seminar components: (1) Completion of a senior portfolio, (2) Participation in the Senior Seminar poster session, and (2) Participation in the Senior Seminar oral presentations. Honors Fellows choosing this option should be in contact with the Senior Seminar instructor regarding guidelines and presentation dates.

If students choose to take Senior Seminar, it is expected that these students will be much more advanced in their project definition, literature review, and empirical research than other Anthropology and Sociology majors. For that reason, Honors Fellows will be required to develop some aspect of their honors research in a way that is not the same as the final paper they will present for honors. They may also be asked to model research procedures, share experiences, make special presentations, or otherwise contribute to the work of the class. Like other students in the seminar, Honors Fellows will be expected to make a formal, oral presentation of their research at the end of the course and to submit a written version of their work, as well. Within those guidelines, the seminar instructor will establish specific course responsibilities and grading procedures for Honors Fellows. If the Honors Fellows opts to take Senior Seminar, it is furthermore recommended that the seminar professor be part of the committee that contributes to the development of the thesis. In this way, the connections between the Senior Seminar and the honors thesis can be articulated more clearly.

The Honors Thesis in Sociology/Anthropology

Because of the amount of time devoted to the development of the honors thesis – eight semesters during the junior and senior years – and because of the broader expectations placed on Honors Fellows, our department requires that an honors thesis be at least forty to fifty pages. This is approximately twice the length of the regular Senior Seminar paper. That thesis should exhibit original research by the student that critically evaluates and advances a body of research or a theoretical tradition within the disciplines of Sociology or Anthropology. The thesis may employ either a quantitative or qualitative research strategy (or mixed methods), consistent with the nature of the project. Studies in applied or public Sociology/Anthropology may also be developed; however, these too must have some empirical component that examines the causes, consequences, or contexts of these projects. Likewise, theoretically oriented topics must have research elements that examine the utility or implications of these ideas.

Like Senior Seminar papers more generally, honors theses should conform to standard formats related to the development and dissemination of research in Sociology or Anthropology. In certain circumstances, a student may choose to produce work in some other format in addition to written work. For example, following the development of a thorough literature review on a specific topic, a student may choose to develop a video ethnography related to their topic. The final video ethnography, however, must be accompanied by a substantial written component that addresses methodological issues, theoretical frameworks, and analytical conclusions developed in the research. In cases where students choose alternate research designs, they should work closely with faculty members who have expertise in these areas.

Credit for Honors 4998 in the Sociology & Anthropology Majors

We agree that four hours of HNR 4998 credit can count in place of the Senior Seminar (SOC 4970 or ANT 4970) provided that the research mentor for the honors thesis is a full-time member of our department. However, students may choose to take Senior Seminar and count four hours of HNR 4998 towards elective credit in the major. All Sociology and Anthropology majors must complete a portfolio of their work; for Honors Fellows opting out of the Senior Seminar, the portfolio will be turned in to the research mentor and the Senior Seminar instructor.