

Honors Program in Sociology and Anthropology

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE HONORS PROGRAM

The honors thesis offers motivated students an opportunity to develop and pursue independent research on a topic of their own interest. Working with a faculty advisor in the first semester of the senior year, the student will develop a proposal for research. The student may enroll in an independent study and receive a course credit for developing the proposal. Alternatively, the student may consult with a faculty member to write a research proposal based on an idea that has come out of a projects in another courses. If the faculty agrees that the student has developed a polished proposal, they will appoint a committee to guide the student in developing the thesis the following semester. The thesis can be credited through a Soc/Anth 460 course or can be done as part of the Soc/Anth 400 course. During this semester, the student will conduct research, write an honors thesis and give an oral presentation of research results to the department. If the final paper is deemed meritorious, the faculty will vote to award the student departmental honors for graduation.

EXAMPLES OF EARLIER HONORS THESES

You can find copies of the honors theses completed by past majors by looking on the shelves in the central department area. [Click here](#) to see a list of the theses that sociology and anthropology students have written in the past.

DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES FOR HONORS RESEARCH

(Revised January 2006, DLP)

A. First Semester: Developing an Honor's Research Proposal (independently, or in SOC/ANTH 452)

Outstanding students who are majors in sociology or anthropology are encouraged to pursue Departmental Honors by completing an honors research project during the senior year. Honors research should be more than a review of existing literature; it will preferably involve the hands-on application of anthropological or sociological research methods, and make a new contribution to scholarship (whether this contribution consist of new empirical data, a new theoretical perspective, a new critique of existing scholarship and theory; or new intellectual questions). By the end of their junior year (or earlier), students interested in pursuing Departmental Honors should consult with their advisor, the department chair, or a department faculty member with whom they would like to work in their junior year. At this point they should have a general idea of what they wish to focus on.

Normally, Honors research is a two-semester project. In the first semester, the student will work independently or will register for SOC/ANTH 452, "Individualized Study." During this first semester the student works with a faculty supervisor to define a research question and do background research on that question. The student will produce a polished research proposal that:

- (a) defines the research question
- (b) explains the theoretical framework for that question
- (c) reviews relevant sociological or anthropological literature
- (d) proposes a plan of research, including a timetable, that outlines the methods to be used in studying the research question.

- (e) outlines the student's personal rationale for conducting this research
- (f) provides a bibliography of literature consulted in planning the research
- (g) *recommended*: includes an appendix with an interview guide (questions that will be posed during interviews)

**note: a more detailed guide for how to write a research proposal (designed for anthropology students but applicable to sociology students as well) can be accessed by [clicking this link](#).*

In addition, students working with human subjects must submit an IRB form along with their proposal. This form outlines the student's plans to conduct ethically sound research. To access the department's IRB form, [click here](#).

**note: if the department deems it necessary, it will forward the IRB form to the campus committee for full institutional review.*

The research proposal and IRB form (when applicable) are due two weeks before the last day of classes of the semester, and should be submitted to the department chair .

After the department chair receives the proposal, copies will be made for all department members who will read it. A formal faculty meeting will be held in which members discuss the merit of the proposal and decide whether the student should be accepted into an Honors research course the next semester (SOC 460 or ANTH 460). Please note that members of the department are *not* interested in receiving a "raw" first draft of a proposal. Rather, the student should adhere to the high standards we hold for honor's theses and submit a polished, high-quality proposal that the student has reworked and edited several times in consultation with his or her advisor. The grade for the 452 individualized study course will be assigned after the department meeting by the faculty advisor of this course.

The decision to accept or reject a research proposal will be based on both the student's grade point average in the major and on the quality of the research proposal. Normally, to be accepted for Honors research a student must have a grade point average in the major of at least 3.1 and an average of B (with no single grade lower than B-) in the core methods and theory courses (SOC 302, SOC 303, and SOC 306 or ANTH 300 and ANTH 323)¹; however, exceptions can be made for students whose research proposals are of exceptional quality. Students accepted for Honors research can register for SOC 460 or ANTH 460 in the following semester. Alternatively, students can complete their honors thesis in conjunction with SOC/ANTH 400–Senior Seminar/Capstone Experience in Anthropology (the thesis will fulfill the requirement for a research paper for this class).

If the research proposal is accepted and the student is admitted into Honors research, faculty members in the department will select two consultants, who, along with the faculty advisor of the

¹Anthropology students who have not yet taken one of these core courses may still conduct honor's research if they have a valid reason for not completing such a course before this point.

research, will constitute the subcommittee of faculty who work with the student and participate in the assignment of the grade for the course. If the student is enrolled in SOC/ANTH 400, then professor for that course must be a member of the committee. The student should meet the members of the Honors research subcommittee prior to end of the fall semester. At this meeting, the expectations for the project will be elaborated and guidance will be given for completing the project.

B. Second Semester: Conducting Research and Writing the Honor's Thesis (SOC/ANTH 460)

During the semester that the student is registered for the Honors research course, he or she will complete the proposed research and write an Honors thesis on the project. Honors candidates should complete their research no later than the middle of the semester in which they are registered for SOC/ANTH 460 or SOC/ANTH 400. They should spend the second half of the semester writing, revising, and polishing the Honors thesis. The Honors candidate must meet formally with the Honors research faculty subcommittee near the completion of the research process to discuss the progress of the project. In preparation for this meeting, the student should submit a written progress report or summary of the research several days prior to the meeting. Although this meeting and the initial meeting with the subcommittee provide a *minimum requirement* for consultation, Honors candidates are encouraged to consult informally with advisor and subcommittee members throughout the semester.

It is important to note that the grade for SOC/ANTH 460 is based on the quality of the Honors thesis (written work) as well as on the quality of the research project (effort in conducting library work and fieldwork). To determine the paper grade, the grades of the advisor and the two consultants are averaged. To determine the project grade, the advisor alone assesses the effort and quality of the library work and fieldwork conducted by the student (as outlined in the methodology section of their proposal); the extent to which the student has consulted regularly with him or her; the quality of the student's presentation to the faculty; and any other criteria established by the research advisor.

The 460 course grade is divided into two components: the paper, which is graded by the advisor and the two faculty consultants on the Honors research subcommittee, and the project, which is graded by the faculty advisor alone. The project grade accounts for 50% of the grade for the course, and the paper grade counts for 50%. The grading criteria for anthropology students enrolled in ANTH 400 has yet to be determined.

The Honors candidate presents the research to the entire department faculty toward the end of the semester before submitting the final paper. The final version of the Honors thesis is due no later than Wednesday of the last week of classes. It should be well-organized, carefully written, thoroughly polished, and, of course, free of errors in spelling, syntax, grammar, logic, and structure. The decision to grant Department Honors will be determined by a vote of all of the department faculty. The awarding of Honors is based on the 460/400 course grade, the evaluation of the final paper by the faculty, and the grade point average in the major. Normally, a grade point average of 3.2 is needed for Honors to be awarded.

TIMETABLE FOR HONORS RESEARCH

During Junior Year

- ❖ Brainstorm about topics for Honors research
- ❖ Talk with department faculty about ideas
- ❖ Ask one faculty member to be main advisor for the honors thesis work
- ❖ Pre-register for SOC 452 (Individualized Study) or ANTH 452 (Individualized Study) for the next semester
- ❖ Begin reading materials on topic

During 1st Semester of Honors Research

- ❖ Take SOC 452 (Individualized Study) or ANTH 452 (Individualized Study)
- ❖ Conduct literature review
- ❖ Brainstorm regularly about project with advisor
- ❖ Write multiple drafts of research proposal
- ❖ Gather preliminary data (optional)
- ❖ Sociology majors should pre-register for SOC 460 (Research Course); anthropology majors should pre-register for ANTH 460 (Research Course) or ANTH 400 (Capstone Seminar)
- ❖ Submit proposal to department chair for review by faculty (2 weeks before last class of semester)
- ❖ Submit the department's IRB form to department chair along with the proposal *if the research will involve human subjects* (2 weeks before last class of semester)
- ❖ If accepted, meet with advisor and subcommittee (before winter break, ASAP after above meeting)
- ❖ Optional: when necessary and applicable, apply for funding from the Provost's Office ([click here](#) for more information).

During 2nd Semester of Honors Research

- ❖ Take SOC 460 or ANTH 460
- ❖ Conduct proposed research (first half of semester)
- ❖ Write honor's thesis (second half of semester)
- ❖ Consult with advisor and sub-committee members as needed
- ❖ Submit and present progress report(s) to sub-committee (at the very least, midway through the semester when research is almost done)
- ❖ Submit completed Honor's thesis to department chair (Wednesday of the last week of classes)
- ❖ Present research to the department (end of semester)
- ❖ Department votes on whether to award honors