Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Senior Research Project Guide 2024-25

7/25/2024

Swarthmore Sociology & Anthropology
Senior Research Project Guide

All Sociology/Anthropology majors are required to complete a two-credit senior research project in order to graduate. While we expect most students will choose to present their research in the form of a written thesis, in some cases, we will allow students, with the permission of their advisor and the department chair, to present their research in other formats.

Use this guide as a companion to the process of working on your senior research project. This booklet, combined with the Senior Research Project Master Class, your research project advisor, and your classmates in the department should provide the support and guidance you need to successfully navigate this exciting culminating experience at Swarthmore. We encourage you all to approach the whole process with a sense of excitement, play, and curiosity. This is your chance to follow your own interests and passions and to become a producer of knowledge in your own right!

The senior research project is normally accomplished during the senior year. The department will register you for SOAN 096/180F in the first semester of the senior year and SOAN 097/180S in the second semester; and in the Senior Research Project Master Class, in the fall (SOAN 098) semester. Combined with individual meetings with your senior research project advisor, the Master Class will provide a support system and structured opportunity for you to develop your research ideas in relation to relevant literatures, and to work through the entire process of research from defining your focus, all the way through to a finished product that shares your insights.

All students completing the two-credit senior research project with the Department (special majors housed in SOAN, SOAN/EDUC special majors,[1] course and honors majors,[2] and honors minors who have chosen the 2-credit senior research project as one of their preparations) will meet every Monday evening during the fall and spring semesters of the year.

Why a senior research project?

The senior research project plays a key role in developing critical skills that will serve you in any job that you may have, in graduate school, and in life more broadly. They include:

- Reading critically, writing clearly, and analyzing adequately.
- Designing a research proposal, conducting research, adapting research activities as necessary based on unforeseen circumstances or changes in the field, and bringing a project from vision to completion.

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[1] Those majors planning to spend a semester student-teaching are advised to develop a modified schedule to ensure their thesis work is done during their non-teaching semesters. This usually means doing the first semester of thesis work during the second semester of their junior year.

[2] ALL Honors majors and minors must present their research in the form of a thesis. At the discretion of Department faculty, students pursuing Honors who are not making good progress on their thesis will be withdrawn from the Honors Program on December 1.

- Framing a research question and choosing a methodology that is appropriate for addressing it.
- Deepening knowledge of cross-cultural issues around social processes such as race and ethnic relations, class inequalities, globalization, violence, gender dynamics, etc.
- Knowing when to work collaboratively and independently.
- Expressing ideas at an abstract and theoretical level.
- Providing an opportunity for in-depth knowledge of a particular area of the world or an important social issue.
- Working closely and well with someone who is charged with evaluating your work.
- Integrating independent research, an internship, or community service into academic work.

Goals and Expectations

Students will develop a research question that:

- demonstrates understanding of relevant issues in the field they choose to study
- reveals an appreciation of anthropology and/or sociology, and if pursuing a special major, bridges at least one of the disciplines of their special major
- engages existing literature in a productive and thoughtful way
- is focused enough to limit the research but broad enough to provide for thoughtful exploration

Students will design a study that allows them to engage with a research question or set of questions. As part of this process each student will:

- identify appropriate data collection tools to address the question
- build on methods used in the literature reviewed
- complete necessary DRC or IRB applications, if working with living human subjects
- collect and/or work with original data or primary source material
- analyze data in systematic ways

Students will draw on appropriate theory and research in the field and:

- complete a literature review to frame and begin to examine the research question/topic
- explore data in light of existing literature in the field
- identify (or construct) a conceptual framework that allows for a systematic exploration of the research questions/focal points

A completed Senior Research Project (regardless of format) will entail:

- an abstract of the project
- a statement of the research question
- a literature review that frames the analysis (discussing the relationship between this study and prior work in the field)
- a description of research methods
- an analysis of data (including a reflection on the limitations of the study)
- and a conclusion or set of conclusions

Finally, any final presentation of a senior research project should be structurally coherent, thoughtfully argued, and based on clear writing with proper grammar and mechanics.

Senior Research Project Proposal

Your senior research project proposal is the formal start to your senior research project. Contact your advisor before the end of this academic year and again during the first week of the fall semester to discover if s/he will meet with all advisees in a group or one-on-one. For students planning to conduct research over the summer, you will need to reach out to your advisor for guidance and feedback on your planned research and to advise you through the human subjects' research approval (through the DRC or IRB). Your advisor will help you develop your ideas for your senior research project and will offer you feedback on your proposal. Keep in mind that the overall proposal (complete, final version due early in fall semester, preliminary version submitted at the end of junior spring semester) should be from three to five pages long. It should consist of:

Research Statement (around 300 words):
The research statement should include a clear statement of the research question and explicitly point out the relevance of the study—this is usually considered the answer to the question "So why should anyone care?" The statement should include specific connections to coursework in Sociology and/or Anthropology at the College and, if relevant at other institutions. The statement should be clear, evocative and concise. It might help to frame your research question as a paradox, such as "why have indigenous organizations in Bolivia declined while the number and quantity of funding sources has increased?" You might also frame the research question in terms of making connections, such as "what has been the impact of neo-liberal economic reforms in Bolivia on religious beliefs and festivals?" It is important to formulate a research question that is researchable! In the research statement you should also mention the theoretical objectives of your study and, if possible, point out how you are bringing a fresh perspective to the question.

Methodology Statement (around 500 words):
The methodology statement should emphasize how you plan on answering your research question. What kind of documents, statistics, or materials do you need to answer your question? Do you plan on doing any observations or interviews? Do you expect to use content analysis, take videos and analyze them, run regressions, conduct surveys? Will you be reviewing documents, analyzing theories? We expect that at this point in your career, you have taken a methods course and you will use the methods to which you've been exposed to investigate your questions. If you took a methods course that has nothing to do with your plan, the onus is on you to teach yourself that method with advice about readings from your advisor.

Initial Bibliography (around 10 sources):
As a scholarly piece of work, your senior research project must engage (methodologically and conceptually) relevant studies. In conjunction with your faculty advisor and advice from the Social Sciences Reference Librarian (Simon Elichko), you should list ten works that will play a central role in framing your research. The sources must be books and/or scholarly articles; websites are inappropriate as scholarly sources at this point (but could be used as sources of data to analyze in the thesis).

Human Subjects Research- IMPORTANT
Many ethical concerns arise when human beings are the subjects of both physical and social research. If you are planning to do research involving human subjects, please talk with your advisor as soon as possible about completing an application to be reviewed by either Department Review Committee (DRC) or the College Wide Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. See the Department of Sociology & Anthropology webpage for links to the IRB's guidelines and application and another to the DRC's guidelines and application:

Department Review Committee (DRC):
https://www.swarthmore.edu/sociology-anthropology/human-subjects-research

College Wide Institutional Review Board (IRB) process:
https://www.swarthmore.edu/institutional-review-board

Most students' research is reviewed through the department's DRC, and only in rare cases will students have to have their planned research reviewed through the IRB. In either case, it is your responsibility to work closely with your advisor in the research design and in completing the DRC (or IRB) application.

A good way to go about applying for human subjects' research approval is to first be in touch with your advisor for guidance. If your advisor feels the DRC is the appropriate place for you to seek approval, then work on an initial draft of the DRC application (found here), following the detailed guidelines and advice in this "Crucial Advice for Filling Out Application" document. Also review the example of the successful DRC application that is available on that webpage for a model to guide your work.

Before submitting your DRC application, you must first seek feedback from your advisor (this often requires a round or two of comments and feedback on drafts of the application). You must also complete the CITI training. CITI stands for Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. It usually takes about 3 hours. Once your advisor indicates that your application is ready to submit, you can go ahead and send it as a word document to Stacey Hogge, shogge1@swarthmore.edu. Mrs. Hogge will forward all applications to the Departmental Review Committee (DRC).
Be sure to should attach your CITI Training Completion Certificate when you submit your initial DRC application.

DRC application deadlines for Spring semester:

April 1, 2024, noon: Senior Research Project (SRP) Proposal due; Students planning to present their research in a format that is not the thesis must also include details about their planned format at this stage. Be sure to be in consultation with your advisor prior to submission for additional guidance.

April 10, 2024, noon: Last day to submit initial DRC application for *College Funded* Summer Research for review.

CITI Completion certificate due at this time

April 30, 2024, noon: Last day to submit final *revised* DRC application for College Funded Summer Research for approval

May 1, 2024, noon: Last day to submit initial DRC application for 'other' Summer Research for review.
CITI Completion certificate due at this time

May 30, 2024, noon: Last day to submit final *revised* DRC application for 'other' Summer Research for approval

No summer research DRC applications will be accepted after May 30, 2024

Senior Research Project Due Dates:

All materials should be submitted as a word document in electronic form, with the naming convention, Last, First_ [Name of item being submitted—such as "Research Proposal" "Literature Review" or "Chapter 2" etc., to Stacey Hogge (socanth@swarthmore.edu). Be sure to always cc: your advisor on your email to Stacey.

Sept 16, 2024, noon: Revised Research Project Proposal due. Please include a title (tentative is ok)

Sept 18, 2024, noon: Last day to submit DRC Applications for review
CITI Completion certificate due at this time

Oct 7, 2024, noon: Last day to submit *revised* DRC applications for approval

Oct 21, 2024, noon: Preliminary Literature Review (Chapter 1) due
thesis writers are strongly encouraged to integrate their literature review into their proposal to create an introductory chapter to the thesis

Nov 15, 2024, noon: Methodology and Outline of Analysis due
All data collection for your senior research project should be completed by this time (interviews and transcription, text and web research, etc.). Submit a memo detailing some of your key findings from your data and suggesting possible links to the readings discussed in their literature review.

Dec 6, 2024, noon: Posters due to Kohlberg 232
Must include:

- Title
- Author
- Research Question/ Hypothesis
- Methodology
- Two or three authors from your Lit Review
- Preliminary Findings
- Acknowledgments

Please view posters we find particularly useful as guideposts for your own before seeing your advisors. Also, please take a look at last year's posters hanging in the hallway (second floor, Kohlberg Hall).

Dec 9, 2024, 4:30- 6pm: Poster Reception

Dec 13, 2024, noon: Chapter 2 along with optional outline of Chapter3 due if doing a thesis. Detailed plan of work for spring semester due for other formats.
Check in with your advisor before Winter Break

Jan 24, 2025, noon: Chapter 3 due or submit next installment of work

Feb 21, 2025, noon: Chapter 4 due or submit next installment of work

Mar 27, 2025, noon: Complete Draft of all Senior Research Projects Due

Guidelines for thesis writers:
Submit a printed copy at the Rite of Submission and also submit electronically as a Word document, with the naming convention, Last, First, Rough Draft, to Stacey Hogge (shogge1@swarthmore.edu)

Must include:

- Abstract
- Title Page (including title, advisor's name, date, your name)
- Table of Contents
- Acknowledgements (optional)
- Page Numbers
- Introduction, Conclusion, and Bibliography (even if you expect them to change dramatically in your final version)
- Citations (within text or footnote)
- Bibliography, Formal and complete (in the Sociology or Anthropology citation style)

After handing in your rough draft, you will schedule a meeting (or conversation) with your thesis advisor and one other faculty member. The focus of the meeting will be on the thesis itself, although the two readers may also ask you to discuss links between the thesis and your coursework in the department. You may be asked to make specific revisions before submitting your final draft.

Apr 30, 2025, noon: Final **Honors** Theses due

One PDF file with naming convention, Last, First, class year, emailed to Stacey Hogge, shogge1@swarthmore.edu

At this time please also complete your Senior Research Project Release Google Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd08Jzlnav4mafAl2qwF9mICtpSqT5WBxh1MsEtQXfTg2F4cA/viewform?gxids=7628

May 9, 2025, noon: Final Course Senior Research Projects due

At this time please also complete your Senior Research Project Release Google Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd08Jzlnav4mafAl2qwF9mICtpSqT5WBxh1MsEtQXfTg2F4cA/viewform?gxids=7628

All final projects should be submitted by email to Stacey Hogge, shogge1@swarthmore.edu
Label all files with naming convention, Last, First_Final_class year
For theses or other written formats, submit your final version in ONE single PDF file

Things to keep in mind as you are working on the senior research project:

Research Outline

I. What is my research question?

A. What is already known?

1. Can I concisely state my research question (i.e. within a question or two)?
2. How can theory help me frame my research question?
3. How will my research add to or challenge what has already been said about this subject?
4. Do I know what is already in the literature on this topic? If not, do I know how to find out what has already been published?
5. What kinds of research methods have other researchers used?
    - ☐ Textual analysis
    - ☐ Observation/participant-observation
    - ☐ Interviews
    - ☐ Surveys
    - ☐ Life Stories
    - ☐ Historical and comparative analysis

B. How did I come to be interested in this question?

1. How much background information do I have about this topic?
2. Do I need more background information before I develop my research question?
3. Why is this research interesting?
    a. Who else is interested in this research question and why?
    b. Does the research have social, political, and/or ethical implications?

C. Is my research comparative?

1. Am I studying one setting or planning on comparing two different research settings?

2. How will the difference between these two approaches affect the outcome of my research?

D. Who are the subjects of my research?

1. Why study this particular population? What are the strengths and limitations of focusing on these subjects?
2. What effect will my research have on my subjects?
3. To what effect will my presence at the research site influence my findings?

E. Who is my audience?

1. Who will be interested in the results of my research?
2. Who might use the information I present and for what purposes?

II. How will I conduct my research?

A. What kinds of methodologies do I want to use?

1. literature review and/or historical studies
2. analysis of documents/discourse analysis
3. analysis of social theory
4. observation/ participant-observation
5. interviews
6. surveys

B. What is the time frame for my research?

1. Do I have a reasonable start and finish timetable?
2. Have I allowed for possible problems and setbacks?
3. Have I allowed enough time to get clearance to speak to people and travel?
4. Have I allotted enough time for my literature review and other library work?
5. Do I have a clear sense of which documents I need to acquire?

C. Is my methodology feasible?

1. Do I need to get clearance to conduct research at this site?
2. Have I gone through proper channels to verify that clearance will be given?

Checklists for Methodology:

Library Research:
We strongly recommend that you contact Simon Elichko: selichk1@swarthmore.edu 610-690-5786

- ☐ Have I found adequate information on my research topic?

- ☐ Do I trust the published information?
- ☐ Have I found varied sources and voices on the topic (i.e. perhaps not just formally published works, but primary materials as well)?

Observation/Participant Observation/Ethnography

- ☐ How long do I need to observe my research subjects to get adequate information on my research subjects?
- ☐ Will I have a position other than "researcher" among this population (i.e. will I be a teacher as well as a social scientist)?
- ☐ Have I gotten clearance for my research?
- ☐ Do I have contacts at the research site that will help me become acquainted with the place and the people?

Interviews

- ☐ How can I find people to interview?
- ☐ How representative are the people whom I find to interview of the wider population I am interested in studying?
- ☐ How many people must I interview to get the kind of information I need and to help assure a representative sample?
- ☐ Will my interviews be:
  1. unstructured
  2. semi-structured
  3. question-and-answer
  4. other
- ☐ How will I record the information I get from the interviews?
  1. videotaped
  2. audio only
  3. jotted notes
  4. recalled notes

Surveys

- ☐ Do I want to survey a portion of my population? Will the findings help support other types of research?
- ☐ Have other researchers conducted surveys on my population that I can analyze?
- ☐ Can I develop a questionnaire that will measure my research topic?
- ☐ Can I readily access my survey population?
- ☐ Do I have a reasonable means of distributing and collecting the survey?

Discourse Analysis

- ☐ Which documents or visual representations will serve as the basis of my study?
- ☐ How have others researched or discussed similar documents?
- ☐ Can I readily gain access to these documents or visual representations?
- ☐ Can I obtain background information on the documents/visual representations?
- ☐ What tools of discourse analysis can I bring to bear on the documents/visual representations?

Social Theory

- ☐ Who are the authors that I will focus on in discussing a theoretical issue?
- ☐ Which social dynamics and issues will inform my discussion (such as defining power and class)? Would a focus on an influential theorist or a main concept (such as hegemony, power, liminality…) be the best way to do my thesis?
- ☐ Do I plan on developing a historical or comparative perspective on how certain theorists have grappled with social issues (such as a comparison of Marxist and Weberian notions of historical change)?
- ☐ What fresh perspective might I be able to bring to bear on important theoretical debates? Have other authors writing about the development of social theory analyzed similar issues?
- ☐ To what extent is the issue that you are exploring currently debated in sociology and/or anthropology?

Visual Ethnography

- ☐ Which visual representations do you anticipate exploring (photographs, indigenous or community-based film, cinema, etc.)?
- ☐ Have others explored the issues that interest you (for example representations of gender in photographs of Native Americans at the turn of the century)?
- ☐ Do you plan on making your own film or collection of photographs and if so which style and form do you plan on using? To what extent is your production practice going to be embedded in local understandings of video production and photography?
- ☐ At what levels will you be able to conduct your research (production, semiotics, distribution, and reception)?
- ☐ Do you plan to conduct interviews with filmmakers and or audiences of a particular work?

Some Helpful References:

For a review and more information on different research methodologies, please see Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, H. Russel Bernard (AltaMira Press, New York, 2002) and *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences* by Kristin Luker (Harvard University Press, 2010).

Some Helpful External Links:

American Anthropological Association ethical guidelines

American Sociological Association ethical guidelines

If you have not done so, please make sure to review the statement on academic honesty to be found on page 24 of the Student Handbook and that is included below.

III. THE COLLEGE STATEMENT OF PLAGIARISM

Academic honesty is a foundation of academic life. One of its tenets is that all scholars present as their work only that which is truly their own. For students this standard embraces all work submitted for academic purposes, not only examinations, laboratory reports, term papers, essays,

etc., handed in for academic credit, but also papers written for seminar or for class discussion, whether graded or not. Transgressions of the principle are known as plagiarism, the use of another's ideas, language, or thoughts and representation of them as one's own.

When an instructor suspects plagiarism in a piece of written work, the instructor should present the evidence to the student who submitted it. If the student is unable to remove the instructor's suspicion of guilt, the instructor is required to submit the case to the Dean for consideration by the College Judiciary Committee. In its deliberations, the Committee considers the following to be evidence of plagiarism in a piece of writing: 1) the failure to put quotation marks around (or when appropriate to indent and to single-space) words, symbols, phrases, sentences, quoted verbatim from any source, whether published or not; 2) the failure to acknowledge one's use of reworded or restated material--even when loosely paraphrased; 3) inclusion of another's data, ideas, or arguments when not acknowledged by footnote and reference.

Writers may refer to a handbook on scholarly writing for information about correct citation procedures. The MLA Handbook is particularly useful since Section 6 also provides examples of plagiarism. Supplementary Departmental regulations governing joint projects, etc., may be found on file in departmental offices. The informal nature of some writing may obviate the necessity of rigorously formal citation, but still requires honest attribution to original authors of all borrowed materials. Students should feel free to consult with instructors whenever there is doubt as to proper documentation.

Fear of being charged with plagiarism need not inhibit anyone from appropriately using another's ideas or data in a piece of writing. Even direct quotation frequently serves as an effective device in developing an argument. Academic honesty requires only that writers properly acknowledge their debts to other authors at least by means of quotation marks, footnotes, and references, if not also with in-text phraseology like "Einstein argued in 1909 that. . ." or "As Melville implies in Chapter 3 of Moby Dick..." Such usage is fully within the tradition of forthright academic work.

Because plagiarism is considered so serious a transgression, it is the opinion of the faculty that for the first offense failure in the course and, as appropriate, suspension for a semester or deprivation of the degree in that year is suitable; for a second offense the penalty should normally be expulsion. A full description of the College judicial procedure may be obtained from the Office of the Dean.

IV. FORMAT FOR REFERENCES

Rather than using footnotes for citations, a common practice in the social sciences is to use parenthetical references to author, date, and page numbers within the text, followed by a bibliography at the end of the paper, which contains complete information for each citation. Footnotes are then used only for substantive information. There will be a discussion of these processes in class but it is always a good idea to consult with your advisor about the different reference styles (such as MLA, Chicago…) and which one might work best for your purposes.

Style Guides

American Anthropological Association
http://www.aaanet.org/publications/guidelines.cfm
American Sociological Association
http://www.asanet.org/students/index.cfm

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE ELECTRONIC SRP RELEASE FORM

Senior Research Projects are digitized.
Please complete this Google release form, it asks whether you want your SRP to be available to the general public, to Swarthmore College Community only, or not at all. You can change this decision at any time by contacting the AA of the Sociology & Anthropology Department.

Student will maintain ownership (copyright) of their work.

Projects will be deposited in the Swarthmore College Thesis Archive.