

2013

SOCI 4096/97 Honours Thesis Guidelines

Department of Sociology
Nipissing University

Revised January 2013

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The undergraduate thesis is a unique opportunity for honours students to design and conduct independent research in an area of their own Sociological interests. Completing a thesis greatly enhances and solidifies the methodological skills and theoretical knowledge students acquire in their course work. Completing a thesis is excellent preparation for the pursuit of graduate studies, and is valuable experience for employment in applied research and policy settings. This document provides a guide on suggested timelines and deadlines (Chapter 1); the course regulations and procedures (Chapter 2); organization and structure (Chapters 3 and 4); formatting (Chapter 5); and references on writing for Sociology students.

1.1 Suggested Timetable and Deadlines for SOCI 4096 and SOCI 4097 Completion

Students are advised to consult their advisor and develop a tentative schedule for thesis completion. The exact deadlines will vary depending on the nature of your research. The table below provides a general guideline, but students are encouraged to develop their own detailed timeline in close consultation with their thesis advisor.

Table 1. Generic Timelines for an Honours Thesis in Sociology

| Date | Deliverable/Task/Activity |
|--------------------------|---|
| Third Year | |
| January-February | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend January Sociology Social to meet potential faculty advisors and research faculty interests on department website• Conduct preliminary literature searches and discuss thesis topics with potential advisors |
| February 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit SOCI 4096 and SOCI 4097 application forms to preferred advisor |
| March-April | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalize thesis topic with an advisor• Research, discuss, and obtain data sets or start application process for access to confidential data |
| Summer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Register for SOCI 4096 and SOCI 4097• Read background literature on topic• Read codebook and questionnaire (for secondary data analyses) |
| Fourth Year | |
| September-October | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin Research Ethics Board application (if required)• Develop and write detailed thesis outline and preliminary introduction• Continue reading and reviewing literature |
| November | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft and submit first draft of thesis proposal (e.g., Introduction, Literature Review and Proposed Methodology)• Begin data collection (if required)• Begin preliminary data analysis |
| December | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revise and resubmit thesis proposal and submit by first week in December for SOCI 4096 credit |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| January-February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis • Draft results, discussion and conclusion chapters • Revise introduction, literature review and finalize methodology chapters |
| March | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final revisions, editing, proofreading and formatting of text, tables and figures • Present thesis findings at Nipissing Undergraduate Research Conference |
| March 15 | Submit final evaluation version of thesis to advisor |
| April | Corrections and submission of final version of thesis |

CHAPTER 2: GENERAL REGULATIONS

2.1 Prerequisites and Application Deadline

Prerequisites:

SOCI 4096 HONOURS THESIS I is restricted to students in the fourth year of the Honours Sociology or Honours Criminal Justice programs and who have completed 24 credits in Sociology and/or Criminal Justice.

Antirequisite: SOCI 4095

Hours: Individually supervised.

Credits: 3

SOCI 4097 HONOURS THESIS II is restricted to students in the fourth year of the Honours Sociology or Honours Criminal Justice programs and who have completed 24 credits in Sociology and/or Criminal Justice and have achieved a minimum grade of 75% in SOCI 4096 HONOURS THESIS I.

Antirequisite: SOCI 4095

Hours: Individually supervised.

Credits: 3

Application Deadline:

Honours students wishing to take this course in their fourth year of study must apply no later than **February 15** of their third year in the programme. The application form is available online at <http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/faculties/arts-science/sociology/programs-courses/thesis-applications/Pages/default.aspx>. The application form is to be filled out and submitted to the preferred faculty advisor (see Section 2.3 below).

2.2 Requirements for Credit, Learning Expectations and Outcomes

SOCI 4096 HONOURS THESIS I

Requirements for Credit:

To fulfill the requirements of SOCI 4096 HONOURS THESIS I, the student must design and submit a completed research proposal, including the thesis problem statement, literature review and proposed methodology. The research proposed in SOCI 4096 will be completed in SOCI 4097. Various forms of research may be proposed. The work is carried out under the supervision of a full-time member of the

Department. To fulfill the requirements of this course, the student must design and submit a completed research proposal to pursue in SOCI 4097.

Learning Expectations (which students will do in the course and the supervisor will measure):

1. Identify and develop a researchable sociological research question on a topic of the student's choosing, in consultation with the supervising faculty member
2. Recognize and choose appropriate theoretical and methodological frameworks to undertake to research the chosen sociological question
3. Understand and employ advanced academic writing skills in completing Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology components of honours thesis project

Course Outcomes (what will result from successful completion of the course):

1. Demonstrate independence in researching a sociological question, including identifying research information sources and data, bibliographic references and other academic materials and resources
2. Ability to employ advanced academic research and writing skills in developing, researching and reporting on the results of original sociological research

SOCI 4097 HONOURS THESIS II

Requirements for Credit:

To fulfill the requirements of SOCI 4097 HONOURS THESIS II, students must submit a completed honours thesis based on significant research completed as a continuation of the honours thesis research proposal completed in SOCI 4096. The work is to be carried out under the supervision of a member of the Department.

Learning Expectations (which students will do in the course and the supervisor will measure):

1. Address requests for revisions to completing Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology
2. Implement appropriate techniques based on selected research methodology to analyze information and data
3. Prepare and submit an academic report, in journal submission format, of the findings from the research

Course Outcomes (what will result from successful completion of the course):

1. Demonstrate independence in researching, analyzing and reporting on a sociological question, including identifying appropriate research methodologies and analytic techniques, identifying research information sources and data, and researching bibliographic references and other academic materials and resources
2. Demonstrated superior ability to employ advanced academic research and writing skills in developing, researching and reporting on the results of original sociological research

2.3 Advisor Selection

Students should discuss their preliminary topic with potential advisors in the Department in their third year of study. In January of the third year of the programme, students are encouraged to attend the Sociology Social to meet potential faculty advisors with similar research interests. Students should also consult the Department website to review faculty research interests

(<http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/faculties/arts-science/sociology/Pages/default.aspx>). No faculty

member is required to supervise any particular topic or thesis, so it is up to students to find a willing and available advisor for their thesis.

The thesis is an opportunity for students to work independently on a research topic of their choice. The general role of the advisor is to assist you in learning how to set timelines, carry out, complete and present your independent research. This may involve commenting on proposal and thesis chapter drafts or analyses. It is your responsibility to meet with your thesis advisor and discuss the progress of your work. Students are also responsible for finding and/or collecting the data for their topic. In certain circumstances, advisors may work with students to develop a thesis topic that is part of their larger research agenda. Funding the thesis work is the responsibility of the student, but in some cases, faculty may have available funds for students to complete their thesis as part of research assistant employment.

2.4 Registration

Students must have an approved advisor in order to register in SOCI 4096 and SOCI 4097. Registration follows the normal course registration, procedures and add/drop deadlines set by the Registrar for 3-credit courses.

2.5 Submission Deadline, Grading and Late Penalties

The thesis must be submitted to your advisor no later than 4pm on March 15. Submit the thesis as a single PDF file attached to an email sent to your advisor. The penalty for late thesis submissions is up to the discretion of your advisor, but typically 2% is deducted for the first late day and 1% is deducted for each subsequent day (including weekends).

Extensions without penalty will only be granted for exceptional circumstances (e.g., medical, family emergencies). In these situations, students are required to inform their advisors, and submit a request for extension.

Your thesis will be graded by your advisor as well as one other faculty member of the Sociology Department. The two grades will be compared, and the average of the two grades will be given if the grades are within 10 percent. If the difference exceeds 10 percent, a third member of the faculty will grade the thesis, and all three grades will be averaged to constitute the final grade.

2.6 Revisions and Final Submission

Your advisor will grade your thesis, and will return the marked thesis typically within 2 to 3 weeks of submission. Advisors may wish to include written comments and corrections on a hard copy or may include comments electronically in the PDF file. You are required to make the corrections and resubmit a corrected final version of your thesis as a single PDF file.

2.7 Plagiarism and University Policies on Academic Conduct

The thesis must be written in the students own words. It is a serious academic offence to plagiarize all or part of the thesis. Direct quotes or ideas from previous research must be cited appropriately in text and in the bibliographical references. At their discretion, advisors may opt to submit your thesis to the standard plagiarism detection software (e.g., SafeAssign) under license at Nipissing University. For further information on academic offences, student policies, and procedures, students should consult Nipissing University's Academic Calendar (<http://www.nipissingu.ca/calendar/regulations/academic/Pages/Student-Appeals-and-Petitions.aspx>).

2.8 Ethics Approval and Conduct for Research Involving Humans

If you are planning on collecting your own data for your thesis (e.g., interviews, administering surveys, participant observation, focus groups), you need to apply for ethics approval from Nipissing University's Research Ethics Board. Students are strongly encouraged to start working on their ethics approval as early as possible in their **fourth year of study**. Ethics approval can be a lengthy process, and often entails multiple reviews and revisions of your initial application. Additional procedures apply if you are intending on conducting research with Aboriginals as participants. For details on how to obtain ethics approval, please see the guidelines outlined by the Research Ethics Board at <http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/research-services/ethics/reb/Pages/default.aspx>.

CHAPTER 3: STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS PROPOSAL

3.1 Writing the Thesis Proposal

Further details on the content and questions addressed in each section of a typical proposal are available in the print and online writing references at the end of this document.

3.2 Sample Thesis Proposal Structure (10-15 pages)

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 1-2 pages |
| 2. Literature Review | 3-5 pages |
| 3. Research Questions and Hypotheses..... | 1 page |
| 4. Methodology..... | 2-5 pages |
| 5. Anticipated Outcomes | 1-2 pages |
| 6. References | |

CHAPTER 4: STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

4.1 Writing the Thesis

As with the research proposal, students are encouraged to make use of online and in-print references on how to structure, set up and write the honours thesis. A brief list of references is attached at the end of this document.

4.2 Sample Thesis Structure (30-40 pages)

| | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Introduction | 3-5 pages |
| 2. Literature Review | 8-10 pages |
| 3. Methods..... | 4-5 pages |
| 3.1 Data | |
| 3.2 Analysis/Analytic Strategy | |
| 4. Results | 10 pages |
| 5. Discussion and Conclusion (possibly two chapters) | 5-10 pages |
| 6. References | |

CHAPTER 5: THESIS FORMAT

5.1 General Formatting and Length

The thesis must be double-spaced and written in a 12 point (Times New Roman preferable). Smaller font sizes may be used for graphical displays or tables but should not be smaller than 9 point. The left margin should be set to 1.5 inches (38mm) and the right, top and bottom margins set to 1 inch (25mm).

The thesis is typically between 30 and 40 pages in length not including tables, figures and appendices. Students may use footnotes and endnotes but not excessively.

All pages of the thesis except the title page must be numbered. Preliminary pages (e.g., table of contents, acknowledgements) should be numbered using small Roman numerals (e.g., i, ii, iii) while the remainder of the thesis should be numbered with Arabic numerals (e.g., 1, 2, 3) centred in the footer. The thesis should include a right-justified header (e.g., Honours Thesis in Sociology: L. Smith).

The front end of the thesis should include the following components in order: 1) Title Page; 2) Abstract; 3) Acknowledgements; 4) Dedication (optional); 5) Table of Contents; 6) List of Tables; 7) List of Figures; and 8) List of Appendices.

5.2.1 Title Page

All theses must include a title page that includes the title, student's name, year and department. Please refer to the example listed in the appendix.

5.2.2 Abstract

The thesis must include an abstract of 200 words or less. The abstract should convey the context of your research, the methodology employed, the major findings and the implications of those results. The abstract should be included right after the title page. For examples on abstracts, students are encouraged to browse articles in leading journals in Sociology (e.g., American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces).

5.2.3 Acknowledgements

Your acknowledgements section should include a list of people you wish to thank (e.g., faculty advisor, second reader, colleagues, friends and family). You should also acknowledge any financial support that you received (e.g., hired to work under a SSHRC grant by your advisor, hold a university scholarship)

5.2.4 Dedication

You may also wish to include a dedication page. While completely optional, some students chose to dedicate their thesis to someone who was particularly influential in their life.

5.2.5 Table of Contents

See sample in appendix below.

5.2.6 List of Tables

See sample in appendix below.

5.2.7 List of Figures

See sample in appendix below.

5.2.8 List of Appendices

See sample in appendix below.

5.2.9 References

All references of sources that are cited in text are to be listed and included immediately after the conclusion section of the thesis.

5.2.10 ASA (American Sociological Association) Style Guide

American Sociological Association (ASA) style is recommended for in-text citations and bibliographic references. A free version of ASA style guide is available at <http://www.asanet.org/students/ASA%20Quick%20Style%20Guide%204th%20edition%20update.pdf>.

References

Department of Sociology, Harvard University. 2012. *A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in Sociology*. http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/soc/pdfs/Guide_to_Thesis.pdf Accessed November 14, 2012.

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Swarthmore College. 2012. *Sociology and Anthropology Thesis Guide 2012-2013*. <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Documents/academics/soan/ThesisGuide12-13.pdf> Accessed November 14, 2012.

Department of Geography, Western University. 2012. *Geography 4900/01E Thesis Guide for Students*. <http://geography.uwo.ca/undergrad/courses/4900-student-manual-2012.pdf> Accessed October 24, 2012.

Massengill, R. 2012. *The Soc 300 Companion: A Guide to Writing Your Sociology JP Research Proposal at Princeton*. Department of Sociology, Princeton University. <http://www.princeton.edu/~rmaseng/The%20Soc%20300%20Companion.pdf> Accessed November 12, 2012.

APPENDICES

Examples of Formats

TITLE IN UPPER CASE LETTERS: THE UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

By

JANE SOCIOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Sociology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

Nipissing University

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References on Writing and Methodology in Sociology

Writing Guides:

- Edwards, M. 2012. *Writing in Sociology*. London: Sage
- Northey, M., Tepperman, L., and P. Albanese. 2012. *Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. Don Mills, Ontario: University Press
- Symbaluk, D. 2006. *Guide to Success in Social Science: Writing Papers and Exams*. Toronto: Nelson
- Winkler, A. and J. Metherell. 2012. *Writing the Research Paper: A Handbook*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Links to Academic Writing Resources:

- [A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in Sociology \(Harvard University\)](#)
- [A Guide to Writing Your Sociology JP Research Proposal \(Princeton University\)](#)
- [Senior Thesis Information & Support \(Tufts University\)](#)
- [Advice on Academic Writing \(University of Toronto\)](#)
- [Writing Sociology Papers \(University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill\)](#)
- [Undergraduate Writing Resources in Sociology \(University of California, Berkeley\)](#)
- [Writing Services \(University of Guelph\)](#)

Quantitative Methods and Statistics:

- Agresti, A. and B. Finlay. 2009. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences, 4/E*. Pearson.
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