The senior thesis is an option available to senior anthropology majors seeking an opportunity for independent study and the development of skills in research, analysis, and writing. The project normally involves both semesters of the senior year, and it counts as two successive three-credit courses. The student selects a faculty member from the Department of Anthropology to direct the thesis. The topic of the thesis is chosen by the student, however, it is subject to approval by the director. You can examine senior theses completed in previous years in the anthropology conference/reading room (621 Flanner) and online.

The faculty director and the student preparing the thesis will meet regularly for purposes of discussion, guidance, and evaluation during all phases of the undertaking leading to the completion of the final text and its defense. The student should approach a potential thesis director in the Fall or Spring of the junior year with a concrete idea for a thesis so that planning may begin in advance.

The topic for a senior thesis may arise from any area or subarea of anthropological interest and should contain the following general components:

1) an empirical basis, drawing on data collected through fieldwork observation, laboratory analysis, survey, interview, archival records, or other recognized sources;
2) a theoretical elaboration of the thesis within the context of the relevant literature within the discipline;
3) a description of methodology along with critical reflection on its practical application in this study;
4) a presentation of findings and a discussion of their significance;
5) a summary conclusion integrating the multiple elements of the study;
6) a bibliography or list of references cited, of sufficient length and quality to show the student's mastery of the relevant literature.
7) a 250-word abstract, to be placed on the departmental website.

While the preparation of the thesis, including the gathering of material and the drafting of preliminary versions, depend on the student's capacity for independent work, a successful thesis depends on active collaboration with the faculty director throughout the process.

The traditional senior thesis is done as two successive 3 credit hour classes throughout the senior year (for a total of 6 credits). It is also possible for a student to complete the senior thesis with a 3 credit hour class in the second semester of the senior year. In these cases, it is expected that the student will have been involved in a research project that included either a directed readings or directed research course of at least three credits prior to the second semester of the senior year. The senior thesis would then grow out of the directed readings or research class.

The senior thesis should represent the student's original contribution to anthropological literature and should be of potentially publishable quality. Theses typically run approximately 40-100 pages in length, though ultimately quality, not length, is the most important issue. Some students may prepare a conference poster session in tandem with a shorter thesis, while others (for example, someone doing narrative ethnography) may find an even longer format appropriate. Ultimately the thesis director and the student work out the most appropriate length and medium to suit the topic.

The student and faculty director may select a second reader from within or outside of the anthropology department to provide a complementary perspective. If there is a second reader, he or she should be given ample time to read the thesis carefully and offer considered suggestions for revision.

Students completing the senior thesis should present their work in a research symposium in the spring, attended by departmental faculty and junior honors students as well as fellow senior thesis writers. Students can present their
work in a 10 minute presentation, a poster, or creative media. Copies of presentations are kept in the departmental library and digital archive for future reference. *(See note below.)*

The senior thesis is an excellent way for students to prepare for further graduate work in anthropology or related fields. It can also provide a means of pursuing special interests not covered in the traditional curriculum. The senior thesis should not be undertaken lightly, however. The department asks for the student's full commitment and best work in the thesis enterprise.

**Schedule of Deadlines**

The first four steps of this suggested schedule apply to a traditional senior thesis, with work commencing at the start of the senior year. Steps 5 through 8 apply to all thesis writers.

1) Begin approaching the faculty director in Fall or Spring of the junior year. (Deadlines for summer research funds begin in February, so students who plan to do research in the summer between Jr. and Sr. years should be ready to start working on a research proposal by the beginning of Jr. year Spring Semester.)

2) The elaboration of the topic and preparation of a reading list or a project outline is due by September 15 (Sr. Year).

3) Preliminary report on theoretical context and research approaches due by October 15 (Sr. Year).

4) Review of initial findings and mid-way assessments due by December 15 (Sr. Year).

5) A first draft of the thesis due by March 1.

**If you would like to attend the College of Arts & Letters reception for senior thesis writers, a draft of your thesis must be submitted by March 25.**

6) A revised draft due by April 1.

7) A final draft due to your thesis advisor by the last day of classes.

8) Submission of the final text in approved format due to the Director of Undergraduate Studies by the end of exam week.

**Approved Format**

Title page to include:

1) Thesis title to adequately reflect scope of thesis
2) Your name
3) Date
4) "Directed by ... in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Notre Dame"
5) 2" side margins and 3" top margin

Thesis format:

1) 250-word abstract
2) 1" margins all sides, double-spaced
3) Pages numbered
4) Include Bibliography or References section in appropriate academic format.
5) If the thesis includes an article or poster submission, include copies of those as well in an appendix.

Final Departmental Copy:

1) Make final revisions to the thesis if any are suggested by the director or second reader.
2) Turn in your thesis in PDF format.

*Ungraded copies of senior theses will be available publically within the department (mainly to provide examples of theses to anthropology students and faculty). Students may request that their thesis not be made available upon written notice to the staff assistant.*

4/11/2014