

Department of Anthropology

SENIOR THESIS ANTH 48900

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, although students are only required to take three senior thesis credits. 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. All previous theses have been digitized, and students can browse them in 296 Corbett Family Hall (Mrs. Barany's or Dr. Haanstad's office).

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 (early) 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, depends on the student's capacity for independent work, a successful thesis requires 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, and it would be completed during the Spring semester under a senior thesis class (ANTH 48900).

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 pages or more in length, though ultimately quality, not length, is the most important issue. Students may also prepare a conference poster session, video essay, field recording sound collage, etc. in tandem with a shorter thesis, while others (for example, someone doing narrative ethnography) may find an even longer format appropriate. An article submitted to an academic journal for publication may count as a senior thesis. 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, graduate students, and undergraduate students. Students can present their work in a 5 minute presentation, a poster, or creative media. It is acceptable for students to present poster or presentations that they have prepared for a professional meeting. Copies of presentations are kept in a digital archive for future reference.

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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 9 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 Oct 4 (Sr. Year).
- 3) Preliminary report on theoretical context and research approaches due by Nov 8 (Sr. Year).
- 4) Review of initial findings and mid-way assessments due by December 6 (Sr. Year).
- 5) A first draft of the thesis with an abstract is due by Feb 22.
- 6) A revised draft due by March 29.
- 7) The University-wide Senior Thesis Celebration when the Arts and Letters Dean hosts a reception for students and their thesis directors or mentors in early April.
- 8) A departmental presentation and defense of your thesis on Friday, April 23 (subject to possible date change) in the Student Anthropology Research Forum.
- 9) A final draft due to your thesis advisor by the last day of classes, April 28.
- 10) Submission of the final text due to the Director of Undergraduate Studies by the end of exam week, May 7.

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 senior administrator.*