Sociology Departmental Senior Honors Thesis Guidelines

The Departmental Senior Honors Thesis is an opportunity for seniors in Sociology to conduct in-depth research in the major or minor field. It is the most stimulating intellectual enterprise in which an undergraduate can engage, demanding dedication and the ability to exercise independent judgment. Students who successfully produce and defend a senior honors thesis will receive a note of distinction on their diploma and cords to wear on their commencement regalia, recognizing their special achievement.

To graduate with honors, students must complete an original thesis, which will be presented to a committee of the faculty. The committee will consider both the written thesis and the result of the oral examination to determine whether the student will receive honors in the concentration. Honors theses vary widely in length, depending on the topic, method, and number of appendices, graphics, tables, references, and other materials included in the work. In general, students can anticipate preparing a document of 30-65 pages.

All students also are required to complete the 4-credit Research Practicum course (SO 400) in the Spring Semester of their Junior year, the 2-credit SO 401 in the Fall of their Senior year, and the 4-credit SO 402 in the Spring of their Senior year. However, students doing a Study Abroad may elect not to sign up for SO 401 credits if that is the semester they will be abroad. No formal coursework is involved for SO 401 and SO 402. These are simply credits assigned to students doing honors theses. However, students receive letter grades for these courses according to the advisors' evaluation of student progress.

Exceptions to the above may be made for qualifying students studying abroad during the semester in which they are abroad (usually occurring either in the Spring of their junior year or Fall of their senior year) and other special cases. Students foregoing the SO 400 Research Practicum (Spring of their junior year) who wish to do an honors thesis are typically required to do a substantive independent study with their thesis advisor no later than the summer before graduation that would provide the student with guidance on methodological and theoretical issues, in addition to supporting the student filing an IRB application (if needed) and obtaining all necessary approvals. However, in some rare cases, advanced students may already have sufficient training to be able to forego an independent study; the need for one is therefore left to the discretion of the advisor upon evaluation of the student’s proposal.

Students seeking to undertake an honors thesis without completing the Research Practicum, or who intend to graduate early, should speak to the Director of Undergraduate Studies to determine an appropriate plan of action that is endorsed by their advisor, ideally no later than May 1 of their Junior year.

Application Guidelines

The minimum grade point average of 3.00 overall and 3.3 in the major is required for students applying for Departmental Senior Honors Thesis.

Please complete the attached application for Departmental Senior Honors Thesis, in consultation with the faculty project advisor. Any full-time faculty in the department (including full-time lecturers and affiliate faculty from other departments) may serve as a thesis advisor or on the thesis committee, which is composed of at least two faculty members, but ideally three (an adviser, a first reader, and a second reader). Departmental ABD doctoral candidates, adjunct faculty or postdoctoral fellows in
sociology with expertise in the subject area may serve as committee members, provided they hold BU affiliation at the time of the defense. Students may select one committee member from outside the department (for example, from political science) as a second reader, provided the committee has two members from sociology. In rare circumstances, the department may make exceptions, allowing for a committee member to be part of a two-person committee, for example if a student has a relationship with a faculty member from another department or school. Students must choose a faculty advisor who will not be on sabbatical your senior year, unless that faculty member is willing to serve and advise in an active capacity while on sabbatical. A list of eligible full-time faculty can be found at https://www.bu.edu/sociology/. The faculty advisor must complete the reference sheet, evaluating the student’s potential for successfully executing and completing the project.

The materials to be included in your application are listed on the second page of the application.

**TIMELINE FOR DOING AN HONORS THESIS**

- **Fall (JR year):** Interested students sign up to take SO 400 in the Spring of their JR year; students who will be abroad during SO 400 or discover their interest in doing a thesis proposal after the start of SO 400 are still eligible to do one, provided they have the support of an adviser who will help them through the process (usually through an independent study) in the Spring of their JR year
- **Spring (JR year):** Students in SO 400 develop and finalize their thesis proposal, secure adviser, file IRB application (if relevant) and file funding application (if needed)
- **No later than May 1 (JR year):** Student must submit their application for a senior honors thesis, including obtaining participation of a faculty advisor
- **Summer (between JR/SR year):** Student collects data/conducts research for project
- **Fall/Spring (SR year):** Student signs up for SO 401 (Fall) and SO 402 (Spring) credits; student analyzes data and writes thesis with presentation and thesis defense by April of SR year

**Deadline to submit applications for Senior Thesis for project beginning:**

| FALL | May 1st* |

*If you need an extension, please contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies before the deadline. Applications MUST be processed by the last day to add courses of the semester you begin the project.

Each applicant will be notified of acceptance or rejection by email, and the appropriate course will be added to the student’s schedule by the Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

**APPLICATION FOR INDEPENDENT DEPARTMENTAL SENIOR HONORS THESIS**
**Student Information** (Please print all information)

First and last name: 

ID number: 

Mailing address: 

Phone number: 

Email address: 

Major / Minor: 

Expected graduation (month/year): 

Semesters working on project: 

Grade Point Average: 

**Faculty Project Advisor information** (Please print all information)

First and last name: 

Email address: 

Title of project: 

Date of Submission: 

Any Special Circumstances/Exceptions: 
Application Check List

Please include the following materials to your application.

☐ Provide a brief description of your intended project. Outline the significance of the proposed work, the method of investigation that will be employed, and the ways the result of the investigation will be analyzed.

☐ Include a bibliography of readings that are relevant to your work.

☐ Explain how this project fits in with your academic and career goals.

☐ Attach an unofficial copy of your BU transcript.

To be completed by the faculty project advisor:

Student’s name:

How long and in what capacity have you known the student?

Please evaluate the applicant's aptitude for independent research according to the criteria listed below. Please add any applicable comments.

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<th>Exceptional</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Unable to Judge</th>
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<td>Intellectual ability</td>
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<td>Breadth of knowledge in subject</td>
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<td>Written communication skills</td>
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<td>Ability to work independently</td>
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<td>Originality/creativity of proposal</td>
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<td>Level of motivation</td>
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Comments:

I have read the student's proposal and recommend that it be accepted as a Senior Honors Thesis Project.

Yes    No

I will be on sabbatical the student's senior year.

Yes    No
If yes, I have explained this to the student, and we have formulated a plan on how to work together, and I agree to play an active role.

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<th>Yes</th>
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Faculty Project Advisor Name __________________________________ Date:__________

Faculty Advisor Signature __________________________________ Date:__________

Director of Undergraduate Studies Name __________________________________ Date:__________

Director Signature __________________________________ Date:__________

Department Chair Name __________________________________ Date:__________

Department Chair Signature __________________________________ Date:__________