

Department of

Sociology

Senior Thesis Handbook, Eisch Endowment Guide and Honors Track Information

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Adapted by: Dr. Mim Thomas, Director of Undergraduate Studies

The Senior Thesis Handbook

Dr. Mim Thomas, DUS

9/27/2016

The sociology department encourages all of our majors and minors to write a Senior Thesis. While this is voluntary for most students, those in the department's honors track must do so in order to graduate with the honors distinction.

Although writing a thesis is a huge undertaking, the practical and intellectual benefits are certainly worth the effort. Researching and writing at such a high level, allows students to pull together, into a unified whole, the sociological knowledge and methodological skills they have acquired over their time in the major. By completing a thesis, students not only show that they are able to think critically and work independently, but they are also creative and persevering.

In addition to writing the thesis, students are required to present their work at a presentation event held every year, during the third week of April. The format is a poster session, where all thesis students must concisely present the main points and findings of their theses on posters.

The following are some additional benefits to engaging in a senior thesis project:

- Gain more opportunities for exchanging ideas with faculty, graduate students, and peers.
- Strengthen oral and written presentation skills.
- Learn about submitting manuscripts for publication.
- Present research findings to a critical audience.
- Lay the groundwork for graduate studies and other equally rigorous pursuits.

Timing

A senior thesis in the College of Arts and Letters requires two semesters of focused research and writing. Most undergraduate students undertake a senior thesis project during their senior year; but upon recommendation or request, students may initiate the process during their junior year. Students should see the Director of Undergraduate Studies about the timing of their senior thesis.

Students are not required to complete a senior thesis. Typically, students carry out their senior thesis work through special research oriented courses, numbered 48xxx. The choice of a 48xxx course depends on the way in which each student plans to begin their thesis research. Basically there are two ways from which to choose. Students may enroll in SOC 48009, Senior Thesis Capstone Project, for two semesters, for 3 credits each semester, usually starting in the Fall. However, students may begin work on the senior thesis during the spring of their junior year, allowing them to use the summer before senior year to do research and collect data.

Another way to launch the senior thesis research project is through one of the department's identified segue courses (e.g., SOC 48002 and SOC 48701) in the first semester, and then complete the thesis project through SOC 48009 in the second semester. (Please note: Students in the Glynn Family Honors Program may begin their projects in ALHN 48980 in the Fall, and finish it in SOC 48009 in the Spring.)

In SOC 48009, students work on independent research projects, under the guidance of individual faculty directors. In identified segue courses, students meet in structured class

settings twice weekly to develop their research skills in areas identified by the instructor, while at the same time getting a chance to begin their individual projects. SOC 48009 is a graded course; so also are the segue courses.

Deciding on a Methodological Approach

Senior thesis research projects may fall within any of the **genres of sociological research**: analytical, case study, historical, interpretive, phenomenological, quantitative, theoretical, etc., depending on each student's objectives. Students may collect the data for their analyses themselves or extract data from an existing data set.

To get started on their thesis projects, students are encouraged to develop a set of research questions within an area of research that strongly interests them. Students' research questions should be specific and definable, and ones that can be fruitfully studied during the period of time in which the research is to be conducted, i.e., within two academic semesters.

*Students should be aware of the wide array of methodologies and consider which ones are best suited to their questions and data. It is best, therefore, if students work on developing questions and formulating ideas about the relationships among their variables of interest before trying to identify an appropriate methodology. **Students are expected to discuss their research questions and possible methodological approaches with their thesis directors.***

Completing a senior thesis is, by definition, primarily the responsibility of the individual student, and students are expected to put forth full and conscientious efforts throughout this year-long process. At the same time, thesis directors and the DUS can be counted upon to provide an adequate framework of support for reasonably conceived projects.

So that appropriate resources can be mobilized in time for the student, it is important for students to begin thinking about their projects as early as possible.

Choosing a Senior Thesis Director

The Director of Undergraduate Studies assists students in finding faculty mentors for their senior thesis research projects. **The choice of thesis director hinges on two main considerations: students' research interests and a faculty member's availability.**

Students may approach faculty members themselves or discuss their options first with the DUS. If a student does not know the faculty member who is most appropriate to his/her chosen topic, the DUS will contact that faculty member to ascertain his/her availability. If the student already knows the faculty member and has already established a mentor relationship with the faculty member, she may approach the faculty member herself.

Students are discouraged from asking for a director outside the Sociology department, unless it is a faculty member in an affiliated department, like, for example, the Institute for Latino Studies.

In the beginning, students may tend toward research projects that extend beyond their present level of expertise in the field. If your director does not know you well, discuss your skills and background with your director prior to beginning your project, so that your director may guide

you in limiting your topic to a manageable level. If you feel weak in certain areas (e.g., statistical analysis), feel comfortable about discussing this with your director and/or the DUS. If known ahead of time, the faculty member can then plan to assist you and advise you in those areas.

The senior thesis project entails an application (see Appendix A), and each faculty director must sign the application form along with the student before the DUS grants **department approval** to the student to add the senior thesis course (SOC 48009) to their schedule. Subsequent to the application process, each director receives the senior thesis guidelines as well as periodic communiqués from the DUS with regards to the senior thesis process.

Relatively few undergraduates are capable of doing a senior thesis without considerable direction from a faculty member, and students' experiences in carrying out their thesis research will be enriched by working with a mature scholar. Directors will have differences in style and strategy in terms of guidance, and the scope of that guidance will depend on a student's individual needs. While direction must be available, the project must not become the director's project, and staying on track must be primarily the student's responsibility.

In sum, students may expect their directors' help in the following areas:

1. Each faculty director will encourage the student to attempt an inquiry of appropriate rigor within the bounds of the student's potential, the time available, and the University's and student's access to resources.
2. Each faculty director will advise the student toward the successful completion of the project, meeting the general specifications as interpreted by the department, which suggests counseling as frequently as appropriate for each student on content, method, and form.
3. Each faculty director will assist with the editing of the report for the typical errors of logic, style, and mechanics that may occur. Evaluation and grading will be based upon the total report.

Evaluating the Senior Thesis

Students will receive a standard letter grade for their thesis work, in each semester. Individual faculty directors assign the grade for their thesis mentee's work. **In order for their senior thesis to receive the honors distinction, students must earn a grade of B or higher on their work.**

Because most students are concerned about the evaluation process, they should discuss with their directors at the outset of each semester what their expectations are for the student's performance in the thesis process. In general, in evaluating the project, each faculty director will consider the following four elements and the manner in which these are combined in the production of the senior thesis:

Form. Form is an essential element of clear expression. **The project should reflect explicit attention to the requirements of form for writing in sociology.**

Students should review appropriate sociological journals (e.g., *American Sociological Review*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *Sociological Theory*, *Sociology of Education*, etc.) for models of how components of the research process tie

together into a clear, integrated whole, and for directions on how to present tables, headings, and referencing. In addition, students are expected to follow the manuscript style guidelines as stipulated in the **American Sociological Association's Style Guide, Fourth Edition**.

Content. Each student's set of research questions should reflect a considered and stated judgment as to the significance and manageability of the topic. The completed project should represent a serious and systematic attempt to pursue your questions effectively, making good use of available resources. The theory (or theories) explaining the phenomenon to be studied should be comprehensively and systematically presented along with an assessment of it/them. The literature review should consist of relevant studies on the pertinent issues under investigation. The theory and literature should be clearly linked to the hypotheses or the theses or themes generated.

Method. The choices made in selecting a methodology should be clearly explained. Concepts should be operationalized or otherwise defined, and the technique to be followed outlined in detail. Sampling design should be appropriate and any statistical technique used should be explained and justified. The strengths and weaknesses in methodology should be anticipated and explicated.

Process. The director will take into account the manner in which the project was completed. Did the student work independently, show up for appointments, meet deadlines, etc.? Has the student complied with the expectations related to the senior thesis project (e.g., submitted the thesis to a journal, presented the project to a critical audience, etc.)?

THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL PROCESS

Research involving human subjects requires approval from the university's Institutional Review Board, which is set up to protect the well-being of human subjects as required by Federal law and institutional mandates:

“The Institutional Review Board's (IRB) major role is to safeguard the rights and welfare of all human subjects who participate in research. In compliance with Federal law and institutional policy, all research projects involving human subjects or human material must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.”

Therefore, all student researchers who will be collecting their own data, involving human subjects must seek approval from the IRB.

For a full review of Notre Dame's Human Research Protections Policy, please visit, <http://research.nd.edu/our-services/compliance/human-research/>

Working with human subjects involves several steps, including the completion of on-line training modules as well as the submission of a request for IRB review and approval, before beginning the actual research. While on-line training is always available, this needs to be completed before the student undertakes doing the research. Additionally, requests for approval must be submitted at least 10 days prior to IRB meeting times—please allow yourself time enough to complete these steps. Meeting times are listed on the following website: <http://research.nd.edu/our-services/compliance/human-research/>

MANUSCRIPT STYLE GUIDELINES

Students must adhere strictly to the American Sociological Association's (ASA) manuscript style guidelines, as delineated in ASA's *Style Guide, Fourth Edition*. These guidelines should provide a complete reference for all formatting questions. For further examples, students may consult recent journal issues containing articles within the genre of their research.

In addition, students may consult their directors as well as the DUS for guidance in presenting the information as effectively as possible. Tables should be clearly and accurately labeled, and easy to read. The sections of the report should be tightly integrated and should flow from one to the other. Typos should be eliminated and proofreading carefully done. These guidelines apply to both quantitative and qualitative reports.

Because the report will be a senior thesis, here are a few additional rules to be followed when formatting **the official copy to be submitted to the Sociology Department**:

- Margins: The left (binding edge) margin should be 1.5 inches. The top, bottom and right margins should be 1 inch. This requirement applies to every page in the document. **Keep in mind that the bindery may trim approximately one-quarter of an inch off each edge.** Tables should be accommodated within these limits.
- Page numbering: Center each page number horizontally; and, without including any punctuation, place the number approximately three-quarters of an inch from the bottom of the page. Paginate, in Arabic numerals, the main body of the text, beginning with the first chapter or its equivalent (e.g., your introduction), from page number 1 through the last page, **avoiding** supplementary page numbering (e.g., 1a).
- Tabs should be .5 inches.
- Line spacing: Double-space between lines; 0 pt before and after each paragraph. Do not double space after periods.
- Title page: See an example of the required format in Appendix B and C, one for honors track students, one for non-honors. (An electronic version is available through the DUS.) The title of your paper should be 24-point type.

(SAMPLE)
FACULTY AGREEMENT TO ADVISE
SENIOR THESIS CAPSTONE PROJECT (SOC 48009)

The senior thesis capstone project is the crowning point of the sociology major. All Sociology Majors are encouraged to participate in this challenging endeavor, yet it is required of only the students in the honors track. Students may enroll in SOC 48009 twice during their time in the major. (All honors track students must enroll in the course at least once.) Students should consult the DUS when working out the arrangements for their senior thesis capstone research project.

FALL _

SPRING _____

AGREEMENT:

I agree to advise _____ in the Senior Thesis Capstone Project
Student Name
during _____.
Semester and Year

Research question and basic research design:

(Attach extra pages as needed)

Faculty Name Faculty Signature

Date _

Student Name

Student Signature

Date _____

Approved: _____
(Director of Undergraduate Studies)

Date _____

THE EISCH ENDOWMENT FOR EXCELLENCE IN SOCIOLOGY

GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING FOR FUNDING

**Dr. Mim Thomas, DUS, in consultation with Professors Russell Faeges and Andrew Weigert, Eisch
Endowment Committee, AY 2016-2017**

9/27/2016



GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING FOR FUNDING

FROM THE EISCH ENDOWMENT FOR EXCELLENCE IN SOCIOLOGY

The Eisch Endowment for Excellence in Sociology

The Sociology Department's **Eisch Endowment for Excellence** is a special source of funding to support excellence in undergraduate scholarship in sociology, especially as it applies to all stages of the research process. The ongoing benefits of this endowment have been made possible through the generosity of Joan and John Eisch.

Joan and John Eisch began their support of excellence in undergraduate studies in Sociology in 1987. In that year, they created the "Margaret Eisch Memorial Award in Sociology" in honor of their daughter Margaret, a rising senior at Notre Dame in sociology, who was killed on July 22, 1976 by a drunk driver. Each year since 1987, the most outstanding senior sociology major has received the Eisch Memorial Award at commencement time. In 2008, Joan and John Eisch expanded their contributions in order to establish the Eisch Endowment for Excellence. As a result, greater numbers of sociology majors who share the enthusiasm which Margaret had for sociology are receiving support to aid them in their independent research endeavors.

In addition to providing financial assistance to students in their research efforts, a portion of the Eisch Endowment for Excellence is sometimes offered to other types of creative academic endeavors.

Activities Funded by Eisch Endowment for Excellence

Funds from the Eisch Endowment for Excellence are aimed at helping undergraduates manage the **research and material costs** incurred at any point in the process of carrying out their research projects. Past Eisch Endowment funding awards helped students meet:

- copying costs
- mailing costs
- travel expenses
 - to another location to gather information or collect data
 - to attend a conference
- conference registration fees
- costs incurred in attending a conference (lodging and meals)

A finite amount of funds is available on a yearly basis, and the amount of money awarded to any one individual is normally \$1,000.00 (the max) or less. (However, in special cases, the Eisch committee will consider additional amounts, if funds are still available.)

Students may seek funding for worthy projects:

- for which there are no other appropriate sources of funds
- for which they have received partial funding from other sources
- for which they have not received funding from other appropriate sources.

Timing

Sociology students may apply for funding through the Eisch Endowment at any time during the year. **Applications are considered on a rolling basis**, and funding is allocated until the annual amount is exhausted.

Application Process

To help students to present their applications for funding as effectively as possible, the Eisch Endowment Committee has developed the following set of guidelines. Students should read through this information carefully before seeking funding.

Guideline #1: The committee on the Eisch Endowment for Excellence will consider only those research proposals that are well-conceived and that explain explicitly how the work and/or materials for which they are seeking funding will advance the project.

This means that:

- Students should give careful and considered thought to their proposals before seeking to apply.
- The proposal is ethical and consistent with the standards of good scholarship.
- The project is doable within the time frame available to the student.
- All expenses are directly related to the project.

Guideline #2. Students must have a letter of recommendation from a faculty member.

In the case of students completing a senior thesis, this faculty member should be the thesis director. In all other cases, this person should be the student's faculty mentor. If a student does not have a mentor, that student is required to consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Sociology for advice on finding an appropriate person.

Guideline #3: Students applying for Eisch funds must use the “Common Application” that is required by the College of Arts & Letters “UROP” and “Learning Beyond the Classroom” programs.

This application is available online at <http://urapply.nd.edu>.

Guideline #4: Before applying to the Eisch Endowment, students must first apply to all other appropriate sources of funding.

Students may seek full or partial funding for their projects from the Eisch Endowment. When applying to the Eisch Endowment, students must show that they have submitted their proposal to all other appropriate funding sources. Applications should therefore include a copy of (1) the Common Application submitted to UROP or Learning Beyond the Classroom; (2) documentation from the other funding sources showing support and/or denial of such funding; and (3) an itemized budget. This itemized budget should include the amount received from other sources as well as the amount being requested from the Eisch Endowment.

Guideline #5: For travel and conference reimbursements, students may delineate the amount needed for costs of travel (e.g., air or train fares; mileage), meals, accommodations, and conference fees. Reimbursement should be sought only for expenses that conform to University policy and must be reasonable in both the amount and relevance to the purpose of the study. Students will be expected to submit all receipts to receive full reimbursement.

Guideline #6: All completed applications for funding from the Eisch Endowment should be addressed to the Eisch Committee, %the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Sociology, 823 Flanner Hall.

Please note: Further questions may be directed to Dr. Mim Thomas, Director of Undergraduate Studies in Sociology. Contact information: Office: 823 Flanner Hall; Email: mthoma13@nd.edu.

Honors Track Information

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

The Department of Sociology offers academically gifted and highly motivated students the opportunity to graduate with departmental honors. In order to participate in the honors track, students must be at least a first semester junior with a minimum major GPA of 3.5.

The requirements for pursuing the sociology honors track are as follows:

Students must maintain a 3.5 major GPA.

Students are required to take a 3-credit standard graded graduate level sociology course.

While any graduate sociology class is open to students on the honors track, students are required to get permission from the class instructor, prior to requesting departmental approval from the DUS.

Students are required to complete a senior thesis.

Typically, students carry out their senior thesis work through special research oriented courses, numbered 48xxx. The choice of a 48xxx course depends on the way in which each student plans to begin their thesis research. Basically, there are two ways from which to choose.

Students may enroll in SOC 48009, Senior Thesis Capstone Project, for two semesters, for 3 credits each semester, usually starting in the Fall. However, students may begin work on the senior thesis during the spring of their junior year, allowing them to use the summer before senior year to do research and collect data.

Another way to launch the senior thesis research project is through one of the department's identified segue courses (e.g., SOC 43991 and SOC 48000) in the first semester, and then complete the thesis project through SOC 48009 in the second semester. (Please note: Students in the Glynn Family Honors Program may begin their projects in ALHN 48980 in the Fall, and finish it in SOC 48009 in the Spring.)

In SOC 48009, students work on independent research projects, under the guidance of individual faculty directors. In identified segue courses, students meet in structured class settings twice weekly to develop their research skills in areas identified by the instructor, while

at the same time getting a chance to begin their individual projects. SOC 48009 is a graded course; so also are the segue courses.

Additionally, students can use their graduate course requirement to gain additional depth for their thesis. Taking a graduate course on a topic which ties into a student's thesis, not only exposes that student to relevant scholarship, but allows for discussion of her/his topic at an advanced level with graduate students who have similar scholarly interests.

Please note: Further questions may be directed to Dr. Mim Thomas, Director of Undergraduate Studies in Sociology. Contact information: Office: 823 Flanner Hall; Email: mthoma13@nd.edu.

Course Requirements for Senior Thesis and Honors Track

I. Courses Required for All Sociology Majors (10 credits):

SOC 30900 Foundations of Sociological Theory
SOC 30902 Methods of Sociological Research
SOC 30903 Statistics for Sociological Research
SOC 33090 Sociology Proseminar (1 credit)

II. Elective Courses (21 credits)

Four (4) courses at *any* level, 10000 through 40000 (for 3 credits each)
 and
 Three (3) courses at the 40000 level (3 credits each)

Major: Total Classes: ~11 Total Credits: 31

III. Senior Thesis

You must have completed SOC 48009 - Senior Thesis Capstone Project at least once, which can count as one of the major/minor 40000 level requirements.

Minors are encouraged to complete a senior thesis as well. You would then fulfill their 40000 level with the SOC 48009 course.

*The senior thesis requires a course, but **does not add** the number of courses required.*

IV. Honors Track

The major and Senior Thesis requirements, as well as completion of one Graduate Level Course for 3 Credits.

Honors Track: Total Classes: ~12 Total Credits: 34