

Department of Sociology

Acadia University

# HONOURS HANDBOOK 2019 - 2020





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## Requirements for an Honours Degree in Sociology

Once having entered the Honours Programme, students must complete the specific requirements for a B.A. major in Sociology, as well as some courses that are required only for Honours students.

The specific requirements for an Honours degree at Acadia are periodically revised; consequently, somewhat different requirements may be in force during any given academic year. The requirements you must follow could be any one of the following:

- The year you became a Sociology major.
- The year you became an Honours student in Sociology.
- The year you graduate.

**You may choose** which of these guidelines to follow, in consultation with your Faculty Advisor.

**The requirements listed below are drawn from the 2019-2020 Acadia Calendar.**

There are two sets of requirements for an Honours Sociology degree:

- Those established by the University, and
- Those established by the Sociology Department.

Be sure to be familiar with all regulations and policies in the Acadia University Academic Calendar, as ultimate responsibility rests with the student.:

***Responsibility of students: It is expected that each student who registers at Acadia University will be familiar with the contents of this Calendar. By registering at Acadia, students accept responsibility for meeting all curriculum requirements and for complying with published dates and deadlines. Students also accept responsibility for being familiar with University regulations pertaining to financial matters.***

The regulations and policies can be found beginning on page 49 of the 2019-2020 University Calendar.

Note that all courses in Sociology offered towards the Honours degree (60 hours of Sociology) must be completed with a grade of **B- or higher**.

## The Senior Seminar

This course provides a forum for honours students to discuss the production of a thesis and consider the wider ramifications of doing social research. As well, the seminar class will provide training in basic writing and speaking skills, and in time management, depending on the decision of the particular instructor and the needs of the class.

## The Honours Thesis: What is a thesis?

A thesis is a major document in any discipline. In terms of effort, content, and presentation, a thesis goes well beyond the level of a normal term project or essay; however, sheer size is not to be regarded as equivalent to scholarship. The Department of Sociology will determine whether a topic is suitable for an Honours thesis. An acceptable thesis can fit into one or more of the following categories, according to the specific requirements of the discipline involved:

- A proposition defined and followed by a scholarly argument either to support or to deny the proposition. The argument may take many forms, for example, interpretive evidence.
- A critical review of the literature on a subject, or an extension of a well-known analysis.
- A well-documented scholarly compilation on a topic or a comparison of alternative solutions to a given problem (Honours Committee of Acadia University, 2009).

An Honours thesis is, thus, considerably more extensive than a term paper. Students will choose a topic to research in consultation with a Sociology faculty member (see "[Finding a Thesis Supervisor](#)," below). The thesis will consist of several chapters, which will normally include a review of existing literature on your chosen topic, the identification of a specific issue in need of further information, and an analysis of the research you conduct on this issue.

Some honours theses focus entirely on reviewing relevant literature on a topic, while others involve the gathering and/or analysis of data. The format of your thesis will be different depending on whether your focus is only on existing literature or not. In considering your topic and the approach you plan to take to your thesis work, you should bear in mind that sociology is a diverse discipline. As a reflection of this, a wide variety of projects and styles may constitute a thesis. A typical sequence of chapters is indicated in the section below, but there are other appropriate models that can be developed in consultations with your supervisor, and possibly the second reader.

As you work on your thesis, you may be required to submit each chapter to your supervisor for revisions and comments, though it will be up to you and your supervisor to agree on the actual process of writing and revising. As you come to the final stages of your thesis, you will submit a full draft to your Supervisor, who will then advise whether the document is ready to move on to your second reader. You will be undertaking extensive editorial work on the thesis and your writing will thus be revised several times. This process of multiple revisions takes a considerable amount of time and care by both you and your supervisor.

## Thesis Supervisor

You should have your thesis supervisor confirmed by the end of the second week of the first term. The Department does play a role in who will be your supervisor as there are limited possibilities and the workload of supervision is shared among the faculty. The faculty meets early in term to discuss suggested supervision roles (primary supervisor/second readers) however both parties (student and primary supervisor) arrive at an agreement. Second readers may be assigned; however, the faculty attempt to match expertise to thesis topic/method. Members of the Sociology faculty have a variety of scholarly interests and expertise. (See the attached list). Ideally, in the winter term of your third year, you should narrow your choice of topics for your thesis and consult with faculty members with whom you might like to work. It is best for students to work with a faculty member whose area of expertise includes the student's thesis topic.

Once a faculty member has agreed to supervise your Honours research, you will work very closely with her or him in the production of your thesis. Your thesis supervisor will advise you about all steps involved in writing thesis chapters. Thesis chapters go through a lengthy process of initial writing, careful editing, and re-writing, usually several times. It is important that drafts of several chapters are completed by December, if you wish to graduate in May. If you are unable to complete the thesis by the March deadline, you may continue to work on your Honours thesis over the summer and graduate in the October Convocation. *This extended academic work does not entail further registration fees.*

The Department will assign a second faculty, a **second reader**, who will read and comment on your thesis. Second readers may assist the actual process of writing early drafts of your thesis or, more commonly, they may read only the final version.

## **Format for Thesis**

Since theses vary in their research methods and the types of data or information they examine, there are various ways to structure a thesis. The precise format should be determined in consultation with your thesis supervisor. The following guidelines are, therefore, suggested and should be tailored to the subject area and research method of your thesis topic.

### **Presentation of the Topic/Thesis Statement**

In a page or two (at most), indicate what you plan to research and why it is important to study. Importantly, you need to ask why your topic would be important, or of interest to, sociologists. Perhaps your thesis addresses a matter of public policy. For some theses, the topic might be important because it has been ignored or neglected to date. In other cases, there is a need to assess the state of knowledge on a particular topic in order to ascertain what we know, what we do not know, and what we might like to know. Importance might also be of a theoretical nature in the sense that the questions pursued in the thesis might cause us to modify or reject existing theories, ideas, and explanations. In some cases, theoretical significance derives from applying a model or theory to a new subject area that is not normally viewed from a particular perspective. The very best of research is important both theoretically and substantively, but few of us reach such lofty goals. If you can make a case that your research is worthy in any of the senses mentioned above, you have done very well.

### **Literature Review /Theoretical Framework**

These two formulations—the literature review and the theoretical framework— reflect differing conceptions of objectives and goals, but they both focus on the notion that any researcher must first summarise the existing literature, and basic theories, concepts, and findings in their chosen field. The researcher also tries to show how there are either theoretical and/or empirical inadequacies in the existing literature or field that the thesis endeavours to address. Some reviews may focus heavily on a theoretical tradition, such as Marxism, Post-Modernism, or Feminism, while others focus on micro-theories or theoretical concepts such as those pertaining to family violence or decisions to leave high school.

You begin your research process by locating (with the help of the Library catalogue, government documents, and data bases such as Sociological Abstracts, ERIC, CBCA and the like) the basic books, articles, reports, and other sources in your field, which you will then summarize and critically evaluate in light of your research question(s). If the main focus of your thesis is on reviewing the relevant literature, you will organize

the thesis in terms of the main themes or focus areas in the literature. If you are doing original research your literature review may be one chapter and you may have a separate theory chapter, or these two discussions maybe combined within one chapter. The Department requires the use of ASA (American Sociological Association) formatting and offers an abbreviated version on the [departmental website](#).

## Methodology

If your thesis is a review of library resources, you may not have a separate methods chapter, though you will assess how the research methods used by other researchers in your literature review affect the nature and adequacy of their conclusions. If you are doing primary research, it is important to explain your methodological approach to the research and why you chose this approach. Is your approach quantitative, qualitative, or mixed? Also, you will need to describe **in detail** the methods you used to collect data and analyze data. Remember that every method has both advantages and disadvantages and you should be able to justify your choice of methods.

## Ethics

All research in Canada conducted at a learned institution or research facility must abide by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (2014)*, which will be discussed in class in detail. The Sociology Department has produced a set of guidelines on ethical issues, but all formal REB policies will apply to your thesis work if conducting research with human participants. Students may also study the “Statement of Professional Ethics” which is located on the Department of Sociology webpage.

Ethical issues arise in any research work; even writing that is primarily theoretical, historical, or based on a literature search or secondary analysis of data. Ethical issues are particularly important should you intend to obtain information or data from living human research participants. Of particular concern are the issues of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Your thesis must, therefore, contain a section that examines the ethical issues in your research.

**NOTE:** Students who plan to conduct research with human participants must submit an ethics proposal to Sociology’s Research Ethics Board for review and approval. There are instances we might ask you to submit your proposal to the University’s Research Ethics Board. Please be mindful of dates and other obligations. See <http://reb.acadiu.ca/> for more details.

## Citations

Your thesis must have an alphabetical listing of all sources cited in your thesis. The Department uses ASA guidelines on citing references from the Internet. An overview of ASA citation guidelines is located at the Sociology Website, the section titled, [“Resources.”](#)

**NOTE:** We encourage all students to become familiar with ZOTERO, which is a reference management software.

## Deadlines

**NOTE:** The specific deadline dates for each step in this process are on the following page.

The University Honours Committee must approve the final version of your thesis. A deadline for submission of the thesis for this examination is provided in the University Calendar issued for your fourth year. In order to meet that deadline, you must meet the intra-Departmental deadlines listed below:

1. The final version of your thesis must be given to your supervisor about the middle of February, four weeks prior to the University deadline. This means that you must complete your thesis by mid-February. This deadline is for a final version that should, at this point, be polished.
2. The supervisor will return this version to you with comments. Another revised version must be given to your second reader three weeks prior to the University deadline. The purpose of the work of the second reader is to ensure that the proper technical standards for writing a thesis are met. These include grammar and presentation. Students will then make any additional revisions necessary. Please note that if there are numerous grammatical issues the thesis will be returned to the student for further revisions.
3. The corrected version must be given to the Head of the Sociology Department a minimum of two weeks prior to the University deadline. Again, you will make necessary changes indicated by the Head. It is in the interest of the Department to ensure that only top quality and carefully presented theses are submitted to the University Honours Committee.
4. Next, one copy of the final version of the thesis is sent to the University Honours Committee where it will be read and examined by a faculty member (external reader) who is not a member of the Sociology Department. Usually, the thesis is returned with additional minor revisions indicated.

5. Once returned by the Honours Committee's external reader, you will have about two weeks to make final editorial changes to your thesis. When the final version of your thesis is completed you must deposit two hard copies of the thesis with Research and Graduate Studies, where final signatures will be applied. One of the two hard copies will be returned to the Department of Sociology; the other will go to the Vaughan library, where other researchers may consult with your topic. Finally, you must submit an electronic copy of your thesis (an e-thesis) online.
6. It is important to provide a final copy of your thesis to the department as well. This copy should be taken to Research and Graduate studies with the other copy for signature. Once it is signed by the Honours Chair, make sure to return the copy to our Administrative Assistant, Karen Turner.

The production of a thesis entails a concentrated period of writing and revising, for the student, the supervisor, the second reader, the Department Head, and the University examiner. Ultimately, however, when finished, you will have produced a durable piece of writing that contributes to the discipline of Sociology and becomes a permanent symbol of your scholarship at Acadia University.

## 2019-2020 IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

(See also [Honours thesis at Acadia University web page](#))

**September 16, 2019** – Meet with thesis supervisor.

**October 21, 2019** – Check in with second-reader.

**February 12, 2020** - Submit completed draft thesis to supervisor.

**February 28, 2020** - Have revised version of thesis submitted to second reader.

**March 11, 2020** - Submit revised, complete and finalized version of your thesis to Department Head.

**March 23, 2020** - Last day to receive honours thesis at the Research & Graduate Studies Office for external review for Spring Convocation. NOTE: You must submit a completed [Thesis Checklist Form](#) with your thesis at this time.

**March 26, 2020** - Oral presentation of theses with reception to follow. This is a mandatory requirement for completion of the seminar course and your honours degree. Students will be awarded an “S” grade in December, with a final grade update in late March upon completion of all seminar requirements.

**April 17, 2020** - Last day to receive completed honours thesis at the Research & Graduate Studies Office and submit your [electronic copy](#) for Spring Convocation.

**May 10, 2020:** SPRING CONVOCATION.

## **FACULTY AREAS OF RESEARCH**

**ABRAMSON**, Zelda (Professor Emerita)

Research methodology, family, diasporic studies, health and health care, aging, women and work.

**AUGER**, Jeanette (Professor Emerita)

Aging, Death and Dying.

**BONNER**, Claudine, BSc., M.Ed., PhD. (Western) (On Sabbatical 2019-2020)

African Diaspora studies, ethnic & race relations, sociology of education, equity and social justice, African Canadian history, migration.

**BRITTAIN**, James, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (University of New Brunswick)

Class (Consciousness), Disposable Populations, Escape, Political Economy, Social Theory

**CARLSON**, Jesse, B.A., M.A., PhD. (York)

Sociological theory, cultural sociology, morality, friendship

**CASEY**, Rebecca, B.A., M.A., PhD. (McMaster)

Aging, Disability, Work and Employment, Sociology of Health and Illness, Research Methods, Social Inequality, Public Policy.

**DAHRINGER**, Heather A., B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (Carleton)

Addiction studies, gender, crime and deviance, qualitative methodologies and research ethics.

**FRANK**, Lesley, B.A., M.A., PhD. (UNB) Sociology of food, family poverty, sociology of health, research methods, public policy.

**LOOKER**, Dianne (Professor Emerita)

Sociology of youth, rural issues, gender, and survey research/quantitative analyses.

**MASOUMI**, Azar, B.A., M.A., PhD- ABD (York University)

Critical Race Theory, Anti-racist Feminism, Gender and Queer Studies, Migration and Refugee Systems

**RONDINELLI**, Elisabeth, B.A., M.A., PhD. (ABD, York)

Cultural sociology, gender and sexuality, education, cross-cultural interactions, ethnography, digital sociology, qualitative research methods

**RUDRUM**, Sarah, B.A, M.A., PhD. (UBC)

Health & healthcare, health inequalities, gender and health; sex & sexuality; family & intimacy; transnational 'development' especially in Africa. Qualitative methods with both people (human subjects) and texts/media.

**THOMSON**, Anthony (Professor Emeritus)

Social and political thought. There are also a number of adjunct faculty members who may be available to supervisor students. Please discuss with the Graduate Coordinator for more information.