

Department of Sociology

HONOURS HANDBOOK 2016-2017

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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 2016-2017 Acadia Calendar.** There are two sets of requirements for an Honours Sociology degree:

- i. those established by the University, and
- ii. those established by the Sociology Department.

Be sure to be familiar with all regulations and requirements in the Acadia University Academic Calendar, as ultimate responsibility rests with the student. From page 10 of the 2016-2017 University Calendar:

*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.*

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.

### 1. The Senior Seminar

Honours students meet together regularly during their fourth year in Sociology 4003, the Senior Seminar. This course provides a forum for discussing the production of a thesis and considering 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.

## **2. 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 the following:

- Sociology is a diverse discipline. As a reflection of this, a wide variety of projects and styles may constitute adequate theses. 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.

## **3. Finding a Thesis Supervisor**

One of your most important tasks will be to find an Honours Supervisor. You should have your thesis supervisor confirmed by the end of the second week of the first term. The Department

does not appoint a supervisor. Students consult with faculty members and arrive at an agreement with a faculty member who agrees to supervise their work. 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. Students should approach a faculty member whose area of expertise includes the student's thesis topic. Faculty members may ask you to approach another member of the Department if the thesis topic is not within their areas of expertise or if they have made commitments to supervise other Honours or Graduate students.

Once a faculty member has agreed to supervise your Honours research, you will work very closely with him or her 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.*

Another faculty member in the Department, the **second reader**, also reads your thesis. Your supervisor can help you locate a second reader in the Department who will be willing to 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. You, your supervisor, and the second reader negotiate the actual role of the second reader.

#### **4. 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.

##### **a) 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.

### **b) 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 basic theories, concepts, and findings in his or her 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 remedy. Some reviews may focus heavily on a theoretical tradition, such as Marxism, Post-Modernism, or Feminism, while others focus on micro-theories or theoretical concept 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 ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, 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 a lite version on the departmental website.

### **c) 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 doing primary research 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 to analyze data. Also remember that every method has both advantages and disadvantages and you should be able to justify your choice of methods.

#### **d) Ethics**

All research in Canada conducted at a learned institution or research facility must abide by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement 2*, 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. Students who plan to conduct research with human participants must submit an ethics proposal to Acadia’s Research Ethics Board for review and approval. Please be mindful of dates and other obligations. See <<http://reb.acadiau.ca/>> for more details.

#### **e) 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 at <http://sociology.acadiau.ca/resources/resources.htm>

### **5. Deadlines**

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 that point, require only minor editing by your supervisor, since she or he has already helped you edit and revise drafts of the individual chapters.
2. The supervisor will return this version to you. Another revised version must be given to your second reader three weeks prior to the University deadline of March 27th. 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.

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 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 you have the final version of your thesis 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.

Note: The specific deadline dates for each step in this process are appended to this handbook.

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 makes a contribution to the discipline of Sociology and becomes a permanent symbol of your scholarship at Acadia University.

## **FACULTY AREAS OF RESEARCH**

ABRAMSON, Zelda, B.A., M.S.W., M.A., PhD. (York)

*Research methodology, family, health and health care, aging, women and work*

BONNER, Claudine, BSc., M.Ed., PhD. (Western)

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

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

*Classical Theory, International Development, Political Economy, Social Change and Revolution*

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

*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*

GRACEY, Anthony, B.A., M.A., PhD. (McMaster)

*Social Theory, Critical Race Theory, Settler Colonial Studies, Gender Studies, Sociology of Inequality, Narrative Inquiry, Historical Sociology, Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods, Social Movements and Collective Action*

LIINAMAA, Saara, B.A., M.A, PhD. (York University)

*Classical and contemporary social theory, visual culture, urban studies, gender studies, higher education, cultural policy*

MOORE, Barbara, B.A., M.A.

*Social problems, Canadian society, gender, sociology of the family, ethnic & race relations*

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

*Sociology of Health and Illness, Gender and Health, Sociology of Family, Gender and Sexuality, Global Issues, and Qualitative Research Methodology*

## **2016/2017 IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES**

**September 16th, 2016:** Select and confirm thesis supervisor.

**October 7th, 2016:** Have second reader of thesis confirmed.

**November 9<sup>th</sup> 2016:** FALL STUDY DAY, NO CLASS

**November 20th, 2016:** Thesis presentation to class.

**February 10th, 2017:** Submit completed draft thesis to supervisor.

**February 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017:** WINTER STUDY WEEK, NO CLASSES

**February 24th, 2017:** Have revised version of thesis submitted to second reader.

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017:** Submit revised, complete and finalized version of your thesis to Department Head.

**March 23<sup>th</sup> 2017 (tentative):** Oral presentation of theses, 4:30p.m., with reception to follow. This is a mandatory requirement for completion of this seminar course. Students will be awarded an “S” grade in December, with a final grade update in late March upon completion of all seminar requirements.

**March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017:** Deadline to receive honours thesis at the Research & Graduate Studies Office for external review for Spring Convocation.

**April 17, 2017** Deadline to receive completed honours thesis at the Research & Graduate Studies Office and submit your electronic copy for Spring Graduation.

**May 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017:** SPRING CONVOCATION.