

## **UVM Anthropology Honors Thesis Guide**

This guide to writing an Honors Thesis in Anthropology offers both a general overview of the thesis proposal and writing process as well as highly detailed advice to help you prepare for and execute the many steps of the process. *Before you do anything else in planning your thesis, please read this entire document so that you understand what will be expected of you.* This guide has five sections:

SECTION I: Writing an Honors Thesis in Anthropology: A Practical Overview (pp. 1-6)

SECTION II: Anthropology Honors Thesis Proposal Writing Guide (pp. 7-14)

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### **SECTION I:**

#### **Writing an Honors Thesis in Anthropology: A Practical Overview**

**1. What and Why?** The opportunity to conduct research for and write an honors thesis is a privilege reserved for our highest achieving and most motivated students. In some respects, an honors thesis is similar to an independent study course: it requires a student to identify a topic, build a reading list, conduct research, and write an extended paper. But an honors thesis differs in other significant respects: it is a large-scale project (6 credits) that runs over two semesters; a project proposal must be approved by a College of Arts and Sciences faculty committee; the final product ranges anywhere between 60 and 150 pages; and it requires a formal defense in front of a faculty committee. At the end of this process, the designation of “honors” is not guaranteed: the work must be considered of the highest quality to receive that designation.

Students undertake theses for a number of reasons: it is required for graduation from the Honors College; it can give students an advantage getting into a graduate studies program; or it may simply help them develop their research and writing skills at a higher level than mere coursework or a typical independent study would. The expectation of Honors work is that the project will in some way *produce original knowledge*. In anthropology, this knowledge can be derived from original fieldwork/laboratory work and/or primary and secondary sources.

Writing a thesis is NOT for everyone, even for students who meet the basic requirements to conduct one. It requires planning beginning in the latter part of the junior year, and throughout the process, tremendous self-discipline, initiative, and organization. Yet the rewards are justifiably rich, from a sense of profound accomplishment and a rich working relationship with a mentor, to the ability to list graduation with honors on a resumé for life.

Consider carefully in advance your reasons for pursuing an Honors thesis. If the “honors” component disinterests you and what you want instead is an independent research experience, consider approaching a faculty member about becoming a research assistant, or undertake a one-semester independent study.

**2. Prerequisites?** Students may pursue College Honors if they have (a) a GPA of 3.20 or higher and 3 or more semesters on the Dean's List OR (b) a GPA of 3.40 or higher. ***Be sure to 1) check the College of Arts and Sciences website for the most up-to-date information about qualifications [http://www.uvm.edu/~ashonors/] and 2) consult with your academic advisor if you have any questions about your eligibility for honors.***

**3. How?** Anthropology no longer offers separate departmental honors. Instead, students interested in writing an Anthropology thesis need to propose it as part of the CAS College Honors program. The CAS College Honors website is here:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~cas/foruvmstudents/?Page=honors/default.html&SM=honors/honsub.html>

**4. Who?** While you are doing the vast majority of the work involved in writing an Honors Thesis, you will be doing it with the support of faculty advisors ***of your choosing***. At the start of this process (see step 6c below for more on the role of advisors), you only need to focus on finding your ***primary thesis advisor***. This should be a faculty member of the Anthropology department (note that only assistant, associate, or full professors can serve in this role) who works on issues or in areas of the world that are related to your thesis interests. Be aware that an individual faculty member is not obliged to serve as your primary thesis advisor, even if you are proposing to work on a topic of mutual interest. Taking on an honors thesis is a consuming task for a faculty member as well, and faculty want to ensure not only that your research interests align with their areas of expertise, but also that you have demonstrated the commitment and intellectual abilities to complete a thesis. So even though it is not a formal requirement, it is a good idea to have taken *at least one* class with your advisor so that the faculty member knows your interests, work style, and abilities.

We strongly encourage you to spend some time writing down thoughts and ideas you might like to explore in your thesis BEFORE consulting the faculty member with whom you wish to work. Also, once you have approached a faculty member, allow her/him time to consider your interests and goals before agreeing to supervise your thesis.

**5. When?** Anthropology majors in their ***junior year***, who are considering writing a thesis, are encouraged to complete their introductory and intermediate-level requirements (00X and 1XX-level) before beginning research. Without these courses, a student is unlikely to have marshaled the materials necessary for a successful thesis project. The choice of a thesis topic may be based on personal interest, but it may also derive from a student's encounter with materials and knowledge about the discipline in other Anthropology courses. Examples of recent thesis topics in Anthropology include:

- An ethnographic study of radio production and consumption in the Burlington area.
- An ethnographic study of Latino immigrants to the Burlington area.
- A description and analysis of the political philosophy shaping the Zapatista movement in Mexico based on reading primary and secondary sources.
- An examination of the use of anthropology in U.S. military campaigns, ranging from the recent development of Human Terrain Teams to historical examples such as Project Camelot.

- An ethnographic study of developmental NGO's in Ireland, Tanzania, and Vermont.

**5 a. Choosing a Topic:** Choosing a topic for a thesis in Anthropology poses a set of unique challenges. Like any substantial research project, your thesis topic should emerge from your interests—what region(s) of the world are you most curious about? What theoretical issues inspire (or frustrate) you to the point of wanting to engage them in a sustained elaboration (or refutation)?

Once you've identified some of your key areas of interest, you should ask the following questions: Has this topic been studied before? Or has it been studied *ad nauseum*? Should you attack central problems of the discipline? Or should you seek an innovative area of inquiry where few researchers work?

Your answers to these questions will form the foundation of your methodological approach to your research. If the topic is a long-running one in the discipline, it means there are existing literatures and arguments that will orient your own research. This is relevant if you are ambitious, want to work through your own position on the issue, or know relatively little about what you want to say.

On the other hand, if your topic is in a crowded field, you run the risk of making an unseen contribution. Furthermore, some proposal reviewers may be more interested in approving a project that treats a topic that no one has approached before, or does so in a novel way. At this end of the spectrum, you may find comparatively less literature that directly treats your topic. Consequently you will need to be both creative and have a good command of different literatures that relate indirectly to your topic.

Last, but certainly not least, you will need to decide to what degree you want to pursue ethnographic and/or fieldwork-based research. In many ways, this is what sets Anthropology apart from other social science research, and you need to think about how your topic may (or may not) benefit from taking some of your research questions out of the existing literature and into the field.

While often enriching, fieldwork can also be frustrating, and you need to think about the opportunities as well as the risks it poses for your research. Additionally, socio-cultural fieldwork will almost certainly need to be submitted for UVM Institutional Review Board (IRB—see point 6b. below for more information) approval.

For more details on developing your interests into a feasible research project, see Sections II (Honors Thesis Proposal writing guide) and III (Thesis Writing Schedule) below.

**5 b. Junior Year:** Planning for a senior thesis should begin during the Junior year (students in the Honors College generally take a thesis proposal course as juniors and have the possibility of submitting thesis proposals then.) Begin discussions with potential advisor(s). At this time, the student should register for 3 credits of HON202 in the following semester, after approval from the chair of the Anthropology Department. The student should also set up a schedule of consultation with the advisor for the succeeding

months, to ensure that the application materials will be ready for submission by the ensuing deadline (see next step).

You might be wondering if Honors work fulfills requirements for the major. For majors, 3 credits of HON202 may count as a 200-level Anthropology course in one area of concentration. The area is determined by the Department Chair in consultation with the thesis advisor. The remaining 3 credits for HON202 (second semester) can be used as a “free elective” to be applied toward general graduation requirements. For students who minor in Anthropology, 3 credits of HON202 count as a 100-level course and 3 credits of HON202 as a free elective in fulfillment of the requirements for an Anthropology minor.

**5 c. Senior Year:** A detailed calendar of key dates is available on the Honors College website (<http://www.uvm.edu/~ashonors/?Page=chcalendar.html>), and see Section II of this Thesis Guide below. The first key task in your senior year comes at the end of September or beginning of October when the student needs to submit 5 copies of the following materials to the chairperson of the Committee on Honors and Individual Studies:

1. **The completed application form**
2. **The thesis proposal**
3. **The supportive statement from the faculty thesis supervisor**
4. **A current unofficial transcript of grades**

The forms, with detailed explanations, are here:

[http://www.uvm.edu/~cas/foruvmstudents/honors/college\\_honors\\_forms/honors\\_app\\_info.doc](http://www.uvm.edu/~cas/foruvmstudents/honors/college_honors_forms/honors_app_info.doc)

The guidelines need to be followed exactly; otherwise, the proposal might get automatically rejected. It is highly advisable to study past successful proposals, here: <http://www.uvm.edu/~cas/foruvmstudents/?Page=honors/chsamples.html&SM=honors/honsub.html> (check out the ones closest to Anthropology).

**Note:** While the deadline for this is late September or early October, work on this proposal should begin ideally during the *junior Spring* or the *first week of classes during the Fall semester, at the very LATEST!* Plan on submitting a draft of the whole proposal to your advisor *at least two weeks in advance of the deadline* to ensure that your advisor has a chance to comment on and edit it.

Also, around this time you should remind your faculty advisor that s/he will need to submit a recommendation on your behalf. Forward them the link for the recommendation form. Do NOT assume they will remember to do this on their own. It is YOUR responsibility to remind them and follow up if necessary.

**6. Nuts and Bolts:** Step 5 c. above already spells out the application and thesis proposal as the first significant submissions in the process of writing an honors thesis. What happens next?

**6a. Honors Committee review:** Once all of the above materials have been submitted by the deadline, the Committee on Honors and Individual Studies will reach a decision on the

merits of the proposal: accept, revise, or reject.

In case of rejection, the project as a thesis ends, but the student can get credit for his/her research as 3 credits of ANTH297 Readings and Research in the first semester and 3 credits of ANTH298 Readings and Research in the second semester; ANTH297/298 can be used toward fulfilling requirements in the major and in the minor in the same way as 6 credits of HON202.

In case of revision, the student has to rewrite her/his proposal to bring it into compliance with the changes proposed by the Committee. Students can work with their advisor to inquire about anything that seems unclear or vague in the changes proposed by the Committee. Revisions are usually due within 2-3 weeks (see link in step 5b for exact date)—there is not much time to revise.

**6b. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Training:** For students pursuing ethnographic research projects involving interacting with or interviewing human subjects, you must complete the UVM online training for human subject protection: <http://www.uvm.edu/~irb/?Page=education/tutorialintro.htm>

Depending on the nature of your research, you may need to submit a formal research protocol for review and approval by the UVM IRB. This decision should be made in consultation with your advisor.

**6c. Forming a Thesis Committee:** After approval by the Committee, students select *two additional faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences* to serve as an advisory thesis committee.

Note that the chairperson of the thesis committee must be from a department other than the one in which honors work is being performed (i.e., *not* be in the Anthropology department). The student also needs to sign up for another 3 credits of HON202 in the last semester of the senior year.

In terms of selecting this committee, you should, once again, consider these choices carefully. In the case of the second member of the committee from the Anthropology department, you should think about professors who have some expertise or demonstrated interest in your thesis topic. You may also want to focus on professors with whom you have taken classes. These last two points are equally valid for the non-Anthropology faculty member you select to serve as the chair of your committee.

You should ideally choose a chairperson who knows something about your topic or the region on which you are working, albeit from another disciplinary perspective. This person will read your thesis. Although chairpersons have differing attitudes toward working with students throughout the whole process, many prefer to see the project only once it is nearing completion. The chairperson's formal role in the committee is to oversee the thesis oral defense, submit paperwork after the defense, and ensure that the student receives a fair treatment during the whole process.

**7. Research and Writing (a.k.a., The Hard Part):** Once your proposal has been approved and you've assembled your advisory committee, you need to develop a research and writing schedule that will enable you to complete your thesis in time for the defense and final submission in the Spring semester (more on these in step 8 below).

If you are in the Honors College, you will be enrolled in HON201, a thesis writing seminar that will provide you with a structured outline of research and writing goals that cover proposal writing, research strategies, and writing goals.

For all Anthropology students and especially those writing a thesis *but not* in the Honors College, it is strongly recommended that you consult with your primary thesis advisor *early and often* about developing a schedule for both the Fall and Spring semesters that lays out specific goals and deadlines for completing your research and your thesis. For this schedule, see Section III.

**8. Final Steps:** For “successful completion,” the student needs to create a written document (the “thesis”) and defend the written document in an oral examination (the “defense”) before the three-person thesis committee comprised of the chairperson (from outside the Anthropology department), the student's advisor, and a third professor drawn from the Anthropology Department.

The thesis and the defense must be completed and evaluated by the end of the examination period in the second semester of the project. **IMPORTANT:** As noted in the timeline above, it is up to you to begin scheduling your defense date in late March. Your committee members will be busy during the final weeks of school when the defense takes place, and be sure to coordinate schedules early. Once the defense is completed, the committee will determine a grade for the work, and indicate whether or not Honors shall be granted. In the Anthropology Department, we ask that *the written document be finished and sent to the committee at least two weeks ahead of the scheduled defense*. Also, the thesis committee and the student's advisor will usually recommend that some corrections be made to the written thesis based on the student's performance at the defense. These corrections should generally be completed within a week following the defense. For exact dates, see the link provided in step 5c.

If the thesis committee decides that the student passes the defense at the “Readings and Research” level, the student can get credit for ANTH297/298 instead of HON202 (see also part 5b above).

The Friday of the last week of classes is the last day to submit final copy of defended, corrected thesis to Chair of the Honors Committee (via [Sarah Helmer](#)<sup>1</sup> at the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office, 438 College Street). This is the final step in the process, and the last one before you can, quite justifiably, **CELEBRATE!**

## SECTION II: Anthropology Honors Thesis Proposal Writing Guide

This guide moves from general observations on proposal writing to specific descriptions of the different sections of the specific proposal you will write.

Keep in mind that the proposal has a *strict* page limit of 8 pages (excluding references) described in the college guidelines so you need to be both thorough *and* concise. This guide is designed to help you achieve this. In a successful proposal you will not simply address all of the following issues; you will also need do so in a precise manner.

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### *Proposal vs. the Thesis Itself*

The Proposal *raises questions, offers background on these questions and offers concrete ways to go about answering these questions.*

The Thesis Itself *is the actual process of answering those questions and the final product(s) of that process.*

A research proposal is a *unique genre of writing with particular requirements*

The Proposal needs to communicate, in *very specific terms*, ***what you are going to do*** and ***how you are going to do it.***

Successful proposals are **polished** (no simple mistakes such as spelling or grammatical errors), **detailed** (they always offer more than the reviewing agency requests), and demonstrate that there will be **a high chance of success** and that if you experience difficulty, you are flexible and clever enough to overcome it and complete the project.

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### *Choosing a Topic: Some Trade-Offs to Consider*

Has this topic been studied before? Or has it been studied *ad nauseum*?  
Should you attack central problems of the discipline? Or should you seek an innovative area of inquiry where few researchers work?

*Why is this important?* If the topic is a long-running one in the discipline, it means there are existing literatures and arguments that will orient your own research. This is relevant if you are

ambitious, want to work through your own position on the issue, or know relatively little about what you want to say.

On the other hand, if your topic is in a crowded field, you run the risk of making an unseen contribution. Furthermore, some proposal reviewers may be more interested in approving a project that treats a topic that no one has approached before, or does so in a novel way. At this end of the spectrum, you may find comparatively less literature that directly treats your topic. Consequently you will need to be both creative and have a good command of different literatures that relate indirectly to your topic.

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### ***Know Who is Going to Review and Approve Your Proposal***

The faculty committee charged with reviewing your proposal is the College of Arts and Sciences Honors and IDM Committee. The committee has representation from social sciences, humanities, and natural/physical sciences.

#### *Proposal Reviewers: Some Key Issues*

- 1) Reviewers will be reading a **large** number of proposals . They want to know quickly if this project is valid, useful, and has a high degree of success.
- 2) Reviewers will likely come from a different academic discipline than yours, so they may not comprehend what you propose to accomplish.
- 3) Reviewers have the problem of equitably judging proposals that reflect different social and academic circumstances. A reviewer is often faced with the tough issue: How do you compare an apple with an orange – or a social science project vs. a natural science project, or a qualitative-based project vs. a quantitative one?

Knowing these problems, follow these general rules throughout your proposal:

*Never use jargon!! Assume they won't understand the jargon of your discipline.*

*Define any unusual or technical terms and concepts that you are using.*

*Your proposal must stand out from the crowd (see below)*

#### *What do they want to know from your proposal?*

- 1) What are we going to learn as a result of this proposed project that we do not yet know?
- 2) Why is it worth knowing?

- 3) What methods will the investigator use to pursue this research question? Are those methods commonly accepted and appropriate to the project?
- 4) How will we know that these conclusions are valid? How do we know if they are right or wrong?
- 5) Can the person who is proposing this project actually do it? Do they have the skills? Do they possess the mastery, or have the assistance of masters, to carry out certain techniques?
- 6) Does the proposal or project meet the requirements of their approval process? Did it follow the rules they laid out for format? Keep in mind these requirements: The entire proposal must not exceed 8 pages (including any tables and figures but excluding references). Proposals should be double-spaced, set in 12 point Times New Roman font, and have 1-inch margins top and bottom and 1.5-inch margins left and right.

These first five questions need to be answered somewhere in your proposal, although not necessarily directly. They can be woven into your narrative.

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### ***Constructing The Proposal***

#### ***Basic Structure of an Honors Thesis Proposal (NOTE: this structure is current as of the 2011-12 academic year)***

- **Title:** Be creative but also be clear. A common strategy is to offer a “descriptive title” with a colon, after which you clearly state the focus of the research.
- **Abstract:** Give a short summary (no more than 100 words) of your project and its significance.
- **Description of the Project:** Explain the question you hope to answer and what it is you hope to accomplish.
- **Previous Work:** Explain the status of work in this field. Explain what other scholars or artists have accomplished in this area to date.
- **Significance:** Explain why your project is important. Explain what original contributions you hope to make. Explain the relevance of your project to the existing literature in this subject.
- **Proposed Methodology:** Explain how you will proceed. Explain how you will collect and analyze your data or materials. Explain how you will interpret your results. This is an extremely important section of the proposal. It is imperative that it be detailed and well constructed. Timetables, schedules, and budgets (where appropriate) are helpful.

- **References:** Include any references cited in the proposal and any important works that you expect to use during your research.

### *Abstract*

An abstract is a one (or at the most two) paragraph description of the project's main goals, methods and expected outcomes. This is usually *the last thing* that one writes.

### *Description of the Project*

The description serves as a statement of the problem you are interested in studying. In it you should provide the general **context** and **goals** of your project, its **significance and expected outcomes**, and the major **assumptions** you are making. This should be short, no longer than several paragraphs or at most a couple of pages.

- What is the main problem or issue that this research takes on? What are the specific questions this proposal explores?
- What will this project accomplish, and how will it do this?
- Where does your work intersect with the main theoretical and methodological debates on this topic?
- Where does this inquiry put established ideas to the test?
- Does this work duplicate (bad) or complement (good) work that has been done on this topic before? How?
- What is the hypothesis you are going to test?
- What are the expected outcomes?

There are several ways to begin a proposal, *but no matter which method you choose, the opening must grab the reader's attention and interest (remember that reviewers are seeing many of these). It must be clear, forceful and crisp.*

Possibilities include:

- *A clearly posed question*—This is not a rhetorical question, but a question whose answer may not be immediately apparent. Your proposal will then go on to explain how you are going to answer this question in your research or project, and why that is the best way to do it.
- *A puzzling situation or apparent contradiction.*
- *A statement of the central point or hypothesis of your research or project.*
- *An anecdote or ethnographic situation that strikes you as representative of the phenomenon you are proposing to study.*

### *Previous Work*

This is where you provide a more in-depth **analytical framing** of the issues your project will treat, including a **summary of the current state of knowledge** on your topic. *This is neither a total review of the literature nor an annotated bibliography*, but a **selective and critical evaluation** of the areas and debates your work engages. Take a stand on these debates – be respectful, yet critical. This is where you identify and clarify your own analytical understanding of the topic, setting the stage for your theoretical (or methodological) contribution to the literature.

Identify *alternative viewpoints and arguments* on the issue to show how you understand and appreciate them. This also forces you to justify the analytical approach you are taking.

### ***Significance***

This section should build off of what you lay out in the Previous Work portion of the proposal. There, you are focused on positioning your work within what has been written, and here, you should explain how and why this position is important. A few general strategies are listed below:

- Will the data you propose to gather help support or extend the validity of an established interpretation? Alternatively, will your data refute prevailing theories? How and why?
- Are you adding to the existing literature by bringing new theories into established interpretations of particular research sites—e.g., “The prevailing materialist interpretations of political unrest in Bolivia offer important insights, and my research will add to these understandings by bringing key ideas from postcolonial studies to bear on moral as well as the material aspects of political movements.”
- Are your contributions and innovations primarily methodological—e.g., you will be using new survey technology in an effort to examine established excavation sites. Or, perhaps, you will bring a qualitative focus (interviews and life histories) to research that has previously relied exclusively upon quantitative methods.

As with choosing a topic, you need to be aware of the stakes involved in how you present the significance of your proposed research. You should be declarative and confident (due to the research you’ve already done to write the Previous Work section), but not arrogant. Striking a balanced tone in this section is crucial because you want to let the review committee know that you are serious, ambitious, and prepared (to start your research) but not naïve and overreaching.

### ***Proposed Methodology***

The Proposed Methodology section is where you *specify in narrative fashion the (research) operations you will undertake and the ways you will interpret the results of these operations.*

*This is not simply **what** you intend to achieve, but **how** you intend to achieve it.*

***Specificity is therefore essential.***

**You must specify the archives, people (not by name, but by category or kind; i.e., landowning peasants, biologist assistants, etc.) resources, sites, proposed techniques of investigation, proposed techniques of analysis, timeline, affiliations, researcher qualifications, etc.<sup>1</sup>**

*Especially for ethnographers, methodology is also an argument about why these tasks, resources and processes are the best way to understand the topic. Therefore methodology is not a simple set of tasks, but a theoretical statement about how it is best to know the topic and the world in which it exists. Furthermore, there should be a seamless narrative transition from literature review and theoretical discussion to methodology, since they are organically related.*

For example, if you want to study the cultural aspects of ‘globalization’ it would make sense to use a multi-sited ethnographic methodology to ‘track’ the different mechanisms by which ‘globalization’ occurs (i.e., information technologies, scientific knowledge production, media, etc.). In other words, your way of studying the effect approximates the way the cultural system works.

Besides describing in detail the research operations you will undertake (the who, when, where, and how), in the Proposed Methodology section you should also deal with these issues below (These should also be woven into your narrative):

*General Issues*

- What is standard about this particular set of methods?
- What is innovative?
- How do they relate to your theoretical interests and arguments?

*Expected Results and Techniques of Analysis*

- What do you expect to find, and how might different circumstances or contingencies affect the outcomes?
- How will you evaluate and analyze the results of your research?

*Chronology, or are your feet on the ground?*

- A reasonable chronology (timeline) shows that you are aware of what it will take to complete the project in a timely manner.
- When will you do things, and **why then?** (That is, don’t just tell us you will do something at one point in the project, but justify why you should do it then.)

*Representativeness vs. Characterization*

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<sup>1</sup>For example, if an ornithologist says she will view birds to understand their behavior, the methodology section must specify what it means to ‘view birds.’ Where will it happen? What time of day? Where is the researcher going to be when she ‘views birds,’ and why is that the best place to be for this purpose? What equipment is going to be used, and why? *Every component and tool needs to be included, explained and justified*

- Are you employing quantitative or qualitative methods? (Or both?) While the former seeks to “represent” reality, the latter seeks to “characterize” it. At their heart, these two distinct ways of organizing a project methodologically.
- At the core of this, you are making a statement about how the world should be studied. Is it by talking to people? Filling out surveys and computing statistics? What is the value of your approach?

### *Contingencies and Limitations*

What are the limits to the work, or any contingencies that might unfavorably affect the outcome of the project, legal or otherwise?

### *The Researcher's Technical Qualifications*

- Does the researcher possess the mastery of necessary techniques, or have the assistance to overcome any limitations?
- If it is a comparative project, does the researcher possess the technical and interpretive capacity to execute all sides of a project?
- Does the researcher have any specific background or experiences that will be useful in the operationalization of this project?
- Does the researcher control the language of the field?
- Has the researcher passed the required ethics review procedures?
- Has the researcher obtained the proper research authorizations?

### *Budget*

This is where you list the costs of any equipment you need (i.e., tape recorders, blank tapes, cameras, film, film processing, etc.), transportation costs, and cost of living (if you will not be working from home, for example, during a fieldtrip).

Note: Bear in mind that inclusion of this information is *optional*. However, if your proposed project does involve travel or require special equipment, including the costs as well as the likely sources (e.g., grants such as the UVM APLE or URECA grant programs you have applied for) is an indication of a serious and well-considered methodology.

For more on funding opportunities, please see Section IV of this guide.

### *Appendices*

If, after covering the issues above, you still have room in your Proposed Methodology and/or there are especially technical aspects of your research in terms of data collection or a clear indication that IRB review will be necessary, you should devote a brief portion of this section to addressing these issues. Suitable topics for a Proposed Methodology Appendix include:

- explain a complicated technical procedure
- give a more detailed discussion of a particular theoretical or historical issue

- demonstrate research permissions, IRB/ethics panel evaluations, contracts and agreements, informed consent materials, etc.
- provide samples of survey questionnaires or interview questions.

### ***References***

Be sure to provide an up-to-date and consistently formatted bibliography. Many reviewers will look here first, because it shows you are ‘up on the literature.’

***Any source you cite***, whether as a direct quotation, paraphrasing, or a reference in the Proposal needs to be included in this section. Also, you should choose one of the major formatting styles (American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA) or Chicago), and use it for all cited materials.

At this stage of your work, you may want to investigate various bibliography management software (e.g., EndNote) or online programs (e.g., Ref Works) to help you with the formatting as well as keeping track of your growing list of sources.

### SECTION III: Developing a Thesis Writing Schedule

What follows is a rough guideline for organizing your efforts towards the completion of an Honors Thesis. This should get you started, but you should follow-up with your thesis advisors to fine-tune and customize a work schedule that addresses your specific topic.

This guide also assumes that during the **Spring of junior year** you have 1) identified an advisor and 2) begun identifying your topic. If you have not done this, then *the first order of business* is to meet with possible advisors and secure her/his consent to serve as your advisor.

#### 1. First week of the semester, senior year—you should meet with your thesis advisor to discuss the status of your proposal.

- The following is a helpful exercise<sup>2</sup> to work on after this meeting:

- I am studying \_\_\_\_\_.
- Because I want to find out \_\_\_\_\_.
- In order to understand \_\_\_\_\_.
- These are the three or four questions I need to ask to find these things out \_\_\_\_\_
- This is a fairly basic but very effective progression of ideas in which you move from a specific topic/event/moment/place to a slightly broader level of significance and finally to a larger generalization or theoretical implication. This is the backbone of most social scientific research and especially anthropology as we are constantly moving between the very local details of quite specific research interests and larger questions of human experience.

Useful and interesting questions are very important to the scientific process, and lie at the heart of good anthropology. Einstein once said that “99% of a good answer is a good question.” What he meant is that carefully framed questions focus the research process ahead of time, leading the researcher directly to certain areas of empirical investigation either helpful or necessary to address the questions.

#### 2. Mid-September—a rough draft of your proposal should be submitted to your thesis advisor.

- Following the guidelines set forth on the Honors College website (<http://www.uvm.edu/~ashonors/?Page=chsubmittapp.html>), you should build from the above exercise to create a rough version of the full proposal.

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<sup>2</sup> This exercise is borrowed from *The Craft of Research* (Booth, Colomb, and Williams, eds: 2003 [1995]). Many more useful tips and suggestions can be found in this invaluable text.

- Also, see Section II above for a detailed guide to writing a proposal.
- Keep in mind the following:
  - The earlier you can get this draft to your advisor, the more feedback and guidance she or he will be able to give you, and this improves the likelihood of submitting a successful proposal.
  - Also, this meeting will be an ideal time to mention the “Faculty Recommendation Form” that will be filled your advisor will fill out online. Your advisor will need to read a final version of your proposal before completing this form.

**3. First week of October**—submission of your proposal packet to the Honors Committee.

- Again, be sure to be familiar with the guidelines and forms required by the Honors College (<http://www.uvm.edu/~ashonors/?Page=chdownloads.html>).
- In addition to the forms that you must fill out and the actual proposal, you will also need to remind your advisor to fill out the online recommendation form, and you need to give your advisor enough time to do this—i.e., *do not wait until Oct. 5 to ask your advisor to fill out this form.*

**4. First week of October**—if you are not familiar with the research resources available at UVM, especially Bailey/Howe Library, this is an excellent time to make an appointment to meet with a research librarian to discuss your topic and get advice on where to look for relevant materials.

- There are research guides organized by subject posted on the Bailey/Howe Library website: <http://researchguides.uvm.edu/index.php>
- If you have questions about these guides or want more instruction in how to research your topic, you should contact either **Laurie Kutner** or **Scott Schaffer** at the library. They are the research librarians who are the most directly involved with the resources at Bailey/Howe that many of you will need to use.
- Also, by this date you should complete the **UVM Institutional Review Board (IRB) training**. For students pursuing ethnographic research projects involving interacting with or interviewing human subjects, you must complete the UVM online training for human subject protection: <http://www.uvm.edu/~irb/?Page=education/tutorialintro.htm>

Depending on the nature of your research, you may need to submit a formal research protocol for review and approval by the UVM IRB. This decision should be made in consultation with your advisor.

**5. End of October**—submit a revised thesis statement as well as a preliminary

annotated bibliography to your advisors.

- By this point, you will have had a chance to do some research, and it's very likely that your original research question has changed or your interests and/or approach has shifted. It's important to document these changes as you continue to refine both your research and your thesis.
- A key ingredient to your success will be keeping a *research log*, and a key component of a useful research log is an *annotated bibliography*. The research log is basically a record of everything you look up in relation to your thesis, and with current technology, this is very easy to do, provided you develop the habit of simply entering research materials into some form of a computer database. There is some excellent software available (e.g. EndNote or Devon Think) as well as numerous web-based resources. Alternatively, you can simply keep a MS Word file in which you cut/paste or manually enter the names of articles you read.
- Your research log will be primarily for your own reference, but your annotated bibliography will be a list of your key sources in which you not only list what you've read, but also include *2-3 descriptive sentences* that will serve as reminders of the main argument of the reading as well as your thoughts on the relevance and accuracy of the source.
- The deeper you get into your research, the more valuable both the research log and the annotated bibliography will become. Not only will you be keeping a running bibliography that will make assembling the final bibliography for the thesis much, much easier, but you will also have a very handy reference guide for materials that you read early on in your research but tend to forget 2-3 months after you originally read them.
- Specific guidance on developing an annotated bibliography is available from the research guides on the Bailey/Howe website or from the research librarians themselves.
- After you discuss your preliminary annotated bibliography from late October, you and your advisors should identify

**6. November and December**—this time should be devoted to research, either field-based or using library/internet sources. With the help of the research librarians as well as your advisors you should be reading the literature relevant to your topic as well as conducting any interviews or fieldwork necessary for your thesis.

- An **IRB** reminder: if your research will involve interacting with human subjects, including interviewing people, for your thesis research, you must consult with your advisor on these issues as well as complete the

UVM IRB online tutorial (see point 4 above).

- Field notes: if you are doing original fieldwork, you should be keeping excellent field notes. Choose a dedicated field notebook (or word processing file) and maintain records of your observations, interviews, insights, and experiences in the field. Successful field researchers tend to take notes either in the field or immediately afterward, while memories are fresh. Your advisor will ask you for a field report summarizing your research progress before winter break, and your field notes will be your source for writing up this report.<sup>3</sup>
- During this phase of your research, you should also establish a meeting schedule with your advisors to discuss your research. A good starting point is meeting once every 2 weeks, and you can adjust this depending on your (that is yours as well as your advisor's) availability and needs.
  - While the expectation is that *you* are doing the research, your advisors expect you to have questions about your material as well as about how your thesis is developing based on your reading.
  - Also, bear in mind that as you research your topic, you will likely develop new areas of interest and new approaches to your original research questions. You may even decide to adjust or even overhaul aspects of your original thesis proposal based on the information you discover during this phase of your research.
  - These semi-regular meetings are an excellent opportunity to share your reading notes and discuss any of the questions or issues that emerge from your research.

**7. End of Fall semester**—before Winter Break, you should submit an updated and expanded annotated bibliography and a short field research report (if applicable) to your advisors.

- Keeping this as a goal will help you maintain a reasonable pace in your research.
- You should have conducted the majority of your field research at this point. Fieldwork after the break should serve the purpose of answering any remaining questions and providing follow-up information.

**8. January and February**—this time period should mark the shift away from research and towards the writing of the thesis.

- If you haven't done so already, this is also a time to take a look at

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on keeping good field notes and fieldwork methodologies, consult: *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* by Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007.

examples of other theses. Ask your advisors for examples that you can read in order to get a sense of the structure and style of a thesis.

- By now you should have a general sense of the focus for each chapter. A typical structure for a thesis looks something like this, based on either four or five chapters of approximately 20-30 pages each:

Chapter One: Introduction (Sets up the problem and explains why it's important; poses research questions; and provides the answer to those questions in the form of an argument and/or thesis statement.)

Chapter Two: History and/or Theoretical issues and/or Methodological issues (Typically a review of the literature on the issues)

Chapters Three and/or Four (Case studies, empirical data, discussion and analysis of the data)

Final chapter: Conclusion. (Summary of findings, future directions)

- What should you write first? Most start somewhere in the middle—with the chapter that discusses history and/or theory, which is based largely on already-completed library research. Wait to write your empirical chapters based on ongoing research. Write your introduction toward the middle or latter half of the writing process, if not until the very end.

**9. End of February**—you should look to have a 20 page rough draft to circulate to your advisors in order to get their feedback and comments.

**10. Mid-March**—at this point, your thesis should be taking shape as you work to incorporate your advisors' comments as well as fine your argument. This is also a good time to begin discussing possible *defense dates* with your committee—give them plenty of warning and be flexible, but also be sure to tell them that the defense can be *no later than the Friday of the last week of classes* (in 2010, this will be May 4<sup>th</sup>).

**11. First week of April**—by now you should have a second draft of your thesis that you can discuss with your advisors.

**12. Third week of April**—the last day of this week is *generally the last day* to submit your thesis to your advisory committee (consult with the College thesis timeline to be precise). The final version of your thesis must be delivered to your committee *no later than 2 weeks* before the defense date.

**13. Last week of classes**—this is the window of time for scheduling your oral defense. Keep in mind that if you want to schedule it earlier, you will need to submit the thesis two weeks in advance. Alternatively, if you want/need to schedule the

defense towards the end of this range, you will have very little time to make any revisions if your committee requires them.

- 14. Finals period**—Submit a final copy of a defended, corrected thesis to Chair of the Honors Committee (via [Sarah Helmer](#)<sup>1</sup> at the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office, 438 College Street). Consult the College Honors timetable for an exact date.

## **SECTION IV: Funding Opportunities**

A number of funding opportunities exist if you require financial support for travel, research equipment, or other needs related to your thesis research.

For more information about these opportunities, such as eligibility guidelines and deadlines, see <http://www.uvm.edu/~mcnair/?Page=research.html>

**The APLE Program:** APLE provides students in the College of Arts and Sciences with opportunities to do research with faculty members, and to get hands-on experience in internships. Summer funding can be up to \$3,000 and academic year funding can be up to \$500.

**The HELiX Program:** HELiX encourages students to stay in science and consider science careers by involving them in research projects. Students in biological anthropology or archaeology can apply for summer funding (\$3,500 plus \$1,500 in supplies) or academic year funding (\$500 to cover research expenses).

**Ronald Suiter Award:** Open to undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences at UVM to defray costs of attending conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. Provides up to \$300 stipends each year, with an additional \$150 from the College of Arts and Sciences added to each award.

**URECA Grants:** Provides funds to outstanding undergraduates from all colleges and majors who wish to pursue a specific research project under the mentorship of a faculty member. Undergraduates can pursue independent research or work with faculty member. Award includes \$1,000 scholarship and up to \$3,000 research funding.

### **Honors College Funding:**

If you are a student in the Honors College students, you should be aware of the **UROP** (Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program) grants, providing up to \$300 that be used to fund travel and equipment costs related to thesis research. Information can be found here:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~honcoll/?Page=UROP.html&SM=felmenu.html>

### **Anthropology Department Funding:**

**The Kleinknecht Fund:** A department alum has made money available for occasional use. Students can apply for small amounts to support research, conference travel, etc. For more information see Prof. Gordon.

## SECTION V: Acceptable Bibliographic Reference Style

Anthropologists use the AAA (American Anthropological Association) bibliographic style. *All* drafts of your thesis proposal and the thesis itself must follow this style.

Here we present the basics. For more information consult the complete AAA style guide at: [www.aaanet.org/publications/style\\_guide.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf).

References, such as for quotations, embedded in text look like this: “blah, blah, blah” (Obama 2000: 30). Note that the citation, which comes after the quotation, is: (last name year: page number). Also note that this ends the sentence *outside the quotation marks*, and the period comes after the citation in parentheses. If you cite the same source again with no other intervening reference, you would put (ibid.) if it’s the same page, or (ibid.: page number) if it’s a different page. Another way to do this would be: As Obama (2000: 30) states, “blah, blah, blah.” Then, later in his text, he adds, “yum, yum, yum” (ibid.: 46).

In the bibliography, also acceptably called “Works Cited” or “References,” you should list only the sources you directly refer to in the text (as quotations or as other references) and list the sources in *alphabetical order*. Here are some brief examples of the most-commonly cited types of sources:

### *Book:*

Obama, Barack  
2010 *The Art of Blah, Blah, Blah*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

### *Article:*

Obama, Barack  
2010 ‘Thus Spake Barack: Blah, Blah, Blah.’ *Culture and Society in the United States* 4(1): 22-39.

### *Class discussion/Personal communication:*

Obama, Barack  
2010 In-class discussion. 9/12/10, University of Vermont.

or

Obama, Barack  
2010 Personal communication. 9/12/10.

### *Film:*

Obama, Barack (Director)  
2010 *Blah, Blah, Blah*. Hollywood: Polygram Films.

### *Website:*

Author(s) or Institution.  
Year Title. Retrieved from World Wide Web on date accessed at: full web address.