MA in Sociology

Department of Sociology

Guide to Theses, MA Papers, and Experiential Research and Learning Projects

May 2010

STEPS FOR THESIS, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT AND RESEARCH & WRITING OPTION

STEP 1: ***Identify an area of interest and decide if you want to write a Thesis, Experiential Learning Project or Research & Writing Paper***

- Attempt to identify this area of interest early in your graduate career. This will allow you to build the literature review through your course work.
- As you think about which option you might choose, think through your future plans. For example, a thesis will be helpful for getting into a PhD program and the Experiential Research project might serve you best in working in an applied context, such as conducting research for a community-based organization.

SOC 490 THESIS

DESCRIPTION: The Master's Thesis (SOC 490) is designed to allow students to conduct original research on a particular sociological issue (e.g., gentrification in Pilsen, the race-based achievement gaps in Chicago Public Schools, etc.) or original theoretical analysis of a specific area of sociological investigation or thought (e.g., the role of the nation-state in a globalizing world, black critical theory, etc.). The written portion is normally between 50 to 75 pages in length, excluding references and appendices etc. Students will receive 6 credit hours upon successful completion of SOC 490.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS: Students can register for SOC 490 after completing 24 credits of coursework. Students opting to write the thesis must have a 3.5 or higher grade point average. All outstanding incompletes in coursework must be removed from the student's transcript prior to enrollment in SOC 490.

SOC 491 EXPERIENTIAL LEARING PROJECT

DESCRIPTION: The Experiential Research & Learning Project (SOC 491) is designed to allow students to create or participate in an experiential project focused on a contemporary sociological issue, question, or debate. Options for SOC 491 include participation in some direct effort to create social change (e.g., a service-learning project), participation in a community, regional, national, or international organization (e.g., an internship with a non-profit organization), some contribution to a relevant social justice policy initiative (e.g., a policy-white paper) or an experiential study (e.g., study abroad). The written portion is normally between 50 to 75 pages in length, excluding references and appendices etc. Students will receive 6 credit hours upon successful completion of SOC 491.

REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION: Students should register for SOC 491 after completing 21 credits of coursework. All outstanding incompletes in coursework must be removed from the student's transcript prior to enrollment in SOC 491. A 3.5 or higher GPA is required for the Experiential Learning Project.

SOC 492 RESEARCH AND WRITING OPTION

DESCRIPTION: The Research & Writing project (SOC 492) is designed to allow students to conduct a critical and in-depth analysis on a particular sociological issue/problem, a specific area of sociology (e.g., social stratification, deviance, race, gender, housing), or a critical review of the literature involving a contemporary sociological debate. The written portion is normally the length of a journal article, between 25 to 35 pages in length, excluding references and appendices. Students will receive 3 credit hours upon successful completion of SOC 492.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS: Students should register for SOC 492 after completing between 24-27 credits of coursework. All outstanding incompletes in coursework must be removed from the student's transcript prior to enrollment in SOC 492.

STEP 2: ***Build the literature review of your area of interest in your classes and through library-based research***

A literature review demonstrates your knowledge of your topic. It is composed of the research or theoretical work already generated about your topic.

A literature review tells the reader:
1. what is already known or theorized about the topic,
2. where there is consensus on the topic
3. what the disagreements/contradicting evidence there is on the topic
4. the gaps/holes in the literature

STEP 3: *Write out a 3 to 5 page proposal detailing your thesis/paper/project*

A proposal explains what you will do, how you will do it and what tools you will use to interpret your results. All proposals must be approved by the chair of your committee before you begin writing the thesis, project or paper.

For the Thesis and Experiential Learning Project: 1) a purpose statement about the research topic, question, debate, issue, argument, or intention; 2) a thesis statement and list of research questions; 3) a description of methodology or description of project and 4) a preliminary bibliography.

For the Research and Writing Option: 1) a purpose statement about the research topic, question, debate, issue, argument, or intention; 2) a brief overview of the project's scope; and 3) a preliminary bibliography (which should first be discussed with the faculty chair).

STEP 4: ***Approach a full-time faculty in the sociology department to chair your thesis, project or paper and a full-time faculty as a reader.***

After reviewing the course descriptions for SOC 490/491/492, students will approach one full-time sociology faculty member, preferably whose interests are similar to yours, to discuss your ideas and to form a faculty committee. For SOC 492, only a single full-time faculty advisor is required. For SOC 490 and SOC 491, the faculty committee minimally includes two people, the faculty chair (who must be a full-time member of the Roosevelt sociology faculty) and a second member-reader. The second reader reads the last draft of the thesis (after it has been approved by the faculty chair), assesses the quality of the draft and recommends any revisions for the final version of the thesis/project. The second reader may be another member of the sociology faculty at Roosevelt or a faculty member from another discipline or university that has demonstrated knowledge of your research or project topic. The faculty chair of your committee will work closely with you during all phases of your research or experiential learning including the exploration and conceptualization of potential issues/areas/debates; development of a bibliography; the writing of the initial and subsequent drafts, revising and editing all drafts, and formatting the final polished product (i.e., use of style guide for citations, references, and other supporting documents).

STEP 5: Complete an Institutional Review Board on Human Subjects application

Once your committee chair has approved your proposal, you need to determine if you need to complete an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application. The Institutional Review Board on Human Subjects is the committee charged with the responsibility of carefully reviewing any proposed research involving human subjects to ensure that researchers consider any potential harm to subjects, obtain legal consent, and protect the rights of human subjects. Most Master's Thesis or Experiential Learning Project research projects involving human subjects require an IRB. There are cases when research is exempted from IRB review, such as data retrieved from publically available archival data. Refer to Roosevelt University's IRB website http://legacy.roosevelt.edu/irb/default.htm for IRB applications, deadlines for applications, information on research that is exempted from IRB review and all other IRB questions.

STEP 6: ***Enroll in SOC 490, 491 or 492 and write your thesis, project or paper***

Candidates must submit the completed SOC 490/491/492 **Intent and Approval Form** to the Sociology Chair (the candidate can access the form by asking her/his committee chair), with the required signatures, **no later than the last week of**

classes in the semester prior to when the candidate plans to enroll in either SOC 490/491/492. This form requires the candidate to attach a written 3-4 paragraph thesis proposal or project description. The Intent and Approval Form may be completed by the candidate with the assistance of their faculty chair. Finally, upon completion, the Intent and Approval form must be signed by the candidate, the faculty chair, and any additional readers BEFORE enrollment in SOC 490/491/492 is possible.

Once completed the Intent and Approval Form should be signed by the candidate and then submitted to the faculty chair and all other committee members for their signatures. When all of the required signatures have been obtained, the candidate should ask their faculty chair to complete an "Individualized Section Registration Form," which, once completed and signed, will allow the candidate to register for SOC 490/491/492. This form is available from the departmental office in room 752 or online (http://www.roosevelt.edu/pdfs/individsecreg.pdf). The candidate cannot register for SOC 490/491/492 until all the required signatures (i.e., faculty chair, all committee members, and the candidate) are obtained and the form is submitted to the faculty chair.

In order to have more time to develop a literature review, put together a proposal and submit an Institutional Review Board on Human Subjects application, students are strongly encouraged to sign up for SOC 495 INDEPENDENT STUDY for three credit hours. Students wanting to enroll in SOC 495 must discuss this option first with their faculty chair/faculty advisor and get their permission.

Students should be aware that faculty members are not always available to oversee projects or sign registration forms during university breaks (including the summer) and holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.). Students should communicate with their committee chair concerning the times in which the faculty member is available.

STEP 6: ***Submit the final version of your thesis, project or paper to your committee one and a half months before university graduation deadlines.***

* For Fall Graduation: November 1
* For Spring Graduation: April 1
* For Summer Graduation: August 1

Students should not expect their thesis, project or papers to be read or graded when the university is not in session (i.e., Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, or Spring Break, or Summer Session). Students are responsible for considering these blackout dates when planning a timeline for completion of SOC 490/491/492, the degree, and for graduation submission deadlines. Students should communicate with their committee chair concerning the times in which the faculty member is available.

STEP 7: ***Defend your thesis, project or paper 1 month before graduation deadlines.***

For the Thesis and Experiential Learning Project: Once the final draft of the candidate's work has been provisionally accepted by the faculty chair and the other members of the candidates' committee, the candidate will then schedule her/his oral defense of their work. This oral defense is an opportunity for the candidate to present her/his work to the members of the sociology faculty and other invited guests. The candidate will also answer questions from her/his committee members and others in attendance. Oral defenses usually take one hour to complete the entire process.

After the question/answer session, the chair and the reader will evaluate the candidate's work and oral defense and then render a grade of Pass or Fail. A grade of Pass carries with it 6 credit hours for the Thesis and Experiential Learning Project while a grade of Fail carries 0 credit hours. A final grade of Pass will not be submitted until the candidate has successfully completed their oral defense and has responded in writing to any final recommendations made by the faculty chair in consultation with the members of the candidates' committee and any full-time member of the sociology faculty present at the oral defense. Please note that the oral defense and any revisions requested following it must be accomplished in a timely fashion that meets the university deadlines for graduation (see timeline below). Please keep in mind that failure to meet ALL deadlines will delay the candidate's graduation for at least one semester.

A hard copy of the final paper must be submitted to the faculty chair no later than the last day of classes in order for the candidate to receive a grade for that semester. Once approved by the chair and the second reader students need to work to follow the transmittal process required by the Graduate College. This process is outlined at http://legacy.roosevelt.edu/gradstudents/documents/Guidelines_002.doc.

For the Research and Writing Option: Students opting for the Research and Writing paper do not have to participate in an oral defense. Rather, students must submit a final paper to her/his faculty chair at the need of the semester. The faculty chair reads over the paper and issues a grade for the paper. If the grade is a passing grade, the student will receive 3 credit hours for the Research & Writing Option.