

# Sociology Masters Thesis Expectations & Proposal Outline

## EXPECTATIONS

The purpose of this document is to inform students of the department's expectations regarding the process of writing a thesis. This document will help ensure the successful completion of the thesis. Students who write a thesis are expected to:

- Write a thesis that does not exceed the maximum page requirement. The maximum page limit for a quantitative thesis is 75 pages and the maximum page limit for a qualitative thesis is 100 pages. Page limits include references, endnotes, and appendixes. Please note the chair of the committee may prefer a lower maximum page limit, which will depend on your professional and academic goals. It is in your best interest to discuss the page limit with your chair.
- Meet with each committee member before writing proposal.
- Write a proposal that is a maximum of 11 pages and includes content outlined in the next section of this document.
- Recognize that writing a thesis typically takes nine months, but may be longer, sometimes significantly longer.
- Understand the thesis writing process may include a series of exchanges with the thesis chair and committee members, of either the entire thesis or individual chapters, requiring minor/major editing and substantive changes. Student can minimally expect three exchanges with the thesis chair but may include more.
- Realize that faculty are contracted to work nine months of the year and during summer months faculty sometimes are unavailable, which may result in delayed responses to email or scheduling a defense. As a result, students may experience delays with the editing and review process, and scheduling defense dates during the summer months.
- Read the timeline and create your own timeline as part of your thesis proposal. Students should recognize that if proposed dates are not met, students cannot reasonably expect to defend on time. In addition, if proposed dates are not met students are expected to email a new timeline to the thesis committee and the sociology program assistant.
- Review the Master's Thesis Manual to format the thesis proposal and thesis using the formatting guidelines provided by the Graduate School.
- Provide thesis committee members an opportunity to review a full draft of the thesis twice before the defense. Once, six weeks before the defense and then again two weeks before the defense.

BY SIGNING BELOW, I UNDERSTAND THE EXPECTATIONS OUTLINED ABOVE ARE REQUIRED IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE WRITING OF THE THESIS.

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

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PRINT NAME

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## THESIS PROPOSAL OUTLINE

Page limit for proposal is 11 pages.

### INTRODUCTION (1 P)

- What is the specific scope of your research interest?
- Purpose of the study: Why this topic is relevant/important (how important to sociologists, to the broader community, issues of social justice, etc.)
- Research Question(s)
- Organization of the thesis proposal.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (1 ½ PP)

- Which sociological theories will you be using to frame your analysis?

### LITERATURE REVIEW (3 PP)

- The literature review should be a well-organized synthesis of the research most closely related to your work.
- This might likely include the dominant debates, theoretical approaches, methodological research designs that have been used to understand your topic
- Your literature review needs to make an argument
- You are trying to demonstrate two things:
  1. You are familiar with the research that has been done in this area and can explain to fellow sociologists who may or may not be familiar with this specific literature, what is out there
  2. What you have to add to the existing literature. You have found a gap or “lacunae” in the literature...something that has not been well researched (or has not been researched utilizing a certain theoretical perspective or methodological design)

### RESEARCH QUESTION (1/2 P)

- A concise formulation of your research question/s.
- Include one to three research questions.
- The research question(s) will guide your project because the purpose of primary research is to gather the data (information/evidence) needed to answer your research question(s).

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN (2 PP)

- What is your methodological approach?
- How will you get access?
- How many cases/interviews will you include?
- Describe how the cases will be selected (random, convenience, etc.)
- How will you record your observations?
- How will you code data?

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- Will you start the research with already established research categories (deductive approach) or will you look for the categories (to code) to emerge from the data (inductive approach/grounded theory)?
- Will your analysis of the coding be qualitative, quantitative or both?

### REFERENCES (1 PP)

- Bibliography -List only those authors included in your proposal.

### TIMELINE (1PP)

- You must attach the *Masters Thesis Timeline* (available on the sociology website) with specific dates filled in. Start with your desired graduation date and work down.