

Course Syllabus
ANTH 412: Senior Thesis
(Sociocultural anthropology)

Prerequisites: ANTH 411: Fieldwork

Objective

This class is an independent study course in which you write a 35-40 page senior thesis based on research done during the previous term in conjunction with ANTH 411: Fieldwork. Steps for writing your senior thesis are listed below, along with helpful Internet links that discuss the process of writing and structuring anthropological research papers. You should meet with your advisor regularly to discuss the writing process and to give him/her drafts for revision.

Timeline

By following this timeline, you will successfully complete your thesis by finals week:

Week 1-2: Read this syllabus carefully, along with all Internet links.

Begin reading over, typing in, organizing, tabulating, and thinking about your fieldnotes and/or archaeological data and/or library research.

Meet with your advisor to discuss how you will structure your thesis. Bring to this meeting an outline OR a list of potential sections OR a visual flow-chart OR a typed narrative description of how you envision structuring the thesis. The aim of this meeting is to discuss preliminary plans for writing up the thesis. Don't worry about neatness and precision at this point; simply aim to bring something – anything – that will communicate your ideas about how to organize your thesis.

You should begin the process of writing the thesis (see below, "Steps in Writing a Senior Thesis").

Week 6-7: Get a first draft of the thesis to your advisor.

Weeks 7-10: You must write several more drafts and receive substantive and editorial comments from your advisor on these drafts before the term is over. You may be asked to visit the Writing Center or to exchange papers with another senior anthropology student in order to get additional comments on

your writing. Feedback and revisions are an important part of the writing process and should be expected.

Week 10: Give a 15-minute formal presentation of research to anthropology faculty, students, and other interested people.

Final's week: Friday of Finals Week the completed, polished version is due.

Communitas

Starting Winter 2006, students working on their Senior Projects (ANTH 410, 411, and 412) and anthropology faculty will meet weekly to share and discuss their anthropological research in progress in an informal and supportive setting. Other anthropology students, particularly those enrolled in our Theory and Methodology Series ANTH 324, 325 and 326, are encouraged to participate. The goal of the weekly meetings is to support students in their senior projects and create communitas. (Communitas is Victor Turner's concept for the experience of intense feelings of social togetherness and belonging.) Check the anthropology web site for details.

Grading:

15% - *Interaction with advisor.* This includes:

- Efforts to seek out advice on written drafts in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Success in carrying out suggestions made by your advisor to revise writing errors and to enhance the scholarly content of your paper.
- Adherence to the timeline listed above.
- What is considered adequate interaction? This is generally determined by you, but keep in mind that professors assume that students who disappear and let the term go by without a visit or an email are blowing the quarter off. If you prefer to work independently until the first draft is done, then keep your advisor abreast of your progress by periodic emails. At the very least email your professor every two weeks to discuss what you are doing.

75% - *Quality of Senior Thesis.* This includes:

- Theoretical sophistication of the paper
- Quality and depth of the anthropological data
- Overall structure of the thesis
- Grammatical correctness and writing style

10% - *Formal Presentation to the Anthropology Department*

Steps in Writing a Senior Thesis (From the Oregon State University Student Guide to Writing a Term Paper)

Step One: Choose a Title

Don't rush this step if it does not come quickly. Just forge on ahead and you will eventually dream up a great creatively conveys the subject of your paper (subheadings throughout the paper also help improve its organization).

Step Two: Outline your paper

This step is optional. Outlining can help you to organize your thoughts and know where you are going with your paper. On the other hand, outlining may be tedious and may hinder you from thinking creatively and synthetically (putting it all together), so you may opt to dive into writing and begin without a strict plan. The decision not to do an outline does not ever excuse anyone from writing a well-organized and well-researched paper.

Step Three: Write a Rough Draft

You can begin by outlining. You can begin by writing an introduction. You can begin by starting in the middle (i.e. writing up some portion of the paper you're fairly confident about). But you do need to begin writing by week one!!

In the beginning, don't worry about sentence structure or spelling or even paragraphing unless such concerns propel your thought forward. Use the process of writing to help you think your paper through. Save all your notes and versions. Don't expect to produce perfect sentences. If you get stuck at this point, and you're unable to crank out even a couple of pages, talk to your advisor about it. The thesis should be 30-40 double-spaced pages (12-point font, 1-inch margins, numbered pages). Your thesis should be structured as follows:

Structure of the Senior Thesis:

Because this is your "baby," you get to choose how to organize your paper, what sections to include, and what arguments and points you will make. The only things you are absolutely obliged to include are:

- Introduction: The introduction should guide the reader by explaining what you are going to do (sometimes called a thesis statement). It should state your objective in writing the paper (why is this important), and it should explain how your paper will be organized.
- Methods: The methods section is where you describe how you obtained the information that you are discussing in this paper. Students will have written their methods section while enrolled in ANTH 411: Fieldwork.
- Body: The body of the paper is where you support, elaborate on, and evaluate information pertaining to your introductory observation, or point, or claim, or position, or thesis. This is where you weave together the anthropological research that you have amassed. You may divide the body into different section if you wish.
- Conclusion: The conclusion should be a thoughtful, insightful summary of the way in which the body of your paper illustrates your introduction. In addition, you should discuss any insights you've

- gained, meaningful conclusions you've reached, or the significance to you of your topic.
- o *References Cited:* Include at the end a "References Cited" bibliographic list of sources used to write the paper. To format this list, you must adhere to the American Anthropological Association Style Guide.

Step Four: Take a Break

Work on the rough draft as long as you're thinking clearly, then stop. Do something else: take a walk or lift weights or watch MTV. The idea is to set the draft aside so that you can return to it fresh. When you do return to it, you'll likely find that the problems don't seem as daunting as they appeared earlier.

Step Five: Revise/Add/Delete

Your rough draft is more or less complete. Now what? Now you need to switch roles and view your draft as your reader might. What explanations need fine-tuning? Are there holes in your paper – things you've thought of but have not yet written down? Remember, readers can skip some of what's there, but if something is missing, they'll be forced to guess (and will probably not guess correctly). This is also the time to make sure that your introduction in fact introduces the paper you've written. Many folks will actually wait until this point to write an intro. Remember that this part of the writing process is probably the most variable. Sometimes you'll find yourself with a very nearly complete and sensible rough draft. Other times, you may have to go back to the research stage, and then work forward again. This is also a good time to seek an independent reading of your paper from a Writing Center assistant. For thirty minutes or an hour, you and a writing assistant will discuss your draft, identifying its weaknesses and its strengths. Once your draft is pretty much as you want it to be, take another break (if time permits).

Step Six: Edit

This is actually a two-step process. Look first at your paper at the paragraph level. Do the paragraphs group information in ways that are helpful to readers? Are the transitions between paragraphs smooth and clear? Once you're satisfied on those counts, concentrate on individual sentences. One useful thing to do at this point is to read your paper out loud. Every time a sentence sounds somehow "off" to you, mark that sentence in the margin, and continue reading. Your ear will often tell you when a sentence should be reworded. Don't forget your bibliography. Are your citations complete? Properly formatted? Once you've read the entire paper through, go back and rework the sentences you've marked. It is your job to edit your papers carefully. Do not give your advisor drafts that have not already been carefully edited by you and spell-checked by your computer. Your advisor's job is to help you perfect a well-worked draft, not to edit careless writing or teach you grammatical rules that you already know!

Step Seven: Finish

Retype the final copy. Make sure your name and the page number are on each page you turn in. Reward yourself; feel good about what you've written!

In addition

When submitting the final version of your paper, you must submit the title and an abstract of your paper by email to the department chair. To look at examples of abstracts in anthropology, go to the library reference section of the first floor and browse through *American Anthropologist* and *American Ethnologist* journals. Or read through anthropology abstracts on the search engine Academic Search Premiere. We expect you to write your abstract in the same precise manner that these published abstracts are written, so please use *American Anthropologist* or *American Ethnologist* abstracts as your models. Your title and abstract will be published on our department web page along with any pictures that you care to share with us.

And do not forget the photo

Please give us a photo of you conducting fieldwork! You may borrow one of the university's digital cameras. Instructional Media Services has digital cameras specifically designated to be lent out to WOU students.

Final Notes

Any anthropology student who earns A's in ANTH 410, ANTH 411, and 412 will be eligible to be honored as Outstanding Anthropology Student in late May of their senior year on Student Recognition Night

Anthropology majors who complete a senior thesis of outstanding quality will be encouraged to submit their paper to Focus – An Online Publication of Undergraduate Articles and Photography in Anthropology – and present their thesis at the Northwest Anthropological Conference.

Resources

[Purdue University Online Writing Lab](#)

[OSU Department of Anthropology: Tips on Writing an Introduction](#)

[OSU Department of Anthropology: How to Avoid Plagiarism](#)

[Other resources at OSU Department of Anthropology](#)