



Proposal to Broaden the MA Sociology Program to Include a Course Only Option
November, 2016

RECOMMENDATION

Sociology currently offers a 36 credit hour MA Degree with the option to complete either a Thesis or Internship as follows:

- 30 Credits of Course Work + 6 Credits Thesis
- 33 Credits of Course Work + 3 Credit Internship

We propose to expand our curriculum to include a third “course only” option path to completing the MA degree as follows.

- 36 Credits of Course work
- Students who elect not to write a thesis or complete an internship will be required to take additional Sociology Graduate course work to meet the 36 credit degree requirement. All other degree requirements remain the same.

RATIONALE

Providing a course only option to the degree will add a much needed measure of flexibility to our program that will enable us to better serve a broader range of our constituencies, including in particular our many non-traditional students whose career goals are not centered on university life and academic pursuits.

1. Many of our students seek terminal MA degrees and desire to use what they learn in our program in order to achieve specific professional goals, seek teaching positions, or pursue other career opportunities that are less associated with a research agenda. A course only option will better serve a greater number of our students by giving them a choice more closely aligned with their goals for graduate study. Other students, for example those who hope to go on for a Ph. D. and have plans for a true academic career, will still have the thesis option available to them.
2. About half of our graduate students and prospective graduate students are “non-traditional” part-time students who work full time and often have families. Because they work full time, they are unable to complete an internship. At the same time, the competing demands of home/work life, extended time it takes for them to complete coursework, also makes completing a thesis challenging. Currently, some of our top non-traditional students do not finish the thesis, and under our current requirements, they have no other path to graduation. In our proposed course only option they could take courses at the rate of one per semester and still complete the MA within the current five-year limit, an achievement that is far less likely for them when a thesis is involved and impossible with the internship when they work fulltime. We will improve our graduation rate by making a non-thesis option available to our students.

3. A course only option will also bring our program in line with several other MA programs in the School of Liberal Arts as well as several Sociology MA programs across the country that offer their students a similar choice.
4. Another fact that has emerged is that many of our graduate students pursue this degree not to learn to do research in sociology but to enhance their existing careers or to teach sociology. Not only does concurrent full-time employment affect their ability to successfully complete a thesis/internship, but most of these students would benefit far more from broader course experience than from a focused research project. In particular, they would come away with a broader knowledge of their discipline. It would also allow for creativity in coursework for students interested in teaching careers. For example, students could elect to craft teaching related internships for credit.
5. Another consideration, students who elect to complete the course only option would have to take an additional Sociology graduate level course which would help with our Sociology course enrollments.

OPTIONS COMPARED

Option 1: Courses + Thesis	Option 2: Courses + Internship	Proposed Option 3: Course Only Option
Required Core Methods & Theory Courses 12 Credits	Required Core Methods & Theory Courses 12 Credits	Required Core Methods & Theory Courses 12 Credits
Elective Courses 18 Credits*	Elective Courses* 18-21 Credits	Elective Courses* 24 Credits
Thesis 6 Credits	Internship 3-6 Credits	Nothing Else Required.

* Up to 6 credits can be Non-sociology courses 500 level or above

CONCLUSION

Broadening our MA program to include a third Course Only Option will enable us to meet the needs of a broader range of students who look to IUPUI as a place where they can achieve their diverse academic, professional, and personal goals. The proposal has the overwhelming support of the faculty of the Sociology Department.