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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

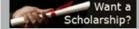Want a Scholarship?

Senior Project Guide

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Introduction

The Senior Project (ANTH-A 412) is an intensive individual project that focuses on the application of an anthropological perspective to a topic of interest to the student. For some students this might be applied research working with a community organization; others may choose to do a methodologically driven analysis of osteological material, ethnographic data, or archaeological artifacts; and others may be best served by an intensive research paper. Like most "capstone" courses in other majors, the Senior Project is designed to demonstrate a student's ability to use the anthropological concepts, methods, and research skills they have learned throughout their undergraduate education.

Beyond demonstrating an anthropological pedigree, the Senior Project can serve a range of different purposes that the student will develop with the counsel of a Faculty Supervisor and the Senior Seminar instructors. For instance, some students conduct research projects that will provide them preparation for graduate school or even initial graduate research. Others conduct their projects in community settings where they can apply and develop their skills prior to working in such community settings. Some students need an intensive research experience that focuses on an area of interest and develops specific research skills.

The most productive projects are well-defined, clearly structured, coordinated with a Faculty Supervisor's direction, and focused on a topic in which a student is interested. Taking time to develop a good project with clear methods and goals on a subject that interests the student will ensure the completion of the project and make the experience much more rewarding and enjoyable. The most pleasant Senior Project experiences often are planned over long periods of time as much as a year in advance, so it is advisable to try and think ahead prior to Senior Seminar.

How do I decide what kind of project would be best for me?

There are three options for approaching the Senior Project. These options are neither mutually exclusive nor absolute, but instead are intended to provide ideas for you to think about as you approach and plan your Senior Project. You may choose one of the three options for project design according to where your goals and interests may lie.   All of the options will involve the same commitment of time (150 hours), but each of them applies anthropological training and interests in quite different ways.   You should think about and discuss your interests during the Senior Seminar in the fall and with a faculty member who can serve as your project supervisor as you complete this work during the spring semester.

Option #1 - Intensive Anthropology Research Paper

Project: For this option, you will write a 20-30 page research paper on a subject of major interest to you. The project *must* address a central research question and show that you have a fundamental knowledge of how an anthropological perspective can be applied to your topic. You will identify a topic during the senior seminar in the fall, prepare your proposal, conduct a substantial literature search, and complete the paper during the Spring semester.

Option #2 - Applied/Service Learning Anthropology Project

Project: For this option you will carry out an applied/service learning project in anthropology. This project may include processing and/or analysis of artifacts, participation in or contribution to a community-based organization or agency, or be structured as a formal internship. The outcome of your project must generate a product that highlights your research skills and that also serves the interest of the group you are working with (e.g. - database, community program, museum exhibit, report to be used by a community organization, etc.). This option really highlights the role of applied anthropology as a collaborative endeavor that is undertaken in concert with an organization or agency located in a community outside the university setting. If you choose this option, you will identify your topic in the senior seminar (from any of the sub-disciplines in Anthropology), prepare a proposal, conduct a substantial literature search, and complete the project and paper during the Spring semester. Remember that for this option, you must arrange the logistics of your project or internship with the external agency or organization in advance of beginning your work.

This option may also satisfy the MSTD-A 408 requirement for Anthropology majors also completing the Museum Studies undergraduate certificate, provided the project is related to museum professional practice. In these cases the proposal must also be approved by the Museum Studies Director (in addition to the Capstone Committee) prior to registration and copies of the final report must be submitted to both the Anthropology and Museum Studies offices at the end of the project.

 Option #3 - Senior Thesis in Anthropology

Project: This option involves writing a senior *thesis* using original data which either you or another member of the department has collected as a result of a previous field research project. While the thesis may not involve further fieldwork, it will necessitate working with and interpreting original artifacts and data and connecting that material to the secondary literature. As with the first two options, you will prepare your proposal during the Senior Seminar in the fall, and will complete the project in the spring.

All of the options above -or some variation of them-are appropriate as a capstone experience through which you highlight your command of anthropological concepts and methods. You should work closely with a Faculty Supervisor to help you develop your plans as you move ahead in this work.

What is the Senior Seminar (ANTH-A 413)?

In conjunction with a Faculty Supervisor and the Senior Seminar instructors, students develop a topic for this project in Fall semester in Senior Seminar (ANTH-A 413), a one-credit class devoted to producing and defending a proposal for the Senior Project. Students are required to complete this class before taking the Senior Project course. There may be some variation in specific requirements of the Senior Seminar class each year, so it is important to consult the instructor for specific assignments and grading criteria. The Seminar provides students time to develop a thorough proposal and then submit it to the Capstone Committee (November 15th). When a proposal is accepted the student may then take Senior Project (ANTH-A 412), in which they will conduct the project they planned in the Senior Seminar.

Who is the Capstone Committee?

The departmental "Capstone Committee" is a three-person faculty committee that approves proposals and reviews final projects. The Capstone Committee does not assign grades; it simply accepts or declines proposals as well as Senior

Projects. If the Capstone Committee requires revisions prior to accepting either the proposal or Senior Project, these are usually conducted with the direction of the student's Faculty Supervisor.

What is a Faculty Supervisor?

Every Senior Project has a Faculty Supervisor who oversees the project and assigns it a grade upon its completion and acceptance by the Senior Project Committee. Students can ask any full-time Anthropology faculty member to supervise their project in the Fall while they are taking Senior Seminar, and this person may or may not be their normal Faculty Advisor. In some cases, non-Anthropology faculty can supervise a project with the consent of the Senior Seminar instructors. Double majors may have an Anthropology Faculty Supervisor as well as one from their other department if they're conducting one capstone to satisfy requirements in both majors.

During the Senior Project the Faculty Supervisor will direct the project, not the Senior Seminar instructors, the Senior Project Committee, or a regular Faculty Advisor. Students should therefore report to their Faculty Supervisor on the Senior Project and not other Faculty members. Faculty Supervisors will be in close communication with the Senior Seminar faculty and the Capstone Committee, but the Faculty Supervisor assigns the final grade in the Senior Project, not the Senior Seminar instructors or the Senior Project Committee. Students must copy all emails regarding the Senior Project to the Faculty Supervisor and save those emails to be turned-in as part of the final Senior Project report.

How do I select a Faculty Supervisor?

During or before the Senior Seminar students should identify a faculty member who works on a subject close to their interests and initial project ideas and meet with them to discuss possible approaches or how it might be possible to integrate a students' central interests into a project. Students can also meet with the Senior Seminar instructors to get their advice on faculty members who would be good fits for their interests. A Faculty member is not compelled to agree to supervise a given project, so it is the student's responsibility to make a clear case for how their insights and experience will be useful in the project. Students will be required to identify a Faculty Supervisor in the Senior Project proposal and your supervisor must indicate his or her approval of the project. Students should not plan to change supervisors during a project.

What is an External Mentor?

Many projects conducted by IUPUI Anthropology majors focus on applied questions and community service, so many students have worked with community organizations including immigration agencies, museums, neighborhood associations, shelters, unions, and similar organizations. If a project will be conducted with such an agency, that agency should have an individual who agrees to assist and advise the student during the project. Some Senior Projects do not have an External Mentor, such as research papers or projects conducted with a Faculty Supervisor's own research data. The student has a responsibility to carry out the project agreed upon between themselves and the External Mentor. The External Mentor should receive key elements of the project, such as the proposal and the final product where appropriate. The External Mentor should receive some product to evaluate the student's work, which they can report in a letter to the Capstone Committee.

What is a Senior Project proposal?

A Senior Project proposal is a paper that clearly and succinctly outlines the methods, goals, products, and broader social and applied implications of a Senior Project. Most proposals are about 10 double-spaced pages in length (typically this page count does not include the Literature Cited). Students must provide a hard copy of the proposal as well as an electronic version to the Senior Seminar instructors. A Senior Project proposal must be well written, clear, and structured according to the following elements:

1. Title Page: Provide a clear and interesting title. Name(s) of Student, Faculty   Supervisor and External Mentor (if relevant).

2. Project Description/Introduction: Describe project plans in detail.

i. Identify and describe where the project will occur, including (if relevant) the name, activities, and mission of any non-university organization involved.

ii. Describe specific goals of the project (very clearly indicate the specific research questions to be addressed and the reasons for undertaking the project and/or discuss what concrete benefits the project will contribute to a particular

organization).

iii. Theoretical and/or applied significance of the project: articulate the importance of this project in broader contexts and its central questions in various theoretical or applied perspectives within anthropology.

3. Literature Review: Discuss the literature relevant to the topic and construct a background for scholarly literature and the relationship of this project

4. Methods: Detailed description of materials to be used and methods to be employed during the execution of the project.

i. Be very clear and detailed about EXACTLY what methods will be used and type of information or data that will be examined. For instance, it is not enough to indicate that you'll conduct oral interviews: say how many interviews, with what research subjects, how long the interviews will be conducted, the range of questions that will be asked, and so on. Be as clear as you can possibly be. There may well be some details that are difficult to predict, and there may even be some modest changes made during the project itself with the counsel of your Faculty Supervisor.

ii. Include a specific plan of action, with approximate dates by which various tasks will be completed, plus estimates of number of hours to be devoted to each. Be as specific as possible. The Capstone Committee will require clarity for project plans that are not clearly described or do not seem to require the amount of time you have allotted for each task.

iii. Special resources needed to carry out the project, if any, and how these will be provided. This may be something like access to the Physical Anthropology lab and agreement with the Lab Director to have sufficient space or it may be equipment such as digital tape recorders, transcription machines, and so on.

iv. Schedule of meetings with Faculty Supervisor and External Mentor. You must schedule regular meetings while the project is being conducted, which typically happens bi-weekly or every three weeks or so. You should document those meetings and include them in the final Senior Project report timeline.

v. Provide a brief discussion of possible human subjects issues connected to the project (if applicable), and, if necessary, documented approval of IUPUI Institutional Review Board (or application for approval). Do not delay requests for IRB approval for any project that will involve human subjects research within the parameters of IRB guidelines. Your Senior Seminar instructors and Faculty Supervisor will explain this in more detail, but in general any research that involves people and will be published or distributed in some public form will almost certainly require that you secure the approval of the IRB.

5. Results: List of learning objectives and professional competencies that are expected to result. Say what it is you hope the Senior Project will show about your research skills and interests. Description of specific products that will result (e.g., research paper, museum exhibit, etc.).

6. Literature Cited: A bibliography of relevant anthropological resources   is absolutely required.

7. Signatures: Student, Faculty Supervisor, and External Mentor (if relevant…and letter of support from External Mentor).

When is my Senior Project proposal due?

Unless special permission has been granted, Senior Project proposals are due during the Fall semester.

Students may not register for ANTH-A 412 until their proposals have been approved by the Capstone Committee.Proposals for Spring semester projects are due as specified on the ANTH 412 syllabus;

For Fall semester projects, proposals are due by July 15th or in accordance with the agreement you have reached with your Faculty Supervisor;Proposals for Summer projects are due April 15th.

Summer projects are typically difficult to coordinate with the Fall Senior Seminar schedule, so please work closely with your Faculty Supervisor to schedule summer Senior Projects..

How many hours is a Senior Project supposed to be?

A three-credit project should be approximately 150 hours (all three-credit classes are supposed to occupy 150 hours of student time, including time in class and studying for the course). Over the course of a 15-week semester, this is

approximately 10 hours a week. Projects should be completed by the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled in the Senior Project. If the projects are particularly extensive, they may be taken for more than 3 credit hours. They may also, by prior arrangement, extend beyond a single semester, particularly if done during Summer I or II.

Time spent on the project must be documented in a detailed timeline log that identifies each task. Students should be very clear about what was entailed in the task, and not include ambiguous entries that cover vast swaths of time: e.g., "Research, 45 hours" will require significant explanation. Indicate the day(s) on each task, detail exactly what was entailed in that task, and note the exact times for the tasks. This is very easy if a notebook log is kept from the very outset, but impossible if attempting to reconstruct from memory at semester's end. This is usually an Appendix to the final Senior Project report. Students must always save all documents in multiple formats and on more than one computer…students should be prepared for their computer to be stolen or crash; the CD, thumb drive, or other data storage device may fail; or hard copies of notes may get eaten by the dog. Backups and Xerox originals should always be made to protect work. Students will be responsible for completely reconstructing the project and renegotiating the project timeline if visited by such bad luck…it is advised to plan ahead.

How do I register for the Senior Project (ANTH-A 412)?

Students must first complete Senior Seminar (ANTH-A 413), after which they may register as for any class in the online registration system. During Senior Seminar students will identify a Faculty Supervisor who will oversee their Senior Project, and when registering for the class they should select the section with the supervisor's name.

Where have other students done their projects?

The Faculty Supervisor and/or Senior Seminar instructors have examples of completed proposals and projects available for examination upon request.

What needs to be in a portfolio?

Upon completion of the project, the student submits a final Project Portfolio by April 15th which should include the following elements:

1. *Title Page* with a brief abstract of the entire project,

2. Copy of the original *Project Proposal*,

3. *Project Paper* of at least 20 pages following a format similar to the Senior Project Proposal and must include a reflexive discussion of the experience (the project paper can vary a lot depending on the project but typically must involve some self-reflection on the project experience, methodology, utility of the project and so on, so please discuss the specifics of your reflexive section with your Faculty Supervisor),

4. *Literature Cited*

5. *Documentary Materials* illustrating the project including visuals, if possible;

6. *Daily Log* of activities kept by the student, which should include the date, length of time on activities and description of activities,

7. *Letter of Evaluation* of the project from External Mentor (if relevant).

We encourage submission of electronic versions of all Senior Project reports unless the nature of the project makes that difficult.

How is my Senior Project graded?

The Faculty Supervisor submits the grade based on their evaluation of the completion of the proposed project as documented in the project portfolio or research paper and the evaluation letter of an External Mentor. The Faculty Supervisor typically arrives at the grade in consultation with the Capstone Committee and the External Mentor's comments.

What are my responsibilities as a student?

Senior projects are an independent learning experience. The primary responsibility for initiating, developing, and carrying

out the project belongs to the student. The student is responsible for discussing possible projects with his/her departmental advisor, identifying and contacting the faculty member who will be the Faculty Supervisor, contacting organizations or individuals who will be involved in the project, writing the project proposal, communicating regularly with both the Faculty Supervisor and external mentor during the project, alerting them to any problems or substantive changes in the project, keeping a log of project activities, and preparing the final portfolio for assessment.

What if I want my senior project to also count for my Museum Internship requirement?

"Anthropology majors who are doing the Museum Studies undergraduate certificate and who wish to have their Senior Project (ANTH A412) count for their Museum Internship (MSTD A408) requirement should develop a project that meets the requirements of **both** the Anthropology department and the Museum Studies program, but should register for ANTH A412. Such projects typically take the form of a museum internship with a focus on anthropologically relevant materials, methods, or research, or a combination of the three. In addition to taking the Anthropology Senior Seminar (ANTH A413) and developing their senior project proposal in consultation with a member of the Anthropology faculty, students should also submit a copy of their proposal and a Museum Studies internship coversheet (available on the MSTD web site http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/mstd/index.php/resources/planning_an_internship) to the Museum Studies administrative assistant (museum@iupui.edu). If there are any questions about whether the project fulfills the Museum Studies internship requirements, the student should consult with the Program Director or a Museum Studies faculty member. At the conclusion of the project, the student should submit a copy of the final report to the Museum Studies administrative assistant, as well as to the Anthropology Capstone committee."