University of Utah * Department of Sociology
Thesis guidelines for Criminology and Sociology Majors

Requirements
1. You must have completed SOC 3111 or one of the approved research methods options for CRIM majors **and** SOC 3112 or one of the approved social statistics options for CRIM majors before signing up for thesis hours. The approved methods options are FCS 3200, POLS 3001, PSYCH 3010 or SOC 3111.
2. You must have received approval for your senior thesis project from a faculty member who will supervise and guide your research and writing before you can sign up for thesis hours. With input from your faculty mentor, we recommend that you write up a short thesis proposal (one page in length), which outlines the scope of your work before you enroll in thesis hours.
3. You must enroll in one or two semesters of thesis research credits. While one semester is required, two are recommended.

Timelines
Below we provide a sample timeline to get you started with planning for your thesis. While the timeline shows a student beginning the thesis in fall of their senior year, you can begin your senior thesis in spring, summer or fall semester.

For a senior thesis: this option is open to any student who is a SOC or CRIM major who wants to conduct a research project and write a thesis.

	Fall of the Junior Year	Spring of the Junior year	Fall of the Senior year	Spring of the Senior Year
Required		Identify faculty mentor, determine project, fill out the form	Enroll in SOC 3877 or CRIM 3877, depending on major Work on thesis, Meet with faculty mentor	
Recommended	Decide that you want to do a thesis!	Write short thesis proposal, Apply for UROP funding		Enroll in SOC 4877 or CRIM 4877 (recommended), Present research at the Undergraduate Research Symposium,

				Submit abstract to the [Undergraduate Research Journal](#), Apply for [Undergraduate Research Designation](#)

For an Honors Thesis:
This option is open to students who have been accepted into the Honors program and the thesis is a requirement for the Honors designation at graduation.
The timeline below is provided as a guideline:

	Spring of the Junior year	Fall of the Senior year	Spring of the Senior Year
Required	Identify faculty mentor, determine project, fill out the [form](#)	Enroll in SOC 4998 or CRIM 4999 (depending on major), Work on thesis, Meet with faculty mentor	Receive approval on your thesis from your faculty advisor, the departmental honors faculty advisor and dean of the Honors College
Recommended	write short thesis proposal, apply for UROP funding		Enroll in SOC 4999 or CRIM 4999 (recommended) Present research at the [Undergraduate Research Symposium](#) Submit abstract to the [Undergraduate Research Journal](#) Apply for [Undergraduate Research Designation](#)

While two semesters of research credits are not required, another benefit of doing your project over two semesters is that it allows you to apply for the Undergraduate Research Designation at graduation, which also requires that you present their research at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in Spring and submit an extended abstract to the Undergraduate Research journal. See: https://our.utah.edu/for-students/undergraduate-research-scholar-designation-ursd/

Models for Theses
There are typically two models for an undergraduate thesis—either 1) the students bring a project idea to a faculty mentor or 2) the student works with a

faculty mentor on their already established or newly started project. Both models have strengths and weakness and both are acceptable to meet the thesis requirements.

With the first, the student will be doing research on a topic that they are interested in and passionate about. This can motivate the student to complete their thesis. Students will gain valuable, hands-on experience with the research process—developing a research method appropriate to their question, potentially going through IRB, collecting data, and so on. On the other hand, this approach mean that it takes more time for the student to complete the thesis. And sometimes, it can be difficult to find the right advisor—someone who knows enough about your topic to be an effective mentor. Also, be warned—some faculty do not like to do this since they may not feel comfortable advising a student on a project that is not in their area of expertise or may not have the time to devote adequate mentoring energy to a project they are not already working on.

The second approach whereby the student joins a faculty member's research project offers many benefits for both the student and the faculty mentor. This approach allows a student to work on either an already established research project or work on a project from its beginning. The student will receive valuable research experience—working part of a larger project. The faculty member and student will decide which part of the project can serve as the student's thesis project. The student benefits from this approach as the mentor is fully invested in the project and working on it already. The student can also learn how faculty approach research and work through problems, which is valuate information if they plan to conduct independent research in the future, such as when they are a graduate student. The weakness of this approach is that the student may not be doing the exact project/topic they wanted to do. However, students who become good researchers are curious about a range of topics and will enjoy the process of discovery in a range of topics.

In addition to these two models, there are other ways that students decide on their thesis topic. Sometimes, the student and the faculty mentor work together to brainstorm an idea for a project that is a good fit for both of their interests. It is also the case that students' internships, practical experiences, and/or community engaged learning experiences can influence the director of their thesis. Students are encouraged to think about how they can use their prior experiences to inform their thesis

Thesis Expectations in terms of Independent Work

No matter which approach is used, the thesis expectations are the same in terms of the responsibilities of the student. The student and mentor should keep in mind that the student needs to conduct their project with some level of independence. That does not mean the mentor cannot supervise, guide, and help with this part of the project, but the student needs to do some of this independently and then receive feedback from the mentor.

When the project is a student-led project (1), this is fairly straightforward. Typically, after consultation with their faculty mentor about the appropriate methods, the students will conduct data analysis independently and then share it with the faculty mentor for suggestions, comments, corrections, edits, or revisions.

The mentor serves as a guide in this process. Thus, the data analysis is clearly independent.

However, this may be a little more complicated and require clear guidelines from the beginning when the data comes from the faculty member or their research team (2). In this case, the student and the faculty mentor will work together on the data analysis, but the student is required to do some analysis independently. Deciding in advance which part of the project is the student's responsibility should take place before data analysis begins. What typically works well is if the question the student is investigating is not necessarily the main research question of the overall project, but related to it. But, again, this needs to be negotiated between the student and the faculty mentor.

Under both approaches, if there is an expectation for publication, guidelines and expectations should be agreed upon from the beginning—co-authorship, authorship order, work expectations past the thesis, and so on. A mentor-mentee compact can be useful in guiding this conversation. This link provides an example of such an agreement:
https://d1uqjtzsuwlnsf.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/163/2016/11/UAB-Mentor-Contract.pdf

The thesis that is turned in needs to have been written by the student. The mentor should review the document and provide feedback, but they should not write it. If there are aspects of the thesis that are collaborative, the student should include a statement at the beginning of the document that explains which parts of the project are collaborative and in what ways they are collaborative.

Double Counting the Thesis in 2 Majors

Many students have multiple majors, and we support students who desire to have their thesis "count" for two majors, assuming the topic connects to both majors. Other majors may have more stringent or more lenient expectations regarding thesis rigor and length that the student may need to meet as well. Theses in Sociology and Criminology have to fulfill the guidelines described in this document, regardless of the other major's requirement. The specific details of how the process will work will be different each time, depending on the students' majors and mentor(s). The student who wishes to use the same thesis for two majors will need to be proactive in working with the advisors and mentor to make it happen.

We are supportive of students doing this in Sociology and Criminology. In this case, students should expect a "dual purpose" thesis to have a significantly longer background/literature review section to situate the project in the literature of both majors. Additionally, the summary and discussion can also be expected to be longer to allow space to describe the thesis' relevance to both fields. As a guideline, students can expect a "dual purpose" thesis to be about 1.5 times the length of a "single major" thesis. We recommend that the student register for the thesis course in both SOC and CRIM.

Suggestions for Thesis Components:

Theses can take several forms. They can involve the analysis of qualitative or quantitative data. They can be theoretical or analyses of the literature. They can also be creative projects that do not follow a traditional research paper model. We encourage you to speak to your faculty mentor about how long you can expect your

project to take, based on the type of project that you are doing. Below are some suggested structures for thesis of the three different types. These are just suggestions. The exact sections of your thesis will be outlined with the guidance of your faculty mentor.

1. <u>Data-Driven Theses</u>
   Potential Sections:
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature review/Background
    - This is where you review and cite relevant scholarly literature.
    - You can use that literature to show a knowledge gap that your project fills
    - The section can end with your research questions/objectives/aims.
    - Your citations should conform to ASA standards (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/formatting_in_sociology_asa_style/references_page_formatting.html) or some other standard approved by your mentor
- Data and Methods
    - This includes a clear description of data and the methods that are used to collect/create and analyze your data.
    - This section should also include citations.
- Results
    - This is where you report what you found with regard to your research questions or hypotheses/objectives/aims
- Discussion
    - This is where you summarize your findings and relate them back to the published literature that you cited in the literature review
    - This section also includes limitations, which are weaknesses of your study, and future directions for research building off your project
- Conclusion
    - This is where you provide future research directions, practical implications or policy recommendations based on the project

Notes: It is a good idea to use a published article focused on a similar topic as a model for the structure of your paper. In terms of length, the thesis could be approximately 25-30 pages (double spaced) including tables and references, but, ultimately, the length is up to your mentor. Consult with your mentor about IRB/Human Subjects requirements before starting the project. All IRB requirements need to be followed, including, but not limited to securing IRB approval whenever necessary BEFORE data are analyzed.

2. <u>Theoretical or Analyses of the Literature Theses</u>
   Potential Sections:
- Abstract
- Introduction and Justification
    - Describe the topic of the project
    - Present the rationale for the project

- Theory and Concepts
  - Present the major theoretical ideas that the project will draw upon
  - Make sure you cite relevant scholarly literature. Your citations should conform to ASA standards (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/for matting_in_sociology_asa_style/references_page_formatting.html) or some other standard approved by your mentor
- Analysis
  - As applicable, relate the theoretical concepts to the topic; synthesize theoretical ideas; or evaluate theoretical ideas. Your mentor can help you determine the best way to structure your analysis section.
  - It is optional to describe how the theory might be used empirically, even if that is not part of the project design
- Discussion
  - Relate the project back to the literature
- Conclusion
  - This is where you provide future research directions, practical implications or policy recommendations based on the project

Notes: A theoretical/analytical thesis aims to master relevant knowledge in an area of inquiry, while making a fresh contribution to scholarship. This requires a considerable amount of reading in the field as well as synthesis and critique of existing research and theory. The format a theoretical/analytical paper (decided upon by the student and mentor) will vary based on the nature of the work. It is a good idea to use a published article focused on a similar topic as a model for the structure of your paper. In terms of length, the thesis could be approximately 25-30 pages (double spaced) including references, but ultimately the length is up to your mentor.

3. Creative projects
Sociology majors who decide to complete a thesis with a creative component may have as the basis of their thesis a creative medium such as drama, art, music, or the spoken word. Although such a project can form the basis of a thesis, it is not a thesis in and of itself. To receive credit as a thesis, a creative work must be accompanied by a written analysis, which discusses the creative process and product through a sociological lens. In this regard, the students should incorporate sociological concepts into their written thesis. In addition, students should include a self-critique of their creative project in the written document, addressing such questions as why the student took the approach he or she did, why he or she selected the particular work or works to be performed, what he or she would do differently (or the same) next time. Final submission of a creative thesis must include the written component as well as the creative product, which could be a portfolio of artwork, a CD, a link to the project on-line, or a written document (e.g., collection of poetry). We do not provide more specific guidance on this type of project here, because the options are so varied; work with your faculty mentor to determine the proper outline/structure for your project before you begin!

Notes: In terms of length, the thesis could be approximately 20 pages (double spaced), but ultimately the length is up to your mentor and the parameters of your creative project. It is essential that you determine the expectations in terms of your written work with your mentor before beginning the project.