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HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

These are some informal, but useful guidelines for students who wish to write their honors thesis under my direction.

The First Paragraph: summary of what you are going to do (and what you will explain in some further detail in the remainder of the proposal). So briefly state the following:

- the topic you will study
- the perspective from which you will study the topic
- the method with which you will conduct the study

The Body of the Proposal: divided into three sections (subheadings are optional)

Topic:

Clarify the relevance of the topic for society and/or sociology.
Discuss your personal interest in the topic, how you got to this.

Perspective:

What is the perspective or framework of your study?

Here you talk generally about the approach you will use (basically always sociology), but also specify a specialty (e.g. sociology of law).

What are some of the works and/or authors will you rely on?

Introduce the theory that you will use or the questions you wish to answer?

The theory and/or questions can still be relatively general at the point of the proposal writing, or you can already be more specific, but never say anything that you do not mean. Specify a theory only if you have one.

Otherwise, state some of the questions that you are interested in and mention that you will look for the appropriate theory.

Methodology:

Research Domain: to narrow the topic.

Be more specific about your study (e.g., a study of law by means of a study of abortion legislation in South Carolina since 1992).

Research instrument: the method that you will use to collect data.

How will you observe people or events? (e.g., survey research, secondary sources, analysis of documents, etc.).

Concluding Paragraph:

State your anticipated results or what you hope to learn with the study.

Hypothesize about what you are anticipating to find in this study.

Make a personal statement of some sort, if appropriate.

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Some General Notes about Proposals

Inform the reader what you will do and how you plan to do it, and make the case that it is useful to do this and that you know how to do it. Pretend that you are asking for grant funding to conduct your study and that the reader has limited funds available and will have to decline some proposals. So very clearly clarify how you plan to do the study and make sure everything is clear to the reader. Be well structured and proofread your work. The proposal should be about 3 to 4 pages. Write in the first person.

The Thesis

The Honors Thesis should address a clear question and provide a useful set of empirical data with which to answer the question. Be sure that your work is very well structured, and that you follow all due criteria of style and form appropriate for academic writing. Use the style guide of the ASA for your References, see link:

<http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/asaguidelinesnew.pdf>

It is very important that you are in touch with me as Thesis Director about progress of your work. Unlike your usual work for exams or assignments in regular courses, you *must* discuss your work with the Director at all stages of your activities, from proposal through the research to the final thesis. You should therefore also wait for approval of a complete draft of your thesis before you can plan an oral defense.

Please note that these are my informal guidelines and that additional requirements from the Honors College may apply.

Good luck!

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