

Sociology: Guidelines for Senior Projects: SOC 461 and 462**Senior Project Standards**

The senior project is required for all Cal Poly undergraduates to receive a bachelor degree. The senior project is a capstone experience that integrates theory with application specific to the field of study, the hallmark of Cal Poly's Learn by Doing pedagogy. Sociology senior projects can be a 15 to 25 page research paper that illustrates a student's ability to collect, analyze, and disseminate material in a well-written and organized document on a discipline-specific topic. Other types of senior projects are acceptable with advisor approval. Faculty advisors have different senior project requirements, so it is important that students consult closely with their advisor.

Types of Senior Projects

Listed below are various types of projects that have been previously approved by faculty advisors. The department welcomes innovative senior projects. Students can consult with their senior project advisor to choose the format and type of project that best fits their needs, interests and passions.

Research Papers

Research paper based on library references / sources

Research paper based on field work experience / field work project results

Research paper based on research conducted during an internship

Research paper about stand-alone research following an internship experience

Research paper about volunteer abroad experiences

Research paper based on stand-alone research following your volunteer abroad experience. This could include research on the country, region, organization, issue, the work completed, and a critique of the experience.

Creative Projects

Creating a website for a non-profit

Creating an informational film or video

Developing an internet website or other resource

Developing and presenting educational pedagogy

Service Projects

Community organizing or awareness raising activity

Creating and conducting diversity awareness training sessions

Organizing the department's Career Fair

Organizing a fundraiser

Writing a grant proposal

Writing a Business, Non-profit, or NGO Startup Plan or Assessment

Writing a Technical Manual

Students can use this link to view senior projects completed by past Sociology students.

<http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/socssp/>

General Information

APA Style

Consult with your advisor about their requirements for formatting and style. American Psychological Association (APA) style is commonly used in the Social Sciences. Thus, APA style is suggested for formatting section headings and citations throughout the senior project. Citation software, such as Endnote is available in the library and online to help with formatting the entire senior project including the headings layout, in-text citations and Works Cited page. Useful online resources for citations and APA style are:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/>

<https://lib.calpoly.edu/help-and-support/citations/>

Grades

Students will be assigned a letter grade each quarter. Each senior project advisor has different grading criteria. Thus, it is important that you discuss your advisor's specific grading criteria with them. It is important to clearly understand how your advisor will determine your grade for both SOC 461 and SOC 462. This discussion usually occurs at the beginning of each quarter. General grading criteria that advisors may follow include:

The overall quality of student's research and writing.

The amount of effort the student put into the project.

The student's ability to clearly present their research findings.

The student's ability to evaluate their senior project process, importance of their findings and their overall experience.

The student's ability to complete the project in a timely manner.

The student's ability to incorporate suggestions, advice or recommendations from their advisor.

A senior project can fail to work out as planned and still receive a good grade. Sometimes institutional obstacles delay the process -- such as difficulty obtaining Human Subjects Review (HSR) approval or problems obtaining permission from an agency to survey their clients. Sometimes unforeseen circumstances occur, such as low turnout for a fundraiser. Often projects can be too large or ambitious to accomplish during two quarters. After starting a creative project, the student may realize that the actual work will be harder or take longer than expected. In these situations, students can write up their senior project detailing the process they went through, lessons learned, reasons why the project did not go as planned and suggestions for future successful approaches to the problem.

Incomplete (I) grades. According to Cal Poly policies an authorized grade of Incomplete is defined as follows:

An Incomplete signifies that a portion of required coursework has not been completed and evaluated in the prescribed time period due to unforeseen but fully justified reasons and that there is still a possibility of earning credit. It is the student's responsibility to bring pertinent information to the instructor who determines the means by which the remaining course requirements are satisfied. A final grade is assigned when the work agreed upon has been completed and evaluated. The student is not permitted to re-enroll in the course to complete course requirements. If the student does re-enroll, the original grade of I is counted as an F (or NC) and the re-enrollment is processed as a repeated course.

Based on this policy, the student and senior project advisor should have a serious discussion if it appears that the student may receive a grade of Incomplete (I) for either SOC 461 or SOC 462. Sometimes it is better for the student to receive a lower letter grade instead of an Incomplete. An Incomplete grade can affect the student's financial aid and GPA. More information can be found at the following link:

<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/academicstandardsandpolicies/grading/>

Length

If the senior project is a standard research paper, the main text is usually between 15 and 25 pages. The page count does not include the Title page, Table of Contents, Research Proposal, Annotated Bibliography, Outline or Works Cited. If Appendices are included, these pages do not count. If your senior project is a different type of project, such as a video, discuss with your advisor how you will document or present the project.

Research with Human Subjects

Consult with your advisor about whether a Human Subjects Review (HSR) application and review is needed for your project. The Cal Poly Human Subjects Review Committee must approve senior projects involving people before the project begins. If your senior project will involve collecting identifiable information from people, you need to start planning at least one quarter in advance, to allow time for required HSR review and approval. Identifiable information includes interviews, questionnaires, films and videos of people. Interviews or videos of people obtained during a class project can not be used for a later senior project -- because these class projects are usually not approved by HSR. A useful decision tree can be found at:

<https://content-calpoly-edu.s3.amazonaws.com/research/1/documents/Research%20Decision%20Chart%20Nov18rev.pdf>

If the project involves identifiable information, the student must submit an application for Human Subjects approval according to Cal Poly HSR guidelines. The student is responsible for gathering the information needed, writing the request, obtaining a signature from the advisor and submitting the HSR application to the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Information about how to start Cal Poly's HSR process can be found at:

<https://research.calpoly.edu/HS-start-here>

Why is it so important to protect human subjects? Review these resources for more information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ3l1jgmYrY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6AKIihoFn4>

Time Frame for the Senior Project

The senior project requirement in Social Sciences consists of two classes (SOC 461 and SOC 462). Each class is 2 units. These classes are usually taken during two consecutive quarters (Fall / Winter or Winter / Spring).

Steps in the Process

Listed below are the usual steps to complete the senior project:

Step 1 – Planning the Senior Project

In order to enroll in SOC 461 (first half of senior project) students must select an advisor. The advisor and student will discuss and agree on a senior project topic. The advisor will give the student a permission number to enroll in 461.

Topic. Select a topic that interests you. You can select a topic related to a future career. You can also select a population, such as older adults or youth in juvenile detention and then use Internet research to find topics related to that population.

Some key questions to ask are:

What is a question or problem that I find engaging or interesting?

What do I think is the answer to this question or the solution to this problem?

What do sociological theory and/or the research literature say about this subject?

What strategies would I like to use to address this question or problem?

Choosing an advisor. The senior project advisor is generally a tenure-track or tenured professor within your major. Explore which professors have interests and expertise in your chosen topic. It is ok to meet with several professors and brainstorm ideas for senior projects, then pick the person you feel most comfortable with for your advisor.

Faculty availability. Most professors only advise 6 to 12 students each year. It is advisable to find an advisor during Junior year or at least one quarter before you plan to start your senior project.

Format. The student and advisor should discuss the topic and agree on the format of the senior project. If the project involves interviews or videos with people, before starting the project, you must complete the requirements for the HSR review and approval as described above.

Step 2 – Register for the Senior Project

Senior project permission numbers. SOC 461 and SOC 462 each require a separate permission number. Before your advisor gives you a permission number, you and your advisor should:

1. Discuss your topic and your ideas about exploring the topic.
2. Determine what type of project you want to create.
3. Understand your advisor's unique grading criteria and requirements.
4. Set mutually agreed upon due dates for the various parts of the project.

Register for the class. Use the permission number to register for SOC 461 the first quarter of your senior project. Repeat this process to register for SOC 462 the second quarter of your senior project.

Step 3 – Complete SOC 461

No scheduled class meetings. SOC 461 and SOC 462 are not standard classes that meet at regularly scheduled times. Instead, you and your advisor will plan meetings during the quarter. For most students it is important to schedule regular meetings with your advisor to keep the senior project moving along.

Tips. Because there are no scheduled class meetings, sometimes students focus on regular classes and postpone working on senior project. Therefore, some students find it helpful to schedule specific times to work on for their senior project. One idea is to schedule at least 6 hours a week to work on senior project. (6 hours represents the average hours per week for a regular class: 4 hours in the classroom plus 2 hours of study time)

Many students report spending too much time organizing materials and getting set up to write, then not having time to actually write. Therefore, a good idea is to create a workspace where your senior project materials can be out and ready to work on. If space is tight, you could keep your senior project materials together in a bag that you take to a workspace.

Assignments for SOC 461. During the first quarter, you might complete the parts of the senior project listed below. Or, if your project is not taking the form of a formal research paper, work with your advisor to choose other useful submissions that will keep you on track to submit a successful project at the end of second quarter. The advisor and the student may choose to follow the standard deadlines listed at the end of this guide or may agree on different guidelines together.

Research Proposal

Annotated Bibliography

Outline

Introduction

As each part of the senior project is finished, add that part to the your working draft. Students are strongly advised to back up their daily writing and longer drafts of the project parts. You can send each draft to the cloud, email drafts to yourself, save drafts on a flash drive or use another secure storage system. Do not have all your work on just one computer!

Formats. The Annotated Bibliography should follow the format in the Writing section of this document or your advisor's preferred format. The Outline should follow your advisor's preferred format. All other parts of the paper should be double-spaced, use a 12 point standard font and have one inch margins.

Tip. Create file names for all of your writing by using the date and a name for each day's writing. For example, if you were writing the Research Proposal over two days, you would save the first day of writing and name the file:

10-30-2023ResearchProposal

Then name the next day's file: 10-31-2023ResearchProposal This system makes finding the most recent draft easy.

Step 4 – Register for SOC 462

As students enroll in classes for the subsequent quarter, they must contact their senior project advisor to request a permission number for SOC 462. This is the quarter during which students will complete the senior project. At the beginning of this quarter, students and faculty advisors will usually meet to:

1. Review the progress on the senior project.
2. Understand your advisor's unique grading criteria and requirements.
3. Agree on any changes to the standard senior project format.
4. Set mutually agreed upon due dates for the various remaining parts of the project.

Register for SOC 462 at the beginning of the quarter or as you enroll in your other courses.

Step 5 – Complete SOC 462.

New assignments for SOC 462. If your senior project is a creative project or an event, talk to your advisor about the structure and presentation style for your senior project. If your project is a research paper, it will usually include the parts listed below. As each of the parts is finished, add it to the working rough draft of the senior project. It is a good idea to frequently save all your writing and drafts in at least two places.

The Rough Draft should include:

1. The parts of the senior project previously completed in SOC 461, which may include:

Title Page

Table of Contents

Research Proposal (Optional – check with your advisor)

Annotated Bibliography (Optional – check with your advisor)

Outline (Optional – check with your advisor)

Introduction

2. The parts of the senior project as they are completed in SOC 462, which may include:

Literature Review

Methodology

Results

Discussion / Conclusions

3. Works Cited (not annotated)

4. Appendices – several if needed

Remember, if your senior project is taking a creative format, you and your advisor may agree upon a different set of components that will comprise your project.

Rough Draft. Submit your Rough Draft to your advisor for feedback. Be sure that your Rough Draft has been proof read, is edited and contains all the parts of the project that you and your advisor have agreed upon.

Final Copy. After the Rough Draft is edited and approved by your advisor, make any needed revisions to create a Final Copy.

Step 6 – Turn in the Senior Project

Submit all of the parts of the project as a perfect Final Copy. The Rough Draft of the senior project is first submitted to the advisor for approval. The advisor will return the Rough Draft with comments or edits. The student revises the Rough Draft and creates a Final Copy. Then the student sends the Final Copy to the advisor for a final approval. The student is responsible for double-checking the Final Copy for any errors before emailing the completed senior project to the Social Sciences Department.

Ask your advisor which documents created during the senior project process should be included in the Final Copy. Some advisors do not require the Research Proposal, Annotated Bibliography and Outline to be included. The Rough Draft is not submitted because it is edited and changed to produce the Final Copy.

Submit the senior project to the Social Sciences Department. After the advisor approves the Final Copy, the student submits this copy to the department.

Create a pdf file of your Final Copy. Email the pdf file to the department at: socialsciences@calpoly.edu

Copy your senior project advisor on this email. If you do not email your Final Copy to the department you may receive an Incomplete grade.

Step 7 -- Optional publishing and indexing with Digital Commons

Students may choose to place their senior project in the campus library for a small additional fee. If you would like to have your senior project indexed in the Digital Commons, upload your senior project to the Digital Commons at the Kennedy Library and pay a library fee. For help formatting and uploading your senior project to Digital Commons go to:

<https://guides.lib.calpoly.edu/digitalcommons/seniorprojects/uploadinst>

A list of previously completed projects can be found at:

<https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/socssp/>

Step 8 – Celebrate!!

Congratulate yourself on a job well done!!

Writing and Formatting Instructions for the Final Senior Project Paper

The final senior project usually includes the following items. Items should be placed in this order:

Title Page

Table of Contents

Research Proposal (Optional – check with your advisor)

Annotated Bibliography (Optional – check with your advisor)

Outline (Optional – check with your advisor)

Text Sections / Main body of the paper

Introduction

Literature Review

Methods – if needed

Results – if needed

Discussion / Conclusion

Works Cited (not annotated)

Appendices (as needed)

Title Page. Follow the format in the example shown at the end of this guide.

Table of Contents. The Table of Contents section should be completed as part of the Rough Draft. All major headings and subheadings should be listed in the table of contents. Page numbers should be accurate and formatted to align on the right. Most writing software can create tables of contents, if headings and subheading fonts are used in creation of the text.

For more information, see these links:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/insert-a-table-of-contents-882e8564-0edb-435e-84b5-1d8552ccf0c0>

<https://support.google.com/docs/answer/116338?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop#zippy=%2Cadd-or-delete-a-table-of-contents>

Research Proposal

The proposal is 1-2 double spaced pages and usually includes answering the following questions. Your advisor will work with you to determine which questions are appropriate for your proposal.

What is the purpose or goal of the project?

What will you do or accomplish during the project?

Describe the kind of research required, service project outcome, research methodology, etc.

Write a statement of your hypothesis.

What is the significance of the project? How will it contribute to academic research?

What practical results will occur as a result of this service learning project?

How your project is connected to your concentration / major?

How will your senior project help you define your future career goals?

Annotated Bibliography

The purpose of this part of the senior project is to help you understand the existing research about your topic. You may use the Annotated Bibliography articles when you actual write the paper or you may include more articles later. The final version of your senior project will usually include more than ten sources. If you decide to cite other articles later in the process, these articles do not need to be annotated.

Find 10 articles from the research literature on your topic of interest. Consult with your advisor about which types of articles or other sources are acceptable. Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and reputable websites are usually preferred. Students are encouraged to use original, research based, creditable sources. Citing a class power point or an Internet blog with an unknown author is usually not acceptable.

Ask your advisor what format they prefer for the Annotated Bibliography. A suggested format is shown at the end of this section. The articles should be listed in alphabetical order by the first author's last name. Summarize each article in one paragraph. Each paragraph / annotation should be approximately 200-250 words. Include the word count in parenthesis at the end of each annotation. Do not include quotes or citations from the article. Follow these prompts for each annotation:

Define the topic, purpose, and/or research question described in the article

Identify the theoretical or ideological perspective or bias of the author or research

Address the source/methodology the author used to obtain and/or analyze the information

Summarize the results or conclusions of the research

Connect the significance of this article or research to your senior project topic

Provide relevant criticisms or limitations of the article's theory, methods or conclusion.

Article citations should follow APA citation guidelines, with second line indented. See example below.

Summary paragraphs should be written in the single spaced, block format shown below.

APA variations in format. APA style uses different formats for citations from books, journals, multiple authors and Internet sources. You are responsible for checking the APA guidelines and formatting the Annotated Bibliography references correctly. The best guide for APA style is this website: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

Check with your advisor if they require APA 6 or APA 7. Below are the current requirements for listing a journal article in a bibliography using APA 7:

1. APA style dictates that authors are named with their last name followed by their initials.
2. Publication year goes between parentheses, followed by a period.
3. The title of the article is in sentence-case, meaning only the first word and proper nouns in the title are capitalized.
4. The periodical title is italicized and run in title case.
5. Followed by the volume number which is also italicized.
6. If a DOI has been assigned to the article that you are using, you should include this after the page numbers for the article.

7. If no DOI has been assigned and you are accessing the periodical online, use the URL of the website from which you are retrieving the periodical.

Example:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, volume number(issue number), pages, <https://doi.org/xx.xxx/yyyy>

Annotated Bibliography Example (Ask your advisor if they prefer a different format)

Min, P. G. & Kim, R. (2000). Formation of ethnic and racial identities: Narratives by young Asian-American professionals. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(4), 735-760, DOI: 10.1080/01419870050033702

In this article, the authors examined the formation of ethnic and racial identities of second-generation Asian American immigrants. The research participants were fifteen Asian American professionals born after 1965 who wrote personal narratives. According to the authors, research on high school students fails to include sufficient data; thus the authors collected these narratives from older participants. The authors' analysis of the narratives demonstrated that children of lower class immigrants are more likely to retain their language and culture. In contrast, children from middle-class and professional families are pressured by their families to assimilate into dominant white culture, abandoning their cultural traditions. The authors offer their version of assimilation theory to explain both the pan-Asian racial formation and effects of mistaken ethnic identifications by white and black Americans on Asian Americans. Most participants reported discrimination during their years at school, including physical and verbal abuse. The participants who did not experience physical or verbal abuse reported alienation and marginalization by their peers. Participants also explained that as they grew up, they considered themselves "American" and consciously avoided all things "Asian". Resentment from white classmates who equated the participants with Chinese immigrants caused participants to shun fellow Asian Americans in school and prefer white friends in college. This qualitative research is significant for my senior project because the findings explain the impact of attending predominately white schools and the effects of discriminatory experiences on racial identity, similar to the current environment at Cal Poly University, SLO. The author's research conclusions may be limited by the small sample size. (256 words)

Outline

It is important to prepare a thorough, complete outline to guide your writing. Extra time spent thinking and developing a clear outline during SOC 461 will result in an easier writing process during SOC 462. Outline examples are shown at this link:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/developing_an_outline/how_to_outline.html

Rough Draft

Create a Rough Draft by the deadline specified by your advisor. The Rough Draft should contain all the parts of the senior project in the correct order. Creating this draft will be easier if you add each part to a master file, as you write it, during the two quarters. Before submitting your Rough Draft, you should proof read and edit the writing, then run a spell check program. In Microsoft Word if there are red or green lines under your writing, it usually means the spelling, grammar or writing style needs to be corrected.

Final Copy

After the advisor returns your Rough Draft with comments or edits, you will revise the Rough Draft to create a Final Copy. Then you will email the Final Copy to the advisor for their final approval. After the advisor gives final approval, you are responsible for double-checking the Final Copy for any errors before emailing the completed senior project to the Social Sciences Department.

Standard timelines for SOC 461 and SOC 462. Consult your advisor about required due dates.

Suggested Timeline for SOC 461

Research Proposal Due: Third week of quarter Date:_____

Annotated Bibliography Due: Sixth week of quarterDate:_____

Outline Due: Eighth week of quarter Date:_____

Introduction Due: Tenth week of quarter Date:_____

Suggested Timeline for SOC 462

Rough Draft and Bibliography Due: Seventh week of quarter Date:_____

Final Copy Due: Ninth week of quarter Date:_____

Sample Title Page

SELF CARE HABITS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS COMPLETING THEIR SENIOR PROJECTS *

By

Jane R. Smith *

Advised by

Professor Mary Hernandez *

SOC 461, 462

Senior Project

Social Sciences Department

College of Liberal Arts

CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY

Fall, 2023 *

*Substitute your title, your name, advisor's name and quarter that the project was completed

