



University  
of Regina

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL  
STUDIES

**HONOURS PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

October 2024

# Table of Contents

<b>1. SUMMARY OF THE HONOURS PROCESS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. SOCIOLOGY 499 AND THE HONOURS PAPER .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. TYPES OF HONOURS PAPERS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1. SOCIAL THEORY OR CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER.....	4
3.2. LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER.....	4
3.3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH PROJECT / ORIGINAL ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL DATA.....	5
<b>4. LENGTH OF THE HONOURS PAPER .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. ASSESSMENT OF THE HONOURS PAPER .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. PLAGIARISM, MISCONDUCT, AND USAGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. THE HONOURS ADVISORY COMMITTEE.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>8. DEFENSE OF THE PAPER.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>9. GRADING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>GRADING STANDARDS FOR HONOURS PAPERS IN SOCIOLOGY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. STYLE MANUALS.....	10
<i>American Sociological Association (ASA)</i> .....	10
<i>American Psychological Association (APA)</i> .....	10
B. EXAMPLES .....	11

The honours paper is the key output of the honours program in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies. The paper is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge of, and abilities in, the discipline of Sociology. The paper is also an exercise in selecting a suitable topic, preparing a substantial piece of scholarly work, integrating feedback from an advisory committee, and presenting the work in an academic defense setting. Successful completion and oral defense of the paper are both required components of the Honours program.

This document provides guidelines for preparing and defending your honours paper. For honours degree program requirements—such as required courses and credit hours—please see the [Undergraduate Calendar](#).

The BA Honours in Sociology requires a minimum 70.00% PGPA and 60.00% UGPA.

## 1. SUMMARY OF THE HONOURS PROCESS

Completing an honours degree in Sociology and Social Studies involves two major steps: (1) composition of an honours paper, and (2) defense of the honours paper. The following are the basic steps involved in completing an honours degree. Each step is described in more detail in the following sections of this guide.

- 1.1. Completion of all required courses and credit hours for the BA Honours in Sociology. Please see the [Undergraduate Calendar](#).
- 1.2. Identification of an honours paper topic.
- 1.3. Selection of a supervisor and advisory committee members.
- 1.4. Research and preparation of the honours paper.
- 1.5. Defense of the honours paper.

## 2. SOCIOLOGY 499 AND THE HONOURS PAPER

The honours paper is embedded within the Sociology 499 course. The honours paper is to be completed and defended during the semester of enrolment in Sociology 499. The final grade on the honours paper constitutes the final grade for the Sociology 499 course. If the honours paper cannot be completed and defended during the student's time in Sociology 499, a formal deferral is required. Deferrals are the purview of the Associate Dean of Arts (Undergraduate). Due to the relatively short timeframe of Sociology 499 (i.e., one semester), most honours students begin planning their paper

prior to enrolling in 499. It is, at minimum, advisable to have your supervisor and committee in place before enrolling in 499.

## 3. TYPES OF HONOURS PAPERS

To prepare the honours paper, the student selects a specific topic within the discipline of Sociology and prepares a paper on that topic. There are many possible approaches to researching and writing an honours paper. Several different types of papers are discussed below. The student is encouraged to develop their idea with input from their supervisor and advisory committee members.

### 3.1. Social Theory or Critical Analysis Paper

A theoretical paper engages with a theory or concept – or multiple theories/concepts. This type of paper does not necessarily rely solely (or heavily) on empirical data, although it may draw upon such data as part of the analysis. In Sociology, a theoretical paper should engage with one or more social theories that reflect the discipline. Social theory papers may:

- Examine a theory or concept as the object of analysis, helping to develop, elaborate, or refine the theory/concept.
- Provide a theoretical analysis of a social issue, thus applying the theory/concept in a social context.
- Compare and contrast various theoretical approaches to a sociological issue.
- Examine a social issue or problem within the context of one or more theoretical approaches.

Critical analyses take an explicitly critical approach to a topic, often using both theory and data to analyze a social problem and make an argument. Such papers may:

- Critically appraise existing academic literature, demonstrating the contributions and limitations of existing research on a topic.
- Critically examine a social phenomenon or “object”, like a film, a public policy, social media discourse, etc.

### 3.2. Literature Review Paper

Literature review papers provide a synthesis and assessment of the academic literature on a specific topic or research question. A literature review is expected to be thorough and comprehensive, providing a “state of the art” overview of the topic. Defined methods for literature review exist, such as systematic, scoping, and rapid review methods. While these types of literature reviews are often very time-intensive and may not be feasible for an honours program, existing review methods could be adapted to fit the constraints of an honours paper.

Typically, a literature review uses pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, such as date parameters (e.g., literature published within the past 5 or 10 years) or geographical parameters (e.g., Canadian or North American studies). Literature review papers should include a detailed description of the literature search method – e.g., specific databases and keyword combinations. Literature review papers may:

- Assess the sociological literature on a topic or issue and evaluate current strengths and limitations.
- Synthesize existing literature into themes.
- Develop a typology or framework to help readers conceptualize the literature.

### 3.3. Empirical Research Project / Original Analysis of Empirical Data

Although not expected for honours students in Sociology and Social Studies, some students may conduct a small-scale empirical research project that involves the collection and analysis of original data or an original analysis of an existing dataset. Empirical projects may, for example:

- Examine qualitative or quantitative data that have already been produced and analyze these in a sociological manner (e.g., Statistics Canada data).
- Provide further analysis or elaboration of data from another project – e.g., a supervisor's project, or previous course-based research project in which the student participated.
- Plan and conduct a small-scale empirical research project to collect and analyze qualitative and/or quantitative data – e.g., conduct qualitative interviews, create and distribute a survey.

**IMPORTANT:** Projects involving data collection from human participants (e.g., interviews, surveys) or secondary analyses of existing data often require ethical approval from a university-based research ethics review board. **Students may not collect data from human participants without having received ethical clearance from a research ethics board or committee.** The University of Regina has a Research Ethics Board (REB), which is responsible for approving projects with human participants. REB review can take significant time; therefore, the Department of Sociology and Social Studies has its own internal Ethics Committee, which provides ethical review of undergraduate student projects. Review by the departmental committee is acceptable for undergraduate honours students in Sociology and Social Studies. Students should consult their supervisor for advice and assistance.

## 4. LENGTH OF THE HONOURS PAPER

A typical honours paper will range from 30 to 50 double-spaced pages (not including references and appendices). Students wishing to submit a paper longer than 50 pages should consult their supervisor and advisory committee for permission.

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF THE HONOURS PAPER

The type and structure of the honours paper will vary as outlined in Section 3 above. However, all papers will be assessed using the following criteria. Additional criteria will be provided by the supervisor and advisory committee.

### ***Criterion 1: Paper Clearly Identifies and Addresses a Theme / Research Question***

The student must clearly identify a theme, research question, or problem that is relevant to the general research topic. This question or theme should (a) be clearly stated near the paper's beginning, (b) be used to organize the presentation of materials in the paper, and (c) lead to a conclusion near the paper's end.

The purpose of this requirement is to focus the intellectual energies of the student and to guide the student's research and writing. By constructing a theme or research question, the purpose and justification for the research task should become apparent. This requirement should also help the student avoid the pitfalls of having an open-ended or rambling exposition of the topic. For example, the student should not attempt to explain all the works of a particular theorist, deal with all aspects of a social issue, present nothing more than a collection of empirical information, or present a series of personal conjectures or opinions.

### ***Criterion 2: Paper Demonstrates Sociological/Social Relevance***

The student must show how the theme or question relates to the discipline of sociology (and/or related social sciences). This means that there will be (a) some reference to the writings of sociologists/social scientists concerning the topic selected, (b) some discussion of theoretical approaches to the topic by sociologists/social scientists, and (c) some discussion of methodological approaches to the topic by sociologists/social scientists.

### ***Criterion 3: Paper is Methodologically Sound***

Honours papers should demonstrate a strong knowledge of research methodology. The methodology will vary depending on the type of paper. For example, theoretical or critical papers should construct an argument that is logically sound and be aware of how a different approach might have led to a different analysis. Literature review papers should include a transparent and logical method for searching and reviewing the literature, drawing upon existing review methods. Empirical papers should follow a recognized qualitative or quantitative methodological design, and all methods of data collection and analysis should be described using the literature.

### ***Criterion 4: Paper Uses Evidence Effectively***

In the paper, the student must use evidence to support an argument and/or answer the research question. This evidence may include scholarly literature (e.g., academic journal articles, book chapters, or books), extant data (e.g., Statistics Canada data), and/or original empirical data collected for the honours paper. This evidence should be integrated with a guiding theory or concept or,

alternatively, should inductively generate a theory or concept. The student should attempt to be creative and original in the paper and should do more than merely summarize the theme or evidence. In all types of papers, conclusions and claims should be well-supported by evidence.

***Criterion 5: Paper is Well-Written, Effectively Structured, and Accurately Cited***

The student is expected to communicate the argument clearly. The paper should be structured logically to ensure that the argument flows smoothly. The paper is to be grammatically correct and free from spelling and formatting errors.

References should be properly cited. In-text and reference list citation should be formatted in a recognized academic style, such as American Psychological Association or American Sociological Association (see [Appendix](#)).

## 6. PLAGIARISM, MISCONDUCT, AND USAGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Honours students are expected to be familiar with the University of Regina's regulations about plagiarism and academic misconduct, as described in the Undergraduate Calendar. Suspected cases of plagiarism or other misconduct will be reported to the office of the Associate Dean (Undergraduate) for investigation.

**Students are prohibited from using generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a substitute for writing their own content in the honours paper. The content of your paper must consist exclusively of your own original work.** Avoiding generative AI technology ensures that the work is an accurate reflection of the students' own abilities. Unauthorized use of generative AI for an honours paper may result in charges of academic misconduct.

In certain cases, generative AI may be used as a part of the research process. Any such exceptions should be discussed with your supervisor before beginning the work. Some appropriate uses of generative AI may be:

- Spell-checking and other minor grammatical supports, such as those integrated into word processing programs like Microsoft Word. However, generation of full sentences or ideas using AI is prohibited.
- Automated transcription programs (e.g., Zoom transcripts, Otter, Trint) for qualitative data transcription, provided that prior permission was received from the ethics review board or committee.
- Translation, where necessary.
- Generation of images or graphics for illustration or for use in experiments. If such images are used in the paper, include a caption indicating that they are AI-generated.

All honours papers must contain an explicit statement about the use/non-use of AI in the paper and research process. Please place this statement between the title page and body of the paper, under the heading “Artificial Intelligence Transparency Statement”. If no AI programs were used, the section can include the following statement: “I, [STUDENT NAME], declare that no artificial intelligence technology was used in the production of this paper.”

If AI technology was used in the research process or production of the paper, the student must indicate what type of technology was used, and how. For example:

“This research project employed the following AI programs or technological supports: XX, YY, ZZ. These programs were used for the following purposes: AA, BB, CC [please see list of accepted uses above]. Permission was received from the supervisor prior to use.”

## 7. THE HONOURS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The honours advisory committee consists of three faculty members: a supervisor and two other committee members; or supervisor, co-supervisor, and one other committee member. As a first step, the student should reach out to a potential supervisor to inquire about their interest and availability to supervise the project. Ideally, the student will have a general topic in mind, but the specific theme or research question can be developed in collaboration with the supervisor.

The supervisor assists the student in forming the remainder of the advisory committee. Once confirmed, the supervisor and committee should be reported to the Department of Sociology and Social Studies administrative assistant. If the student is unable to find a supervisor, they should consult the Department Head for assistance.

All members of the advisory committee must be tenure-track/tenured faculty. At least two members of the advisory committee, including the supervisor, must be faculty in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies. Under exceptional circumstances (e.g., if the necessary expertise cannot be found within the Department), it may be possible to select a co-supervisor from another unit within the university.

Typically, the student receives feedback from the supervisor throughout the process of researching and preparing the paper. To prevent problems later in the process, committee members should be consulted on key decisions, such as identifying the theme/research question, choosing a methodology, or developing the paper outline. Once the student and supervisor agree that the paper is ready for committee review, the committee member(s) will be invited to provide feedback on the draft. This feedback is then integrated into the final paper to be defended. Committee members should be given an opportunity to review the revisions made based on their feedback before the defense. In some cases, another round of revisions may be deemed necessary by the committee members; however, numerous rounds of committee revisions are discouraged for an honours paper. If any Department member has any serious concerns about the acceptability of the paper, these should be raised with the



supervisor prior to the defense being scheduled. If the supervisor and the student consider the paper completed, even though other committee members disagree, then the disagreement will be taken to the Department Head. The case will then be adjudicated by the Department Head, who may consult with relevant departmental committees as needed.

## 8. DEFENSE OF THE PAPER

The final step in the honours process is an oral defense of the honours paper. The supervisor and committee members should receive the defense-ready copy of the thesis at least one week prior to the defense. A notice of the paper title, name of the student, and the time and place of the oral defense will be posted in the Department Office. The oral defense is open to anyone who wishes to attend. The defense will be chaired by the Department Head or their designate.

The oral defense will begin with the student providing a presentation of no more than 15 minutes. The committee members (including the supervisor) will then ask questions of the student. The committee members will normally orient their questions around the paper and issues raised in the paper. After the committee members have finished questioning the student, other faculty, students, and guests present may also ask questions. The oral defense is normally not to exceed one hour.

After the oral defense has been completed, everyone will leave the room except the supervisor, committee members, and the chair of the defense. The supervisor and committee members will then collectively decide the grade for the paper. The grade will be communicated to the student as soon as possible, normally within ten to fifteen minutes after the completion of the defense. The grade will constitute the grade for Sociology 499.

Because the thesis grade constitutes the grade for Sociology 499, the defense must be completed before the end of the Sociology 499 semester.

## 9. GRADING

The three committee members will grade the paper based on the criteria listed in [Section 5 of this manual](#), and according to the Sociology honours grading system below. Consensus is preferred, but if the committee cannot reach consensus on a grade, the grade assigned for the paper will be the average of the grades assigned by the three committee members.

The grade will be based on the paper itself. A poor oral defense will not lead to the lowering of the grade. However, a strong oral defense may lead to the grade being raised.

A passing grade for Sociology 499 is 50%. However, note that a student must maintain a minimum PGPA of 70% and a minimum UGPA of 60% to receive an honours degree.

## Grading Standards for Honours Papers in Sociology

90+	Exceptional papers
85-89	Very good papers
80-84	Good papers
75-79	Papers above the minimum standards but considered “average”
70-74	Papers that meet minimum standards
50-69	Papers that do not meet honours standards but are considered passable

# Appendix

## A. Style Manuals

The paper should be written, and references formatted, according to a recognized academic citation style. This style should be used consistently throughout the paper, including in-text and reference list citations. Use of a social science style, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) or American Sociological Association (ASA) is recommended.

The following resources may be helpful when formatting your paper and references. Full citation handbooks for APA, ASA, and other styles can be found in the library.

### American Sociological Association (ASA)

#### 1. Purdue Owl writing lab

ASA in-text citation instructions:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/asa\\_style/in\\_text\\_citation\\_references.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/asa_style/in_text_citation_references.html)

ASA reference list instructions:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/asa\\_style/references\\_page\\_formatting.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/asa_style/references_page_formatting.html)

#### 2. ASA Quick Tips Sheet

[https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick\\_Tips\\_for\\_ASA\\_Style.pdf](https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf)

### American Psychological Association (APA)

#### 1. U of R Student Success Centre APA instruction sheet

<https://www.uregina.ca/student/ssc/writinghelp/citation-help/APA-7th-Edition.pdf>

## 2. The APA Blog

You can use the search function to easily find articles about different citation issues.

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

## B. Examples

Students may review the collection of honours papers available in the office of the Department of Sociology and Social Studies for examples of topics, themes, and methodological approaches.