**Department of Anthropology**

**MAIS concentration in Anthropology**

**Anthropology Thesis Guide**

**(last revised 5.3.21)**

**Introduction:** Students must read the the [Thesis Manual produced by the UTRGV Graduate College](https://www.utrgv.edu/graduate/_files/documents/thesis-manual-updated-jun183.pdf) in addition to the Anthropology Thesis Guide. The most recent edition of the GC Thesis Manual is June 2018. The Thesis Manual has complete instructions concerning the preparation of theses. Students should also visit the UTRGV’s Graduate College webpage for important information and deadlines related to the formatting and submission of the thesis draft and final copy. See [Thesis & Dissertation | UTRGV](https://www.utrgv.edu/graduate/for-new-and-current-students/thesis-and-dissertation/index.htm). Thesis preparation workshops are provided by the Graduate College. All theses must meet strict formatting guidelines. Failure to follow those guidelines will result in delayed graduation. Students must submit a draft of the thesis to the Graduate College by mid-October (for fall semester completion) and mid-March (for spring semester completion) for format checking. The final copy is due by the end of the exam period each semester. Failure to meet these deadlines will result in delayed graduation.

The thesis process for the MAIS in Anthropology typically extends beyond the two semesters covered by the Thesis I (ANTH 7300) and Thesis II (ANTH 7301) courses. Planning for the thesis project begins before students enroll in thesis courses. Many anthropology students engage in fieldwork—either ethnographic or archaeological—for their thesis research project. Fieldwork extends the period of data collection which may result in a longer thesis process overall. Students should realize that research and writing are rarely smooth, linear processes. They may experience delays along the way. If the goal is to finish the degree quickly, students may decide to take the non-thesis option. However, there are benefits to writing the thesis, particularly if a student intends to continue graduate studies. See the guidelines below for a general timeline for the thesis option in our MAIS degree plan.

**About the thesis courses**: The MAIS Anthropology thesis option degree plan requires six hours of thesis course credits: Thesis I ANTH 7300 and Thesis II 7301. Those are taken sequentially, not in the same semester. If students do not complete the thesis by the end of ANTH 7301 Thesis II, they may enroll in ANTH 7100, a one-hour thesis course that is less costly, until the thesis is submitted.

According to university policy, a student **must** be enrolled in a thesis course when the final copy of the thesis is submitted to the Graduate College. The policy also states that students must continue to enroll in a Thesis course each Fall and Spring semester until the thesis is completed. Students are not required to enroll in thesis courses during the summer unless they are actively involved in data collection in the community, utilizing university resources (includes faculty), or conducting research in facilities that might check on a student’s university status. Unenrolled students do not lose library privileges during the summer months.

Thesis courses are graded using the S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) grading standard as students progress through the research and writing processes. Once the thesis defense and final copy are completed successfully, a grade change form will be submitted to the Registrar to change the S grades in Thesis I and II (if taken in an earlier semester) to a standard ABCDF grade. Only the required six (6) hours of Thesis I and II will count towards the degree. If a student has taken more than six hours of thesis credits, the remaining courses will retain the S/U grade and will not be calculated into the GPA.

**The Thesis Process:** The following timeline gives students an idea of the steps involved in doing a thesis research project in anthropology.

1. **Planning Phase (second semester/semester before enrolling in ANTH 7300)**

**Steps 1-8 of this phase typically occur *prior to* enrollment in the ANTH 7300 Thesis I course.**

1. Choose a topic. Each thesis begins informally with students choosing the topic that makes an original contribution to the discipline. Students should begin formulating ideas in the *first semester* of their graduate program and discuss topic ideas with the anthropology faculty. Students will begin to research the topic, document sources in the literature, and perhaps sketch an outline of important issues related to the chosen topic.
2. Choose a thesis chair. Students choose a thesis chair among the approved graduate faculty in the Department of Anthropology. Students should approach faculty members who have expertise in the proposed project topic area. Be prepared to discuss the topic, documented sources, and other related issues. The discussion with each faculty member will be helpful in selecting a chair and finalizing the topic.

* The thesis chair plays an important role in the development of the thesis and is primarily responsible for directing the student throughout the thesis process. Although the student will work with all members of the thesis committee, the thesis chair should coordinate much of the activity surrounding the thesis and its development.

1. Choose a thesis committee. The following positions form a thesis committee: 1) the committee chair, 2) a second graduate faculty member from the anthropology department, and 3) a third graduate faculty member who may be from outside the department. **No more than one faculty member from outside the department can be included on an anthropology thesis committee unless the topic merits it**.
2. Complete the Application for Thesis Committee Form. The Chair must complete and sign the [Application for Thesis Committee form](file:///C:\Users\yxl994\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\CJ6LF1F4\1.%09https:\www.utrgv.edu\_files\documents\graduate\utrgv-applications-for-thesis-comitee.pdf) on behalf of the student and submit it to the Graduate Program Coordinator who will submit it to the Dean of the College for review and final signatures. Ideally, the Application form will be submitted prior to the student enrolling in a thesis course. Any changes to this form in the future must be completed on the [Change of Committee form](https://www.utrgv.edu/graduate/_files/documents/change-of-committee-form.pdf).
3. Register for ANTH 7300 (Thesis I) for the following semester. The Graduate Program Coordinator will communicate with the department’s administrative assistant to add a thesis course to the course schedule under the thesis chair’s name.
4. During the summer (between years 1 and 2), continue to: 1) refine the research topic and proposal, 2) work on the annotated bibliography, and 3) develop the research design and methods. These three sections will be the groundwork for thesis chapters: Introduction (clear statement of purpose and significance of study; how is study unique? How does it contribute to the literature?); Literature Review (a review of the relevant literature directly pertinent to the research topic; should encompass the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical research on topic); and Method (detailed research design, plan for data collection, target sample, sampling strategy). A detailed research design is required for an IRB protocol.
5. Work on IRB protocol if IRB approval is needed for the research project (see step 8). Students can work on these steps and keep his/her advisor up to date on progress without being actively enrolled.
6. Apply for IRB approval, if necessary. Before data are collected from any human subject, the student must take an online training course (CITI) and obtain approval from UTRGV’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please see [Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research | UTRGV](https://www.utrgv.edu/irb/) for more information on types of research that require IRB approval and the processes for required training and submitting this paperwork. Students should work with the thesis chair on the IRB paperwork. This approval process can be slow. **No student is allowed to begin collecting data involving human subjects prior to written IRB approval**. Students must factor in this process, and potential delays, into the project timeline. An IRB protocol can be submitted during the summer as long as student is pre-enrolled for the fall semester. If not submitted in summer, student should submit early in the fall semester of the second year.
7. **Research Phase**

**Steps 9-12 of this phase typically occur during the ANTH 7300 Thesis I course.**

1. A well-developed research proposal and some written work on thesis chapters should be done by the end of the ANTH 7300 course.
2. Submit research proposal to committee chair and members.
3. Begin data collection and analysis, as appropriate.
4. Work on thesis chapters around data collection and analysis. This usually entails an iterative process between the student and their committee chair, where multiple drafts are written and revised before a draft is sent to the other committee members.
5. **Writing, Oral Defense, and Submission Phase**

**Steps 13-16 of this phase may occur during the ANTH 7301 Thesis II course. Students who have not finished by end of the ANTH 7301 course may enroll in ANTH 7100 in future semesters until the steps of this phase are complete.**

1. Complete the writing of the thesis manuscript and send to the committee members. The thesis chair will advise student as to when the draft should be disseminated to the remaining committee members. Allow committee members at least two (2) weeks to review and provide feedback on the thesis draft. Make any requested changes.
2. Oral defense of thesis. A student must be enrolled in the semester a thesis is finalized and submitted. If needed, the one-hour thesis course, ANTH 7100 Thesis, can be used.

* The student should schedule a defense date at least two weeks before graduation. The student will consult with his/her committee to determine date of the defense. The defense should be scheduled at a time when all thesis committee members can be present or available via Zoom or phone. The committee chair must be present for the defense.
* The committee will then inform the Program Coordinator of the scheduled defense date.
* When the student has arranged a defense time, s/he will post this information for the University community.
* On the given defense date, the student will meet with the members of the thesis committee for a public oral examination on the thesis, usually lasting from one to two hours. It is the committee's responsibility to ensure that the thesis and the oral examination are of passing quality. All members must agree that the thesis is defensible before the defense can be finalized.
* After the committee has finished examining the student on the thesis, the committee will send the student and any observers from the room and then discuss the thesis and the examination and retire for confidential deliberations. The Committee will decide whether to assign a grade and/or to ask for further revisions. When the committee has reached an agreement, it will inform the student, the Program Coordinator and the Department Chair. A majority of the members must agree that the defense and thesis has passed. See step 16 for final grade submission.
* If a student fails the oral defense and the committee has reason to believe the student can make the necessary revisions within a semester, the student may take one semester (while enrolled) to make the necessary corrections, and then redefend. If after two failed defenses, the student chooses to continue, they must switch to the non-thesis track or terminate their attempts at the degree.

1. Submitting the Thesis to the University. Once the student has made all requested revisions to the thesis, the student should follow the guidelines set by the Graduate Office regarding online submission of the final thesis. To graduate the student must pay all fees for binding the thesis copies, copywriting the thesis, microfilming the thesis, and for publication of the thesis abstract. A student may have additional copies of the thesis bound for personal use, at additional cost.
2. Certification of Completion of Thesis or Dissertation form <https://www.utrgv.edu/graduate/_files/documents/certification-of-completion-of-thesis-or-dissertation-form.pdf> will be completed by the committee members and submitted to the Graduate College. This form indicates the committee’s approval of the final written document. Once the project chair approves of the final document, she or he will issue a grade that will be entered for the Thesis I and II courses.

Approved by the Anthropology Faculty 4.26.2021