

Independent Study (I.S.) Handbook
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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Part A: Rules a441BT/F1 14.0]1(u)-Prole of 4.0]re

Junior I.S. is essentially a small Senior I.S. without the data collection and analysis. Most of the time, Junior I.S. also involves the use of fewer sources and less depth of theoretical analysis. We encourage students to carry over their Junior I.S. topic to Senior I.S. It is likely that this will involve major revision and expansion of the chapters, but it will save students a good deal of work as the same sources can be used. Additionally, copying parts of one's Junior I.S. into one's Senior I.S. is **not** considered plagiarism (unless of course the Junior I.S. was plagiarized). Students always have the option of doing their Senior I.S. on a completely new topic.

As a final note, we urge students to pay close attention in their coursework as all of the department's classes are designed to teach the skills necessary for Junior and Senior I.S.

IV. Advisors

Assignment of Advisors

Your I.S. advisor is not necessarily the same as your academic advisor. The assignment of I.S. advisors is the responsibility of the department Chair, after consultation with the student and faculty, and consideration of the topic the student wishes to investigate. Assignment of an advisor will be made in the first week of the semester, and will take into account: (a) the student's preferences; (b) the I.S. advising and teaching load of each faculty member; and (c) the faculty members' areas of expertise.

Your I.S. advisor is considered the "first reader" of your thesis, and a "second reader" will be assigned after the I.S. is completed. As with the first reader, assignments of the second reader will be made according to student preference, faculty availability, and faculty expertise.

Obligations of students and faculty

1. The responsibilities of the advisor are as follows:
 - a. To encourage the student to attempt an inquiry or project of appropriate rigor and scope given the strengths and limitations of the student's academic background, the time available, and the College's and the student's access to resources (e.g., library, computer, field work facilities, contacts, etc.);
 - b. To advise the student toward the successful completion of the chosen project, meeting the general College specifications as interpreted by the department;
 - c. To assist with the editing of the thesis according to the following guidelines:
 1. On all drafts of the thesis, the advisor is responsible for indicating to the student typical errors of logic, style, mechanics, etc. which may occur. The advisor is not required to edit and proofread these drafts paragraph by paragraph and sentence by sentence. The editing of any draft by the advisor does not imply the ultimate acceptability of the thesis.
 2. Your advisor is not a proofreader, and it is not part of the advisor's job to struggle through improperly prepared drafts. The "rough drafts" that you submit to your First Reader must be carefully proofread, revised, word-processed drafts with complete and accurate source citations.

V. Form of the I.S

Style

The style guide of the American Anthropological Association is available at:

<http://www.aaanet.org/publications/guidelines.cfm>

The brief style guide of the American Sociological Association is available at

http://www.asanet.org/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf

Spacing and Pagination

The finished thesis submitted to the Registrar should be double-spaced with pages numbered at the top and running continuously from page 1 through the appendices and bibliography. All pages before Chapter One should be in lower case Roman numerals.

Margins and Font

The margins should be no less than 1 inch and no greater than 1.25 inches (this 1.25 incorporates the space needed for binding the document). The font should be no larger than 12 point.

Printing

We encourage students to print on both sides of the paper, but remember that this means the page numbers should appear at the top right of the front page, and the top left on the back page of the paper. Please adjust your pagination accordingly.

Table of Contents

The thesis should include a Table of Contents (including Acknowledgements and Abstract, in lower case Roman Numerals) and if more than two tables, charts or maps are used, a separate List of Tables and Figures should be added immediately after the Table of Contents. Along with the Acknowledgements, Abstract, and Chapters, the Table of Contents should also list any appendices, so that the Table of Contents provides a visual outline of the entire thesis.

VI. The Oral Defense and the Role of the Second Reader

Purpose of the Second Reader

The purpose of the second reader of the I.S. thesis is to have an additional faculty member in the department examine a completed senior project. The faculty member who serves as second reader will offer a dispassionate examination of the student's completed senior project. In this regard, the second reader may be a faculty member of the department with whom the student has consulted about one or more sections of the I.S. prior to submitting the final I.S. project. Despite prior knowledge of the I.S. project, the second reader will be expected to read the completed I.S. with fresh eyes and to develop questions and comments primarily on what the student has presented in the completed I.S. Although the second reader is not expected to be an expert in the area of specialization the senior project focuses on, s/he is expected to examine the project on the basis of the scholarly standards in the respective fields of sociology or anthropology.

What to Expect in Orals

s/he is expected to have firm grounding in. It will do the student well to bear in mind that s/he likely knows the topic at hand better than either advisor in the room and that there is no reason to be cowed by unexpected questions during the examination.

Notification of Pass/Fail

After 45-50 minutes of conversation about the I.S. project, the advisors will ask the student to step outside and away from the primary advisor's office while they decide whether the student passed or failed the oral examination. There will be no other grade notification of the student's performance at this time. See below for the evaluation and grading process of I.S. projects beyond pass/fail.

VII. Evaluation and Grading of Senior I.S.

The two semesters of Senior I.S., SOCI/ANTH 451 and 452, are graded separately using two distinct types of grades and two distinct grading processes.

SOCI/ANTH 451 Grades

No letter grade is assigned for the first semester of Senior I.S. Only grades of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (NC) are used. NOTE: An incomplete in 451 is **rare** and must be approved by the student's I.S. advisor.

SOCI/ANTH 451 Grading Process

The I.S. advisor alone is responsible for determining the student's grade for SOCI/ANTH 451. In order to earn an S for SOCI/ANTH 451, students must:

Grading Process: Chapters of the Ethnographic (Typically the Literature Review and Theory chapters), and develop a plan for collecting data, which will eventually be incorporated into the

following semester. You will be reassigned an advisor, which may not be the same advisor that you worked with previously.

SOCI/ANTH 452 Grading Process

As mentioned above, students are notified whether they passed or failed SOCI/ANTH 452 shortly after the oral defense. If the thesis satisfies the requirements for passing 452, the I.S. Advisor and second reader together determine a final grade of Honors, Good, or Passing.

3. Select a topic that takes research in a new direction, and contributes to the existing literature in the field. How is your study unique in the body of research on that social phenomenon?

4. Your topic must be one in which you actually have access to the population you want to study. For example, while researching the role that women play in urban gangs is a valid topic, your access to these people may not be possible. Exploring such a topic during Junior I.S. will help you identify such problems early. Gaining access to a population for research may take longer than the time you actually have for your Senior I.S. project.

5. Select a topic in which you have the appropriate background to conduct research. For instance, do not select a topic that will require extensive translation if you are unfamiliar with a particular language. Don't expect to conduct ethnography or statistical research if you have not taken classes to assist you in this type of analysis. And we discourage research in a cultural area on which you have taken no classes (or have no significant personal background).

topic. Being interested in a topic is great—being convinced of the answer prior to the research is not.

3. What type of information do I need to answer the research question? Will this type of information be accessible to me?

4. Is the scope of this information reasonable (e.g., can I really research this question in 6 months?)

5. What sources will have the type of information that I need to answer the research question (journals, books, Internet resources, government documents, people)? Can I access these sources?

6. Has my question already been answered? If yes, do I have a unique take on the question? A unique take could be doing

students who engage in hypothesis testing state their hypotheses clearly. This is often done in the methods section, but could appear elsewhere in the I.S.

III. Organization of Chapters

Your I.S. thesis must be clearly presented, and should include: the purpose of your I.S. project; the social and cultural context for the research; the research questions you are asking; the theoretical and empirical literature which you are examining; the theoretical assumptions you are making; the methodology or approach to the topic you have chosen; your data/findings and analysis; and your conclusion. The typical thesis is between 55-80 pages in length. To fulfill all aspects of the I.S., theses typically consist of six chapters in the following order:

Chapter 1: Introduction (3-5 pages)

Chapter 2: Literature Review (10-15 pages)

Second-

Purpose

You need not review all the writings of every theorist discussed in your thesis, and may concentrate on those aspects of a theorist's writings that are appropriate to your topic. However, you should avoid relying on brief excerpts from anthologies, and should instead examine the relevant primary writings of each theorist in order to develop a sound understanding of the theories.

think carefully about their course selection so that they have a broad range of methods training and are fully prepared to embark on their I.S. research, wherever it might take them.

A key challenge in I.S. research (or any research with humans) is negotiating access to a research site. In addition to getting clearance from Human Subjects at the College, you may have to apply for access (or further human subjects permissions) to conduct research in places like schools, churches, prisons, and child care centers. This can take a long time. Some places do not require a formal application but it may still be very time consuming to get access or arrange logistics. Students should note that local institutions hold many possibilities for research, however they are often unable to accommodate requests because so many Wooster students have done research there before. Begin your access negotiations early and with careful consultation with your advisor. Be sure to include your advisor in any communications with potential field sites. Students should also remember that they are representing The College of Wooster and that their actions can have ramifications for future students who might want to access the same field sites.

In your research methods classes, you have learned about a wide range of anthropological and sociological methods. These include, but are not limited to, surveys, interviews (individual, group, and focus group), observation and participant observation, content analysis, secondary data analysis, archival and museum collection analysis. It is beyond the scope of the I.S. Handbook to describe these methods in any detail. Students should review their books and notes from their methods classes and consult with their advisors. It should be noted that students who conduct interviews should fully transcribe them and—if not conducted in English—should translate them. Whether or not transcripts should be included in the final product is a matter for students and advisors to decide in each individual case. Students must describe the implementation of their method(s) in detail (e.g., How did you contact the “gate keeper” who controls access to the population you want to study?), and also describe the process they used to collect data.

For further information on ethics in sociology and anthropology, please see the American Sociological Association and American Anthropological Society websites.

<http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm>

<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>

VIII. Results: Findings, Analysis, and Discussion (15-30 pages)

In general, the format for the presentation of data depends largely on the type(s) of information that you have collected (i.e., ethnographic data, content analysis, quantitative results, etc.). The data and analysis chapters/sections can be kept separate, but in some cases it is useful to combine them. Generally, keep in mind that the presentation of data is descriptive, while the analysis is interpretive. In all cases, it is important to summarize your data and demonstrate how you are making sense of the information. Below is a list of the expectations for four of the most common types of data.

Quantitative Data (i.e., survey, quantitative content analysis, existing data sets)

1. Descriptive statistics (merely a description of data) are necessary but not sufficient for a passing grade in I.S. You should move beyond descriptive elements (e.g., mean, median, mode) to explanatory techniques (e.g., crosstabs).
2. Inferential statistics (in which you consider whether you are able to draw conclusions statistically from your sample to your target population) are required.
3. For data you will discuss directly, tables should be included within the text. Tables you will not discuss directly should appear in appendices. For table formatting, see the style guides of the American Sociological Association (<http://www2.asanet.org/pubs/asaguidelinesnew.pdf>) or the American Anthropological Association (http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf)

Interviews

1. If you have conducted interviews, you should provide profiles of your participants while maintaining their anonymity, typically through the use of pseudonyms (this could also be done in the methods chapter). One should give a sense of who this population is, and the cultural context within

Observation and participant-observation (ethnographic research)

1. If you have

The conclusion can be written as a stand alone chapter or it can be a part of the discussion of your results. Either way, it must incorporate a summary of the major findings of your study. Additionally, you may want to include at least one of the following:

Appendix A: Sample Title Page

The College of Wooster

“Green” Consumerism versus