The purpose of the Honors project in Sociology is to provide students with the opportunity to conduct sociological research. This guide presents specific departmental requirements, expectations and advice for honors students preparing to participate in the honors research experience in the Department of Sociology at The University of Akron. Below you will find guidelines on how to successfully complete an honors thesis. A suggested outline for the thesis proposal and the final thesis document are included.

Coursework Preparation: Honors Students are encouraged to take Methods of Social Research I, Methods of Social Research II, and Sociological Theory prior to engaging in the honors research project. Also advisable is to take a substantive course related to the honors student’s research interests. Taking such courses will aid in the student’s development of a research question, literature review, and overall research framework.

Finding a faculty sponsor: Sponsors for sociology honors projects are generally faculty from the Sociology Department, but not always. In the past students have worked with faculty and instructors from outside the department that have expertise in sociological research areas. It is important to obtain permission from the Sociology Department’s Honors Preceptor before beginning projects outside of the Sociology Department. Summer internships have also been used as honors projects however permission must be obtained before the project begins.

Readers: Each proposal will have two readers beyond the advisor which will be agreed upon by the student and the advisor at the time of submitting the research proposal. The role of the readers is to give feedback and suggest changes for the final thesis.

Timeline: The Department of Sociology recommends that in the fall of the junior year, students seek out a sponsor for their sociology honors project. Next, honor students should decide on a mentor/research project early in the spring semester. This is especially critical if the honors student plans to use their final thesis as part of an application to graduate school or other professional pursuits post graduation.

The Honors College requires that students and sponsors fill out the honors project form which can be found on the Honors college web site (http://www.uakron.edu/honors/students/honors-research-project.dot) by the end of the junior year. However, the Department of Sociology strongly recommends that students identify a sponsor, and in many cases begin their research, far in advance of this deadline. It is important to begin the process of determining a project as early as possible because many research projects may take between 6 and 12 months to adequately conduct the necessary research and analysis (e.g., some projects may require data collection). It is likely that Sociology faculty will not accept students if sufficient time to reasonably complete a project is lacking. Therefore, contacting potential faculty for Honors projects early is the best thing a student can do for success.

Readers and your project mentor should be provided copies of your thesis in its final stages at least 8 weeks before grades are due the semester you plan to graduate (for spring graduates this would typically be the first week of March). You should expect to make changes after your readers give you feedback on the thesis. With changes made you should provide your project mentor, and any reader that has asked to
see the final version, a final draft for review at least three weeks before grades are due. With these deadlines in mind you should expect that you will have collected the data for your project in the summer and/or fall with attention paid to writing up the results in the spring semester. The completed project must be signed by all readers and handed in no later than 5 PM on Friday the thirteenth week of the semester.

If the project sponsor believes that progress toward completion of the research and final written results has not been demonstrated by the 8 week deadline or any reader feels that significant additional data collection, analysis and or writing needs to be done prior to completion the mentor can recommend delaying graduation.

Given the time sensitivity of completing an honors research project, honors students should consider creating a timeline “contract” to be agreed upon by the student and faculty sponsor.

**Honors Project Expectations:**
In general, the grade for the project is usually based upon completion of a written paper in the form of a scientific journal article. Advisors and sponsors should set clear parameters with respect to expectations for the completion of the honors thesis. An Honors Thesis written in the Department of Sociology should follow the American Sociological Association style guidelines. [http://www.asanet.org/Quick%20Style%20Guide.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/Quick%20Style%20Guide.pdf)

Students should be sure to ask a potential sponsor what their expectations are with respect to how their work will be graded, how long the proposed research is expected to take to complete, how many honors thesis credits they should take and when (i.e., summer, fall or spring), what form the final written work is expected to take, and if they expect the research to be presented in any form in addition to a formal paper (e.g. poster presentation at a meeting). It is expected that honors students will apply for funds from the Honors College to help offset the costs of their projects. ([http://www.uakron.edu/honors/students/honors-research-project-funds.dot](http://www.uakron.edu/honors/students/honors-research-project-funds.dot)).

**Credit Hours:**
An Honors project in Sociology is usually 3 to 6 credits with a max of 4 counting toward the degree. Students who sign up for more than 3 credits usually require 2 semesters to complete their project. Students are expected to perform 3 hours of research-related work each week for each credit hour enrolled. If a project extends past one semester (this is common) the student will receive the grade of “Incomplete” (I) for the first semester and subsequent semesters until the project is finished.

**Thesis Proposal Suggest Outline**
This suggested outline is intended as an aid for the student and his/her thesis advisor in preparing the thesis proposal. For the proposal, the nature of the problem to be investigated and the procedure to be used in the investigation will, of course, result in differential emphases on the various outline sections listed below based upon consultation with your honors advisor. The resulting proposal should be approximately 5-10 pages.

1. **Statement of problem**
   In this section you present the general problem to be investigated.
   Your discussion should be no longer than necessary. The goal is to simply and clearly explain the problem and orient the reader.

   Literature may be cited in this section.
II. Literature review and research questions
In this section you briefly explain the theoretical orientation you will use to frame your research problem and review the literature relevant to the topic at hand. This review of the literature should lead you to a more specific statement of the particular issues/questions you plan to address in the thesis.

This section could be combined with Section I.

III. Methodology
In this section you briefly describe the strategy (i.e., method) you will use to investigate the problem (e.g., survey, interviews, observation). The particular research methods employed depends on the nature of the problem and/or the state of knowledge in the area. This should be worked out in consultation with your advisor.

IV. Data Analysis
In this section you will indicate how you plan to analyze your data to address your research questions.

V. Contribution of thesis/paper
In this concluding section, identify what you think will be the primary contributions of your proposed thesis. These might be substantive, relevance for application, theoretical, and/or methodological.

VI. References
This section will include all of the complete citation information for all sources cited in the paper. Citations and references should be presented using American Sociological Association formatting (see http://www.asanet.org/Quick%20Style%20Guide.pdf for a basic guide).

**Be sure to discuss with your advisor whether your research requires approval from the Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subject. If your advisor thinks it does, you can work with her/him to complete the application process.**

Final Thesis Document

For the final thesis, specific methodological and analytical details must be worked out in consultation with your advisor. The proposal and the project should be completed in conjunction with enrolling in 3850:496 Senior Honors Project (1-3 credits).

Items I-IV need to be expanded and thoroughly developed in consultation with your advisor. Section V will detail explicitly the findings emerging from your research. The final thesis should be approximately 30-35 pages.