

# **IUPUI DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

## **SENIOR SEMINAR AND SENIOR PROJECT GUIDE**

### **Introduction**

**How do I decide what kind of project would be best for me?**

**What is the Senior Seminar (ANTH-A 413)?**

**Who is the Capstone Committee?**

**What is a Faculty Supervisor?**

**How do I select a Faculty Supervisor?**

**What is an External Mentor?**

**What is a Senior Project proposal?**

**When is my Senior Project proposal due?**

**How many hours is a Senior Project supposed to be?**

**How do I register for the Senior Project (ANTH-A 412)?**

**Where have other students done their projects?**

**What needs to be in a portfolio?**

**How is my Senior Project graded?**

**What are my responsibilities as a student?**

### **Introduction**

The Senior Project (ANTH-A 412) is an intensive individual project that focuses on the application of an anthropological perspective to a topic of interest to the student. For some students this might be applied research working with a community organization; others may choose to do a methodologically driven analysis of osteological material, ethnographic data, or archaeological artifacts; and others may be best served by an intensive research paper. Like most “capstone” courses in other majors, the Senior Project is designed to demonstrate a student’s ability to use the anthropological concepts, methods, and research skills they have learned throughout their undergraduate education.

Beyond demonstrating an anthropological pedigree, the Senior Project can serve a range of different purposes that the student will develop with the counsel of a Faculty Supervisor and the Senior Seminar instructors. For instance, some students conduct research projects that will provide them preparation for graduate school or even initial graduate research. Others conduct their projects in community settings where they can apply and develop their skills prior to working in such community settings. Some

students need an intensive research experience that focuses on an area of interest and develops specific research skills.

The most productive projects are well-defined, clearly structured, coordinated with a Faculty Supervisor's direction, and focused on a topic in which a student is interested. Taking time to develop a good project with clear methods and goals on a subject that interests the student will ensure the completion of the project and make the experience much more rewarding and enjoyable. The most pleasant Senior Project experiences often are planned over long periods of time as much as a year in advance, so it is advisable to try and think ahead prior to Senior Seminar.

### **How do I decide what kind of project would be best for me?**

There are three generalized options for approaching the Senior Project based on the ultimate goals of the student (described below). These options are neither mutually exclusive nor absolute, but instead are intended to provide a generalized structure and/or approach to the start of the Senior Project. Students may choose one of the three options of project design according to where their ultimate goals or interests may lay. Not everyone intends to be a practicing anthropologist or even go to graduate school in anthropology. Therefore, each student should think carefully about their capabilities, level of commitment, and goals before deciding on a project. All of the options will involve the same amount of time (i.e., 150 hours), but apply anthropological training and interests in quite different ways. These options should be discussed during Senior Seminar and independently with a faculty member that the student might ask to be their Faculty Supervisor.

#### **Option #1 – Intensive Anthropology Research Paper**

Project: A 20-30 page research paper on a subject of major interest to you. The project *must* address a central research question and show that the student has a fundamental knowledge of how an anthropological perspective can be applied to the subject and that they are capable of doing an involved research paper. Students would identify a topic in senior seminar, conduct a substantial literature search, and complete the paper during the following term.

This option may be ideal for students who have limited interest in graduate school or see Anthropology as an extension of existing professional interests. This includes, but is not limited to, students who are not likely to enter into a formal career in anthropology and may want the degree for advancement in an existing career, or may be returning to school after many years with the goal of completing a degree, or may not be interested in graduate (even if not anthropology) or professional school. Students may be doing a double major, but putting less energy into Anthropology.

#### **Option #2 – Applied/Service Learning Anthropology Project**

Project: An applied/service learning project in anthropology. This project may include processing and/or analysis of artifacts, participation in or contribution to a community organization, or be structured as a formal internship. The outcome of these projects often generates some sort of product (e.g. - database, community program, museum exhibit, report to be used by a community organization, etc.). Students would identify the subject in senior seminar (from any of the sub-disciplines in Anthropology),

prepare a formal proposal, conduct a substantial literature search, and complete the project and paper during the following term.

This option may also satisfy the MSTD-A 408 requirement for Anthropology majors also completing the Museum Studies undergraduate certificate, provided the project is related to museum professional practice. In these cases the proposal must also be approved by the Museum Studies Director (in addition to the Capstone Committee) prior to registration and a copy of the final report must be submitted to the Museum Studies office at the end of the project.

This option may be ideal for students who are interested in a professional career in anthropology, but outside the academic community (that is, at the advanced BA or MA level in an applied field). This includes, but is not limited to, students who have a substantial interest in Anthropology, may not work directly in the discipline, but will be served well by a degree in Anthropology in that field. This may include students such as those who wish to work with community organizations or be cultural heritage managers (i.e. - 'shovelbums'). Normally these students will need the experience to find specific types of employment.

### **Option #3 – Senior Thesis in Anthropology**

Project: A senior *thesis*, which although it may not produce original research, will have several components that are original and/or creative in ways that indicate potential for advanced study in anthropology and probable success in attaining an MA or PhD. This may include an analysis and write-up of data, artifacts, survey instruments, cultural patterns or an applied anthropology project that is hypothesis-driven and testable. In many cases students may identify their thesis topic well in advance of the Senior Seminar. Senior thesis projects can be more complex than Option 1 & 2 projects and may take a bit more effort to complete in the same amount of time.

This option may be ideal for students who are interested in a professional career within academic anthropology, attending graduate school, normally aimed at acquiring a PhD in anthropology. This includes, but is not limited to, students who have self-identified as wanting to attend graduate school in anthropology and have the desire and capabilities to succeed. These individuals are usually highly self-motivated and directed, and have a GPA that is within the range appropriate for admittance to graduate programs (that is, above a 3.3 cumulative GPA).

### **What is the Senior Seminar (ANTH-A 413)?**

In conjunction with a Faculty Supervisor and the Senior Seminar instructors, students develop a topic for this project in Fall semester in Senior Seminar (ANTH-A 413), a one-credit class devoted to producing and defending a proposal for the Senior Project. Students are **required** to complete this class before taking the Senior Project course. There may be some variation in specific requirements of the Senior Seminar class each year, so it is important to consult the instructor for specific assignments and grading criteria. The Seminar provides students time to develop a thorough proposal and then submit it to the Capstone Committee (November 15<sup>th</sup>). When a proposal is accepted the student may then take Senior Project (ANTH-A 412), in which they will conduct the project they planned in the Senior Seminar.

## Who is the Capstone Committee?

The departmental “Capstone Committee” is a three-person faculty committee that approves proposals and reviews final projects. The Capstone Committee does not assign grades; it simply accepts or declines proposals as well as Senior Projects. If the Capstone Committee requires revisions prior to accepting either the proposal or Senior Project, these are usually conducted with the direction of the student’s Faculty Supervisor.

## What is a Faculty Supervisor?

Every Senior Project has a Faculty Supervisor who oversees the project and assigns it a grade upon its completion and acceptance by the Senior Project Committee. Students can ask any full-time Anthropology faculty member to supervise their project in the Fall while they are taking Senior Seminar, and this person may or may not be their normal Faculty Advisor. In some cases, non-Anthropology faculty can supervise a project with the consent of the Senior Seminar instructors. Double majors may have an Anthropology Faculty Supervisor as well as one from their other department if they’re conducting one capstone to satisfy requirements in both majors.

During the Senior Project the Faculty Supervisor will direct the project, not the Senior Seminar instructors, the Senior Project Committee, or a regular Faculty Advisor. Students should therefore report to their Faculty Supervisor on the Senior Project and **not** other Faculty members. Faculty Supervisors will be in close communication with the Senior Seminar faculty and the Capstone Committee, but the Faculty Supervisor assigns the final grade in the Senior Project, not the Senior Seminar instructors or the Senior Project Committee. Students **must** copy all emails regarding the Senior Project to the Faculty Supervisor and save those emails to be turned-in as part of the final Senior Project report.

## How do I select a Faculty Supervisor?

During the Senior Seminar students should identify a faculty member who works on a subject close to their interests and initial project ideas and meet with them to discuss possible approaches or how it might be possible to integrate a students’ central interests into a project. Students can also meet with the Senior Seminar instructors to get their advice on faculty members who would be good fits for their interests. A Faculty member is not compelled to agree to supervise a given project, so it is the student’s responsibility to make a clear case for how their insights and experience will be useful in the project. Students will be required in the Senior Project proposal to identify a Faculty Supervisor or it will be required to revise and re-submit the proposal. Students should not plan to change advisors during a project.

## What is an External Mentor?

Many projects conducted by IUPUI Anthropology majors focus on applied questions and community service, so many students have worked with community organizations including immigration agencies, museums, neighborhood associations, shelters, unions, and similar organizations. If a project will be conducted with such an agency, that agency should have an individual who agrees to assist and advise the student during the project. Some Senior Projects do not have an External Mentor, such as research papers or projects conducted with a Faculty Supervisor’s own research data.

The student has a responsibility to carry out the project agreed upon between themselves and the External Mentor. The External Mentor should receive key elements of the project, like the proposal and the final product where appropriate. The External Mentor should receive some product to evaluate the student's work, which they can report in a letter to the Capstone Committee.

### **What is a Senior Project proposal?**

A Senior Project proposal is a paper that clearly and succinctly outlines the methods, goals, products, and broader social and applied implications of a Senior Project. Most proposals are about 10 double-spaced pages in length (typically this page count does not include the Literature Cited). Students **must** provide a hard copy of the proposal as well as an electronic version to the Senior Seminar instructors. A Senior Project proposal **must** be well written, clear, and structured according to the following elements:

1. **Title Page:** Provide a clear and interesting title. Name(s) of Student, Faculty Supervisor and External Mentor (if relevant).
2. **Project Description/Introduction:** Describe project plans in detail.
  - i. Identify and describe where the project will occur, including (if relevant) the name, activities, and mission of any non-university organization involved.
  - ii. Describe specific goals of the project (very clearly indicate the specific research questions to be addressed and the reasons for undertaking the project and/or discuss what concrete benefits the project will contribute to a particular organization).
  - iii. Theoretical and/or applied significance of the project: articulate the importance of this project in broader contexts and its central questions in various theoretical or applied perspectives within anthropology.
3. **Literature Review:** Discuss the literature relevant to the topic and construct a background for scholarly literature and the relationship of this project
4. **Methods:** Detailed description of materials to be used and methods to be employed during the execution of the project.
  - i. Be very clear and detailed about **EXACTLY** what methods will be used and type of information or data that will be examined. For instance, it is not enough to indicate that you'll conduct oral interviews: say how many interviews, with what research subjects, how long the interviews will be conducted, the range of questions that will be asked, and so on. Be as clear as you can possibly be. There may well be some details that are difficult to predict, and there may even be some modest changes made during the project itself with the counsel of your Faculty Supervisor.
  - ii. Include a specific plan of action, with approximate dates by which various tasks will be completed, plus estimates of number of hours to be devoted to each. Be as specific as possible. The Capstone Committee will require clarity for project plans that are not clearly described or do not seem to require the amount of time you have allotted for each task.

- iii. Special resources needed to carry out the project, if any, and how these will be provided. This may be something like access to the Physical Anthropology lab and agreement with the Lab Director to have sufficient space or it may be equipment such as digital tape recorders, transcription machines, and so on.
  - iv. Schedule of meetings with Faculty Supervisor and External Mentor. You must schedule regular meetings while the project is being conducted, which typically happens bi-weekly or every three weeks or so. You should document those meetings and include them in the final Senior Project report timeline.
  - v. Provide a brief discussion of possible human subjects issues connected to the project (if applicable), and, if necessary, documented approval of IUPUI Institutional Review Board (or application for approval). Do not delay requests for IRB approval for any project that will involve human subjects research within the parameters of IRB guidelines. Your Senior Seminar instructors and Faculty Supervisor will explain this in more detail, but in general any research that involves people and will be published or distributed in some public form will almost certainly require that you secure the approval of the IRB.
5. **Results:** List of learning objectives and professional competencies that are expected to result. Say what it is you hope the Senior Project will show about your research skills and interests. Description of specific products that will result (e.g., research paper, museum exhibit, etc.).
  6. **Literature Cited:** A bibliography of relevant anthropological resources is absolutely required.
  7. **Signatures:** Student, Faculty Supervisor, and External Mentor (if relevant...and letter of support from External Mentor).

### When is my Senior Project proposal due?

Unless special permission has been granted, Senior Project proposals are due in the semester prior to registering. Students may not register for ANTH-A 412 until their proposals have been approved by the Capstone Committee.

- Proposals for Spring semester projects are due **November 15<sup>th</sup>**.
- For Fall semester projects, proposals are due by **July 15<sup>th</sup>**.
- Proposals for Summer projects are due **April 15<sup>th</sup>**. Summer projects are typically difficult to coordinate with the Fall Senior Seminar schedule, so please work closely with your Faculty Supervisor to schedule summer Senior Projects.

### How many hours is a Senior Project supposed to be?

A three-credit project should be approximately 150 hours (all three-credit classes are supposed to occupy 150 hours of student time, including time in class and studying for the course). Over the course of a 15-week semester, this is approximately 10 hours a week. Projects should be completed by the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled in the Senior Project. If the projects are particularly extensive, they may be

taken for more than 3 credit hours. They may also, by prior arrangement, extend beyond a single semester, particularly if done during Summer I or II.

Time spent on the project must be documented in a detailed timeline log that identifies each task. Students should be very clear about what was entailed in the task, and not include ambiguous entries that cover vast swaths of time: e.g., “Research, 45 hours” will require significant explanation. Indicate the day(s) on each task, detail exactly what was entailed in that task, and note the exact times for the tasks. This is very easy if a notebook log is kept from the very outset, but impossible if attempting to reconstruct from memory at semester’s end. This is usually an Appendix to the final Senior Project report. Students must always save all documents in multiple formats and on more than one computer...students should be prepared for their computer to be stolen or crash; the CD, thumb drive, or other data storage device may fail; or hard copies of notes may get eaten by the dog. Backups and Xerox originals should always be made to protect work. Students will be responsible for completely reconstructing the project and renegotiating the project timeline if visited by such bad luck...it is advised to plan ahead.

### **How do I register for the Senior Project (ANTH-A 412)?**

Students must first complete Senior Seminar (ANTH-A 413), after which they may register as for any class in the online registration system. During Senior Seminar students will identify a Faculty Supervisor who will oversee their Senior Project, and when registering for the class they should select the section with the supervisor’s name.

### **Where have other students done their projects?**

The Faculty Supervisor and/or Senior Seminar instructors have examples of completed proposals and projects available for examination upon request.

### **What needs to be in a portfolio?**

Upon completion of the project, the student submits a final Project Portfolio by April 15<sup>th</sup> which should include the following elements:

1. **Title Page** with a brief abstract of the entire project,
2. Copy of the original **Project Proposal**,
3. **Project Paper** of at least 20 pages following a format similar to the Senior Project Proposal and must include a reflexive discussion of the experience (the project paper can vary a lot depending on the project but typically must involve some self-reflection on the project experience, methodology, utility of the project and so on, so please discuss the specifics of your reflexive section with your Faculty Supervisor),
4. **Literature Cited**,
5. **Documentary Materials** illustrating the project including visuals, if possible;
6. **Daily Log** of activities kept by the student, which should include the date, length of time on activities and description of activities,
7. **Letter of Evaluation** of the project from External Mentor (if relevant).

### **How is my Senior Project graded?**

The Faculty Supervisor submits the grade based on their evaluation of the completion of the proposed project as documented in the project portfolio or research

paper and the evaluation letter of an External Mentor. The Faculty Supervisor typically arrives at the grade in consultation with the Capstone Committee and the External Mentor's comments.

### **What are my responsibilities as a student?**

Senior projects are an independent learning experience. The primary responsibility for initiating, developing, and carrying out the project belongs to the student. The student is responsible for discussing possible project with his/her departmental advisor, identifying and contacting the faculty member who will be the faculty supervisor, contacting organizations or individuals who will be involved in the project, writing the project proposal, communicating regularly with both the faculty supervisor and external mentor during the project, alerting them to any problems or substantive changes in the project, keeping a log of project activities, and preparing the final portfolio for assessment.