SENIOR CAPSTONE GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS IN SOCIAL INQUIRY

Fall 2012/Spring 2013

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To complete the Senior Capstone Requirement, students are strongly encouraged to write an independent senior thesis. Students not wishing to write a thesis may take a graduate course in one of the social sciences; the course must be approved by the Social Inquiry chair (Rachel Sherman, shermanr@newschool.edu).

A. INDEPENDENT THESIS

Project Description

Independent senior projects are individual research projects developed in close consultation with a faculty advisor, allowing students to explore in-depth areas of particular interest to them. A project proposal must be submitted to the program chair for approval. Projects should be limited in scope in order to allow completion in one semester. (Students wishing to undertake a more substantial project involving additional time should consult closely with both their advisor and the program chair to ensure suitability.)

Schedule and Procedure

Students should meet with the chair of Social Inquiry in the second semester of the junior year to discuss the possibility of taking a graduate course or doing the independent thesis.

Students who undertake a thesis must submit final project proposals *which have been approved by the thesis advisor* to Prof. Rachel Sherman by **October 24th for spring 2013 graduation** (and **March 12th** for fall 2013 graduation). They will register for an independent study with the thesis advisor for the semester in which they expect to graduate (and in which they will write the thesis).

Final approval of the project by the SI chair must be reported to the senior class advisor by the first day of advance registration for the following semester (early November for spring and early April for fall), in order for the student to be able to register for the appropriate course.

Nature of the Senior Project

All Senior Projects must be based in *research*. Creative elements are possible, but these *must* be accompanied by substantial research. The goal of research projects is to engage with an existing literature in the field of Social Inquiry in relation to a specific *question* or *set of questions*. Projects must therefore comprise the following parts:

(1) clear articulation of the research question and its importance
(2) a review and analysis of relevant literature in the field, with clear explication of relevance to the question at hand, and
(3) exploration of the research question with supporting evidence

Requirements

Demonstrated familiarity with the relevant literature is required. For independent projects, students should expect to complete a research project of approximately 50 pages. (With approval from the SI chair, the student may submit an equivalent creative work/research combination.)

Step-by-Steps for working on your Proposal

Pick a topic you wish to work on (ideally, an extension of a topic you already have some familiarity with). You should start thinking about the proposal in the second semester of your junior year or over the summer prior to your senior year.

Then you must find a faculty thesis advisor who is willing to work with you. This is different from your academic advisor (although it can be the same person, if appropriate). Thesis advisors must be full-time faculty members in one of the departments included in Social Inquiry (unless an exception is granted by the SI chair). You can see affiliated faculty here:
http://www.newschool.edu/lang/faculty_dev.aspx?sc=LANT,LECO,LHIS,LPOL,LSOC,LPSY,LURB,LPHI

Make sure to allow yourself enough time to find an advisor. It is not always easy to find the appropriate person!

Criteria for Proposals

1. Proposals should be in the format stipulated below, and should include all the components required by those guidelines. In addition, the proposal should be well-written and free of spelling and grammatical errors.
2. The proposal should exhibit an appropriate level of scholarship; it should display the format and tone acceptable to professionals in the specific academic field or specialization.
3. The proposal should be well-reasoned and thoughtful, and ideas expressed should follow from one another in a logical manner. The motivation and methodology for the project should be described with as much detail as possible
4. Proposed projects must be reasonably accomplished in one semester.

Format

Proposals should be 6-8 pages long (double-spaced) and contain the following:

a. Working title of proposed research paper/creative project.
b. Name of advisor.
c. A description of the key idea being explored (approx. 2 pages).
d. A description of the methods of investigation to be employed (approx. 2 pages).
e. A discussion of the relevance of the project to the field of Social Inquiry
one of its sub-fields (1 page).
f. A section on work already accomplished, such as initial research completed, if applicable.
g. A bibliography or relevant sources to be consulted (1-2 pages).
h. A section on likely results or conclusions that are desired from this work (approx. 1 page).

Grading

Active and conscientious participation in the project process is essential to a successful senior project. This includes (1) fulfilling the requirements outlined in this document, (2) meeting with the project advisor consistently, (3) providing material for review to the advisor in a timely manner (giving sufficient time for feedback to be provided), and (4) engaging with advisor feedback in a constructive manner. In general, senior projects are graded in accordance with the degree of success of the final product. Though to a lesser degree than in a course, the process that led to the final product and the student's participation therein are taken into account as well.

B. GRADUATE COURSE

Rather than write a thesis, Social Inquiry majors may also take a graduate course in one of the social science disciplines (Sociology, Anthropology, Politics, History, Economics, Psychology). To serve as a capstone, the course must require a final research paper of 20-30 pages. The course may be taken in the first or second semester of the senior year.

Students wishing to choose this option must obtain permission to enroll in the course from the Social Inquiry chair (Rachel Sherman). The student should discuss his or her desired course with the chair during the registration period prior to the semester in which the course is to be taken. Upon receiving approval from the chair, the student will have permission entered to register for the course through Academic Advising.

GUIDELINES FOR SENIOR THESIS ADVISORS

Students complete a senior work project over two semesters. In the first semester, students write a proposal for approval by the department; and in the second semester, the approved project described in the proposal is actually completed. Projects should exhibit a culmination of a student's skills and experiences acquired through studying in a particular field. Each project should be framed such that it could be reasonably completed in one semester. If you review the attached guidelines, you will have more detailed information about the expectations for students.

ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

Senior Work Proposals

It is important that advisors comply with all deadlines regarding drafts and final submission of the proposal. Students requesting you as their SW advisor should contact you by the *third week* of the semester with some concept formulated for a project. If you are agreeable to advising the project, you should encourage the student to immediately begin writing a first draft of the proposal. The draft should be completed by the *fourth or fifth week* in the semester (and a revised draft by the *seventh week*). After you have approved the proposal, please refer it to Rachel Sherman, the chair of SI (shermanr@newschool.edu). **The deadline for the proposal to be submitted is October 24th for May graduation and March 12th for December graduation.** The chair will inform the student about any required revisions, and provide confirmation of final approval; the chair must also approve the assigned advisor.

Once you have signed off on a proposal, you are committing to assist the student with revisions of the proposal (based on suggestions and feedback from the chairperson), as well as working with the student through the following semester until completion of the project. **Note: Final approval for advisor assignments is determined by the chairperson; *even after signing the proposal, the advisor must be confirmed by the SI chair*.**

As an advisor, you should endorse the proposal if and only if it satisfies the criteria outlined above, under "Criteria for Proposals." Please note that one of your prime responsibilities as the potential project advisor is to help students contain their ambitions and focus on a project of appropriate size.

Senior Work Projects

During the second semester, the student will register with you for an independent study. You are committed to meet with the student at *at least* 5 times during the term. You will receive emails from the SI administrator, Chellie Bowman, asking if the student is making appropriate progress. *Please respond to these emails* (which take the place of the hard copy contact forms formerly used). Your feedback is our only indicator of student progress. Please let us know if students are struggling, as this is crucial to whether they will graduate.

In this phase of the senior work project, you are responsible for the following:

- Advising students on appropriate and effective ways to implement ideas delineated in the proposal (for example, practical advice about data collection and analysis, suggestions about translating concepts into creative expression, etc)
- Helping students to designate interim goals and preliminary deadlines to ensure completion of the senior work project on time
- Reinforcing the importance of following professional guidelines for manuscript preparation, and recommending corrections wherever deviations from these guidelines might occur
- Reviewing project drafts for overall quality and soundness, and submitting final grades by the deadline:
  Fall Semester Projects due the first week in December, and grades due by winter break;
  Spring Semester Projects due the first week in May, and grades due by graduation.

If you have questions, contact the SI chair, Rachel Sherman (shermanr@newschool.edu) or the SI administrator, Chellie Bowman (langsocialinquiry@newschool.edu). Thank you!

SENIOR WORK PROPOSAL/ADVISOR FORM
Please attach to your proposal
Due 10/24/12 for Spring 2013 graduation

To be completed by the student undertaking a senior thesis project

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

STUDENT I.D. #: _____

TITLE/SUBJECT OF PROJECT: _____

_____

To be completed by the Senior Work advisor:

SENIOR WORK ADVISOR'S NAME: _____

NEW SCHOOL AFFILIATION? ☐ YES; DIVISION:
☐ NO

FULL-TIME NEW SCHOOL FACULTY MEMBER? * ☐ YES ☐ NO
*If you are NOT a New School Faculty member, has your advisee contacted the SI chair for approval?)

PHONE: (one of these telephone numbers should be a number with voicemail)

Work: _____ Home: _____

E-MAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Please read and sign:

I have read and discussed the Senior Work Proposal with the above named student, and *approve it to be forwarded to the Social Inquiry Chair or designee for final approval.* If revisions are deemed necessary I agree to further develop the proposal with the student.

Signature: _____ Date: _____