



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

SOCIOLOGY  
DEPARTMENT

Undergraduate Office  
[wjh.harvard.edu/soc](http://wjh.harvard.edu/soc)

33 Kirkland Street  
650 WJH

## FINAL TIPS to the THESIS IN SOCIOLOGY

**DEADLINE: TUESDAY BEFORE SPRING BREAK, 1:30pm**

**Two copies of the Completed THESIS in standard black thesis binders, with the acknowledgment page removed from bound copy, are due in the Undergraduate Office by 1 pm. Please also send a pdf of your thesis to [lthomas@wjh.harvard.edu](mailto:lthomas@wjh.harvard.edu) on the due date. At that time (1pm), we will host a celebration in honor of your accomplishment.**

Eventually, you may pick up one copy of the thesis; the second will be archived.

You may want to give a copy of the completed thesis to your advisor. She/he will have worked at length with you on it, and will want copies for their libraries, to consult later and share with future students.

**Please note:** On occasion we have had people call up on the afternoon of the day the thesis is due to say that they can't get near the printer, or the computer is down, etc. and they will not be able to turn in the thesis on time. These are not acceptable excuses for a late thesis. Allow time for mechanical and human failures. Do not leave the writing and typing of your thesis to the last minute and thereby leave yourself vulnerable to the cruelties of chance. **Late theses will be marked down** (e.g., from Magna to Cum+, from Cum to Cum-) for each day overdue, weekends included.

### FORMAT OF THE COMPLETED THESIS

Theses in sociology vary widely, from statistical analyses, to interview based research to ethnographies. In fact one year we had an autobiography! Therefore we have no particular requirement about how to organize your thesis. However all theses should follow a few basic rules.

**Abstract:** One copy of a one-page abstract summarizing the thesis, including a brief statement of the topic, the method of research, and the findings must be turned in with the thesis.

**Length:** There is no minimum or maximum length to a sociology thesis. They tend to run between 60 and 100 pages. Some have been considerably longer. Some are shorter. Yours should be long enough to do justice to your topic, and no longer.

**Format:** The font should be Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced. The left margin should be 1.5", the other margins 1". Page numbers should be centered at the bottom of each page, starting with the first page of the introduction. Your thesis should be printed single-sided on acid-free paper. There is **no one way** to put your thesis together, however students often ask and so a *suggestion* would be: title page, abstract, acknowledgments (turned in separately – will be

re-inserted for archiving), table of contents. Page numbering should begin with the body of the thesis.

**Acknowledgment Page:** An acknowledgment page or pages is optional. **If you do include an acknowledgment page, please submit two copies separately.** They will be inserted into the copy returned to you and the copy sent to the archives. Most people do include acknowledgments. If you have received any financial support for your research, such as a Ford grant or another fellowship, you should acknowledge that support.

**Bibliography:** A bibliography should include only the books, articles, and primary sources that you have cited in your thesis.

The department has no specific rules regarding style (e.g. forms of tables and charts, chapter headings). The American Sociological Review publishes its citation rules twice a year as the first couple pages of the journal and you are encouraged to use those, but you are welcome to use any standard format as long as you give due acknowledgment to the work of others that you have used. Discuss these issues with your advisor. Be sure that whatever style you choose you use consistently throughout the thesis.

The introduction to your thesis should state your research question and convince the reader that it is an important one. It should also introduce whatever theoretical perspective you will adopt in trying to answer the question. The body of the thesis should marshal the evidence you have for your thesis or argument. The conclusion should revisit the initial question, discuss how your thinking might have changed over the course of doing the research, discuss any limitations to the work, and summarize the main points you have made. You might also discuss further research that should be done in the area, or policy implications of your more basic research.

You should avoid the use of the passive voice in your writing. It is OK to use the first person--e.g. "I interviewed 50 sailors."

**PRIZES:** There are a number of prizes at Harvard for senior thesis research. The Hoopes prize and the Bowdoin prize are both college wide competitions that are appropriate for Sociology concentrators. For information on other senior thesis prizes, please visit the Harvard University FAS Prize Office page (<http://prizes.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k78478>). Information on deadlines and application procedures are also available.

The Sociology department awards the Albert M. Fulton Prize each year. It is awarded to the student who submits the best thesis "judged by its contents, research methods and literary expression, in the field of Sociology." Your advisor can nominate you for the Fulton Prize. The faculty members of the CUD make the decision, and it is announced at the end of the year party we hold for graduating seniors.

Best wishes Writers. Don't forget to eat and sleep!!!