

Bard College
Anthropology Program
Handbook for Senior Project Proposals & Preparations in Junior Year

What does a senior project in Anthropology entail?

Anthropology engages questions about the relation between cultural practices, identities, ideologies and social life, broadly construed. Senior projects in the program can use a variety of methodologies and approaches: they can be ethnographic (based on fieldwork), they can be historical (using oral histories, archival or secondary sources or museums), they can be comparative/theoretical (e.g. exploring a theory or phenomenon across two or more contexts) or they can be archaeological (e.g. artifact analysis). Some examples of anthropological questions from past senior projects include:

- How does the recent popularity of ‘primitive skills’ culture reflect a larger cultural context of environmental awareness?
- How are meanings surrounding ‘traditional’ contra dance in New England negotiated between generations?
- How are Arab-American immigrant experiences spatially inscribed in urban neighborhoods?
- What is the relationship between gated communities in India and shifts in the global economy? How are class relations constituted in such communities, and what is the relation of class to long-standing social institutions, like caste or religion?

- We encourage students to commence their research for the senior project in the summer between Junior and Senior years. Students will continue both library and field research during their senior year, and can make use of January as another time for fieldwork outside of the Bard area.

- When completed, senior projects are expected to be 60-90 pages long (double-spaced, normal 12 pt font). They typically include an introduction, a conclusion, and three or more body chapters. A bibliography is also required.

How do I prepare for my Senior Project before senior year?

- **Spring semester, junior year:** Meet with advisor to discuss possible topics for senior project.
- **Early April:** For those doing ethnographic research over the summer, submit a proposal to the IRB. Your current academic advisor will sign off on this proposal, even if your senior project advisor has not yet been determined. Submission and decision dates for the IRB committee evaluating proposals can be found each semester on Bard’s IRB website: http://inside.bard.edu/irb/meeting_dates/.
- **Late April:** submit a proposal to your academic advisor. Based on the senior project proposal, the Anthropology program will match each student with an appropriate senior project advisor. If there is a particular faculty member you would like to work with, we will do what we can to pair you with that person.

- **Before the end of the semester**, you should meet with your senior project advisor. Different advisors have different advising styles, so it is a good idea to discuss expectations for the coming year.

What should be included in the Senior Project Proposal? (Length: 1-3 pages, double-spaced)

- A description of the specific problem or question the student wishes to explore as the student currently understands it.
- A description of how the student expects to conduct research on this project with as much practical detail as possible. The student should try to imagine all the possible challenges that could arise in such research and to provide possible solutions. Where are the texts (e.g. in what libraries, archives?)? Does the student need a visa to travel? Or funding?
- A preliminary bibliography of sources relevant to the student's area of interest. This can be place-specific, historical or theoretical. It must include anthropological texts but need not be limited to them. This should include no fewer than 3 sources that you know you want to use for your senior project.
- A list of 3 faculty members the student feels would be ideal advisors for this project.
- Past senior projects can be accessed in full through Bard's Digital Commons: http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/sr_proj_anth/

Midway and Final Boards

Midway: Midway boards occur at the end of the first semester of senior year. Boards will consist of three faculty members (at least two of whom should be faculty in the anthropology program). Written work to be completed for the midway typically includes at least one chapter; bibliography; and an outline of the whole project. This writing should be circulated at least one week in advance of the board date. The midway is a valuable opportunity to receive feedback on the work you have done so far, as well as your conceptualization of the project.

Final Board: The same faculty members who served on your midway board will also serve on your final board. (There may be changes under rare circumstances, but this should only occur in consultation with the advisor and faculty member). At the beginning of the final board, you will be given the option of receiving a letter grade or a pass/fail grade for the project. You will learn immediately after the final board if your senior project has passed; however, you will only receive a final grade once all boards in anthropology have been completed. The final board is an opportunity to defend your argument and point to new possibilities for research.

Grading Criteria Evaluations will be based on the two-semester process as well as the final project, including strength of argument, care with editing (spelling, grammar, etc.), and bibliography.