

Anthropology Major Senior Capstone: Individual Research Project

General program information

The Anthropology major is designed for motivated students who wish to complete their required studies by conducting their own independent research on an anthropological topic done under the guidance of a faculty advisor. The capstone project is required of all majors, and while it can take various forms; the default is a substantive work of scholarship, usually of 8-12k words. The designation of honors in Anthropology is awarded based not only on length, but also on the quality of the argument and research. Students are asked to work closely with faculty mentors who will guide them through the various phases of their research. Students interested in pursuing alternative formats (e.g. video, multimedia) should consult with the Anthropology Director of Undergraduate Studies anth-dus@dornsife.usc.edu, and seek faculty advisors who can guide them appropriately.

Students should prepare for the Anthropology thesis by completing coursework in research methods such as ANTH 410 or equivalent. Students should plan to register for ANTH 411 Anthropology Seminar in the Spring semester of senior year.

Research topic

The research topic of the senior thesis is of the student's choosing, but should be grounded in an anthropological analysis of topics such as technology and media, migration and refugees, global governance, international markets, development and humanitarianism, global health, etc. The senior thesis can be an expansion and re-working of an earlier research paper written for another course, but it must contain substantial original new work.

Academic mentorship

Students are required to find a faculty mentor (or mentors) from the anthropology department at USC. Students should supply the faculty mentor with a written research proposal, which should include sufficient detail so that a determination of the scope and appropriateness of the research topic can be made. Students should seek a mentor who works in their region or theoretical area of research. Ideally, this will be a faculty member they have done coursework with but this is not a formal requirement.

Honors Program in Anthropology

To be considered for Honors in Anthropology, students need a cumulative GPA of 3.5 GPA both in the university as a whole, and in the courses that qualify for the Anthropology major (a USC honors requirement); and complete an Honors Thesis that is certified by its two faculty readers in Anthropology as of honors level. The honors thesis should exceed minimal expectations for the capstone outlined above, but the quality of the argument and supporting materials is more important than the length.

Funding for undergraduate research

Funding for undergraduate research: Students are encouraged to apply for SOAR (for the academic year) and SURF (for summer funding, <https://dornsife.usc.edu/surf-shure/>) to help support the costs of their research for the thesis. Students wishing to conduct independent

research can apply for the Provost's Undergrad Research Fellowships.

<https://academicprograms.usc.edu/services/undergraduate-research-and-experiential-learning/>

IRB clearance

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is an independent ethics committee responsible for reviewing the methods of proposed projects to ensure that research is conducted ethically. Research involving library and archival sources does not require IRB clearance, and participant observation is also usually exempt from IRB clearance.

As a student you are not generally required to seek IRB approval unless you have plans to publish your research, or you are conducting research that has the potential to place your subjects at risk. If you are unsure, contact the IRB Review office: <https://oprs.usc.edu/irb-review/>.

Thesis/Capstone submission deadline:

The full draft of the capstone or thesis project should be submitted by the end of March. It will be read by both the instructor of ANTH 411 and the student's advisor and evaluated by the end of April.