

Advanced Research and Writing

ANTH/SOCI 497 – Fall 2025

“In science, when human behavior enters the equation, things go nonlinear. That’s why Physics is easy and Sociology [+Anthropology] is hard.”

- [Neil deGrasse Tyson \(2016\)](#)

Instructor: Dr. Erick Axxe (he/they)

Email: axxe@hendrix.edu

Office: Mills 220

Office phone: 501.450.1445

Class time: W 2:10-4pm

Class location: Mills 105

Student hours: TR 8:30-9:30 am, W 1-2pm, or by appointment

Course Description

The purpose of our practicum courses is to offer a capstone educational experience for senior majors through the acquisition, integration, appreciation, and application of knowledge in the completion of a senior thesis. Because we have a joint sociology/anthropology major with two different emphases, this is a chance for students and faculty to come together for a common experience. The course includes assigned reading, small assignments, independent research, reflection on our respective fields as well as career and life plans, collaborative learning, seminar discussions, and the completion and presentation of a senior thesis.

In *Advanced Research and Writing*, each student will complete a senior thesis applying and demonstrating their level of knowledge in the major. The class is designed to teach students how to produce high quality research in their field by refining their approach to a topic they have written about in an existing paper, although we also allow well-considered new topics. Using your previous paper as a base, you will expand your sources, consider your methodology and research ethics, and make creative use of sociological and anthropological theory to find new perspectives and deepen your analysis. Refining your research and your writing over the course of a semester allows for deeper engagement than the standard term paper and brings higher expectations. The final product will be approximately 25 pages (exclusive of the bibliography, title page, and any appendices) and will represent a carefully developed and polished senior thesis project.

This course is built on a specifications grading system, meaning assignments and projects are assessed based on clear criteria for completion, with opportunities to revise and improve work to meet expectations. By meeting assignment specifications, you progress through defined achievement levels (Basic, Proficient, or Mastery), empowering you to take control of your learning and focus on skill development.

This course meets in person once a week. Throughout the semester, you will complete assignments, a thesis, and a research presentation. All course materials will be available through Microsoft Teams.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- Analyze the relationship between theory and methods in sociological or anthropological research
- Demonstrate ethical research practices using disciplinary skills and knowledge
- Strengthen analytical and communication skills through discussion, presentation, and writing
- Explore and evaluate post-graduate options, including careers and graduate/professional studies
- Develop professional materials (e.g., résumés, statements, portfolios) tailored to their post-graduate goals

Required Materials and/or Technologies

- Please bring a laptop to class.
- All other course materials will be distributed through Microsoft Teams.

Grading and Faculty Communication

Grades in this course will follow a specifications grading model, with assignments assessed on a pass/fail basis based on clearly defined criteria. Your final grade will be determined by the **bundle** of assignments you successfully complete. Students must meet all criteria within a bundle to earn that grade.

Grading Bundles

- A (Mastery):
 - Complete 90% or more of course assignments with specifications met.
 - Fully participate in 90% or more of class activities.
 - Submit a final thesis that meets all core specifications.
 - Deliver a research presentation that meets all core specifications.
- B (Proficiency):
 - Complete 80–89% of course assignments with specifications met.
 - Participate in 80–89% of class activities.
 - Submit a final thesis that meets all core specifications.
 - Deliver a research presentation that meets all core specifications.
- C (Basic):
 - Complete 70–79% of course assignments with specifications met.
 - Participate in 70–79% of class activities.
 - Submit a final thesis that meets basic specifications.
 - Deliver a research presentation that meets basic specifications.

- D (Needs improvement):
 - Student fails to meet one of the four required specifications.
- F (Fail):
 - Does not meet two or more of the four required specifications.

Attendance Policy: Students with two or more unexcused absences will be ineligible for grades above a “C” due to the importance of class participation in this course. Excused absences include illness, religious observances, or college-related activities, with prior notice required when possible.

Class Participation: To receive credit for the course, each student should attend all class sessions having prepared by doing any assigned reading and completing all written and other assignments. Because we only meet once a week, **only an excused absence will be acceptable if you miss a class.** Students will have the responsibility for organizing/creating some of our class sessions. The course grade will depend on the quality of the student’s contribution to class discussions, peer critiques, and the oral presentation and written thesis. You will bring a laptop to class, but you will not open it unless directed to do so. Active involvement is crucial for collaborative learning.

Weekly Assignments: You will be documenting your progress through various weekly assignments. Annotated bibliographies and other assignments will become sections of your thesis. Unless otherwise stated, you need to submit assignments on Teams before the beginning of class, where we will often use them as a basis for our discussion.

Thesis: The student’s grade in this course will depend on how well they are able to integrate previous course experience in the sociology/anthropology major with new readings, research, experience, and discussion. Each thesis project will be documented and analyzed through assignments, seminar discussions, peer critiques, a written thesis, and an oral presentation at the conclusion of the course. Your work will show that you know how to use the *methodological* and *theoretical* traditions of your respective fields in a meaningful and in-depth way. The written thesis paper should be approximately 25 pages and will draw on your assignments over the course of the term. It will be a *synthesis* of your knowledge and experience including *description*, *sociological/anthropological analysis*, and elements of *self-reflection*. It will be the basis for your oral presentation at the end of the term. While I will grade your thesis, departmental faculty may serve as informal consultants and resources for your senior thesis.

Oral Presentation: At the end of the semester, you will present your thesis in a PowerPoint (or Prezi) and oral presentation. This presentation should cover your theoretical background and literature review, your data and research process, your findings, and the general conclusions/links to the discipline. We also encourage you to present your project at the Arkansas Sociology and Anthropology Undergraduate Symposium or other professional meetings, usually held in the spring.

Capstone Grade: Please note at the end of the semester you will receive a grade for this class as well as for the thesis. As stated in the Hendrix catalog, your senior capstone grade will be the average of the grades for the written thesis and the thesis oral presentation – not necessarily the

same grade you receive for the course. The capstone grade is recorded on your Hendrix transcript separately.

Late Assignments

To encourage consistent progress and timely feedback, assignments must be submitted by the due date.

- Revisions: If an assignment does not meet specifications, you may revise and resubmit within one week of receiving feedback. Revisions must address all identified issues.
- Late Submissions: Late assignments must still meet all specifications to pass. Extensions may be granted at the instructor's discretion if requested in advance.

Instructor Feedback and Response Time

- Preferred contact method: If you have a general question about the course, please use our course's [discussion board Q & A on Teams](#). Otherwise, please email my Hendrix email address (axxe@hendrix.edu). I will reply to the discussion board and emails within **48 hours on days when class is in session at the college**.
- Class announcements: I will send all important class-wide messages through the [General](#) tab on Teams.
- Grading and feedback: For assignments submitted before the due date, I will try to provide feedback and grades within **four days**. Assignments submitted after the due date may have reduced feedback, and grades may take longer to be posted.

Hendrix Resources

Academic integrity: Our academic integrity policy may be found in the 2025-26 Catalog in section [D.6.c.Academic Integrity](#). Assignments must reflect your original work. Properly cite any sources used. The use of AI to compose your papers for this class is considered academic dishonesty and will be reported to the Committee on Academic Integrity. Do not use ChatGPT or other interfaces to write a first draft of a paper and then edit it. Do not write a draft and then check an online source for ideas about your structure. These assignments are designed to bring your thoughts and ideas into the course and to develop your writing skills. Using AI to write a paper undermines both goals of the assignments. Oftentimes, students use AI because they feel stress and time pressures. If you're in such a situation, rather than use AI, contact me and ask for an extension.

Statement on diversity: Hendrix College values a diverse learning environment as outlined in the College's Statement on Diversity. All members of this community are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the community. If you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, please contact the Dean of Students Office (Donna Eddleman, Eddleman@hendrix.edu or the submit a [Title IX report](#). If you have ideas for improving the inclusivity of the classroom experience please feel free to contact Dr. Axxe. For more information on Hendrix non-discrimination policies visit [Hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination](https://hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination).

[Title IX Reports of Discrimination Based on Sex, including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking, Dating Violence, or Gender-Based Harassment.](#) (Follow link to see details.)

Health and wellbeing: Hendrix recognizes that many students face mental and/or physical health challenges. If your health status will impact attendance or assignments, please communicate with me as

soon as possible. If you would like to implement academic accommodations, contact Julie Brown in the office of Academic Success (brownj@hendrix.edu). To maintain optimal health, please utilize campus resources like Hendrix Medical Clinic or Counseling Services (501.450.1448). Your health and wellbeing are important.

Class attendance: Our attendance policy may be found in the 2025-26 Catalog in section [D.6.e. Class Attendance](#). **If students must be absent from class, they are expected to email Dr. Axxe before class.** Without prior notification, absences are unexcused (barring true emergencies). Students will be excused for absences resulting from observance of religious holidays, cases of illness, and athletic competition, as well as any additional reasons as determined by the classroom teacher (e.g., conference travel, Model UN). Students do not need to present third-party documentation for absences related to physical or mental illness. Misrepresenting reasons for an absence to a classroom teacher is a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is a community of peers ready to assist you with your writing projects, in all genres and fields, and at any stage of development. We work with you in one-on-one meetings that you can book in advance, or you can just drop in at our office in Bailey Library. Virtual appointments are available for medical reasons or by special arrangement. To book appointments and for more information, visit www.hendrix.edu/writingcenter/ or contact pruneda@hendrix.edu. We look forward to working with you!

Hendrix Bailey Library: Bailey Library's mission is to collaborate and empower all members of our community so that they become their best selves, cherish the scope of human knowledge, and positively contribute to the world. Whether face-to-face or remote, librarians are happy to help locate quality resources supporting research and classroom work and to assist with the critical evaluation of academic information. Librarians provide individual research assistance by appointment. The library building is open seven days a week, and access to the library's online resources is available 24/7. You can visit the library's website at <https://www.hendrix.edu/baileylibrary/> for more information, to book an appointment, and to access the library's Discovery search, Class Guides, and full-text article databases.

ADA accommodations: As your instructor, it is my legal obligation to ensure that all students have equal access to course materials and equal opportunity to perform well in the course. In addition, "It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Students should contact Mr. Blake Draper in the Office of Advising & Academic Success (AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu) to begin the accommodation process. Any student seeking accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course."

Technology: I ask that you please bring a laptop or tablet to class. All readings will be distributed digitally, so this will also allow you to have the materials in class. Much of the technology we interact with is made to be addictive. I suggest you find and use resources that will help you resist distractions. [Here's](#) a website with a list of website blockers. Similar software exists for apps on phones and tablets.

Additional Resources

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

- **Local housing shelters and women's shelters:** Research indicates that a number of low-income college students face homelessness or transient/insecure housing accommodations. Affordable Colleges Online's website provides statistics about college homelessness as well a way to locate local services.
- **Food Pantries:** Here's a list of local food pantries.
- **Zotero:** Zotero is a free citation management software.
- **Grammarly:** Grammarly is a free software that checks and suggests fixes to grammatical errors.
- An [inclusive data resource hub](#).

CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

- Wed., 8/27 Introductions, Course Syllabus (1st hour)
Discussion of Thesis Guidelines; Collective Work on Thesis in Working Groups (2nd hour)
Read: 1) Fröhlich – [How students should write a thesis in the AI age](#)
DUE: 2) Proposals
- Wed., 9/3 Major's Meeting (1st hour)
Zotero Training (2nd hour)
Read: 1) [White \(2005\)](#)
DUE: 2) Refined thesis proposal
- Wed., 9/10 Alumni less than 1 year out (1st hour) (Frankie Franco)
Discussion of Good Introductions (2nd hour)
Watch: [Graduate School – Yea or Nay?](#)
DUE: Initial Annotated Bibliography (Find and read 5 articles from the sociological/anthropological literature that relate to your project)
- Wed., 9/17 Alumni 1 year out (1st hour) (Lauren Allen and Isaac Jimenez)
Ethics & Research Discussion: Various ethical issues involved in research, including the ethics codes of our disciplines and the HSRB process at Hendrix (2nd hour)
Watch: 1) [How'd you Start Your Career?](#)
Read: 2) ASA and AAA code of ethics and Hendrix HSRB Policies.
DUE: 3) Outline for your thesis.
- Wed., 9/24 Alumni 5 years out (1st hour) (Kevin Martin-Arnold and Sarah Buford)
Thinking about Theory, Ethics, and Research (2nd hour)
Watch: [General Advice](#)
DUE: Write HSRB proposal if collecting new data; if not, write a 2-3 page discussion of your data and ethical considerations for your project and your general line of inquiry (i.e., method). Link this to a detailed discussion of your methods and those typical of your line of inquiry.
- Wed., 10/1 Career Services, Employments and Careers (1st hour)
Discussion of Anthropological and Sociological Voice (2nd hour)
Read: 1) Eckstein et al., "The Voice of Sociology: Obstacles to..."
Salzman, "What Anthropologists Look For"
Hill and Goldberg, "Thinking Like an Anthropologist"
2) Look at ASA or AAA websites and explore two of the association sections (e.g., Society for the Anthropology of Work or ASA Section on Crime, Law, and Deviance). Follow an area of interest you have and a topic that you know nothing about; get a sense of what is most important to the ASA and the AAA

by taking a holistic view of the websites, looking for similarities as well as differences.

DUE: 3) Annotated Bibliography (five more sources)

Wed., 10/8

Group Work (1st hour)

State of the Disciplines with SOCI/ANTH Dept. faculty (2nd hour)

Read: Santos (2025) – *Ethnographies of a Dying Discipline*

Zhan and Xu (2024) – *Seeking Clarity at a Time of Confusion*

Misra (2024) – *Sociological Solutions*

DUE: Five pages of your thesis, including discussion of your theoretical consideration

Wed., 10/15

Clinton School Representative (1st hour)

Mid-semester Check-in (Data, analysis, planning) (2nd hour)

DUE: Five more pages of your thesis

Wed., 10/22

Stacey Schwartzkopf (1st Hour)

Begin peer review in class; guidelines and checklist (2nd hour)

DUE: 10 pages of thesis draft for peer critique

Wed., 10/29

Discuss peer reviews (1st hour)

Checking in on thesis projects and troubleshooting (2nd hour)

Watch: [Four videos from Career Services on resume writing](#) or [read this document on how to develop a CV](#).

DUE: Complete your peer review using the guidelines passed out in class. Provide your partner with the marked up (track changes) copy by class time.

Develop a resume (job oriented) or a CV (academic oriented).

Wed., 11/5

Anne Goldberg (1st hour)

Cover letter/personal statement workshop (2nd hour)

Read: [How to write a personal statement](#) OR [how to write a cover letter](#)

DUE: Write 1-2 pages responding to the peer review (What was helpful? What was not? How will you use it to revise your thesis?)

Select a job you would apply to and write a cover letter OR write a personal statement for a post-secondary program.

Wed., 11/12

Erick Axxe (1st hour)

Group work and discussion of the presentations (2nd hour)

DUE: FULL Thesis Draft

Wed., 11/19

Group Counseling, Q&A (1st hour)

Shanel Khaliq (2nd hour)

Wed., 12/3

DUE: Senior Thesis

Tues., 12/16

Presentations, 8:30 am-12:30 pm