



# **BA Honours in Sociology: Information Handbook for Students**

## Contents

1. WELCOME .....	3
2. WHY DO A “B.A. HONOURS” IN SOCIOLOGY?.....	4
3. THE BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONOURS PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY AT MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY.....	4
5. CONTINUED ENROLLMENT IN THE HONOURS PROGRAM.....	6
6. GRADUATION .....	6
8. SLGY 5110 and SLGY 5120: THE HONOURS COURSES.....	11
9. WHAT IS AN HONOURS THESIS? .....	11
10. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES.....	12
11. YOUR SUPERVISOR’S RESPONSIBILITIES.....	12
12. RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR READER OR ADJUNCT (OPTIONAL).....	12
13. WRITING YOUR HONOURS THESIS .....	12
14. PRESENTATION OF YOUR THESIS RESEARCH .....	13
15. RESOURCES.....	14

## 1. WELCOME

This Handbook has been prepared to give you, the student, an overview of the Honours Program in Sociology at Mount Royal University. It will help you decide whether you want to apply for admission to the Program. This Handbook provides the information you need to determine whether you are eligible for admission and explains the application process. If you are admitted to the Program, this Handbook will also serve as the key resource to guide you through your Sociology Honours experience.

Information on all Honours programs in the Faculty of Arts, including Sociology, can be found in the MRU Calendar. We hope that you find this Handbook helpful.

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## **2. WHY DO A “B.A. HONOURS” IN SOCIOLOGY?**

An Honours degree recognizes academic excellence. The Honours Program in Sociology offers dedicated undergraduate students the opportunity to conduct independent research under the supervision of a full-time faculty member in Sociology who has expertise in the student's chosen research area. You will submit the results of your research in the form of an Honours thesis or project. When you successfully complete the Honours Program, you will be well-positioned to apply to academic graduate schools because many universities prefer an Honours degree with a thesis component. An Honours degree is also helpful in applying to professional graduate programs. The Honours program provides you with research, writing and analytical skills that may be useful in further studies and/or employment. Completing an Honours thesis is also useful in developing research skills, even if graduate school or law school is not your intended path, and employers may also see having a B.A. (Honours) degree on your resume as desirable.

## **3. THE BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONOURS PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY AT MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY**

### **SPECIFIC GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:**

The Sociology Honours major is a competitive program designed to provide exceptional students with the opportunity to study sociology in more depth and with a sharper focus. Honours students must meet the general graduation requirements for the Bachelor of Arts with Honours as indicated in the General Graduation Requirements – Bachelor of Arts with Honours section of this calendar. In addition, Sociology Honours students must meet the following graduation requirements.

#### **Specific Sociology Honours Graduation Course Requirements:**

Students admitted prior to 2017-18 will use archived calendars available [here](#). Students admitted in 2017-18 will use the archived calendar available [here](#).

To review specific calendar year requirements, please meet with the Sociology [Advisor](#).

## **4. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION TO THE HONOURS PROGRAM**

Normally, you would apply for admission to the Honours Program when you are in the **third or second-to-last** year of your Program. In other words, students need to have completed 20 courses before they can apply to the Honours Program. By the end of your third or second-to-last year, you should have completed SLGY 2131, SLGY 3321, SLGY 3323, and SLGY 3333. If you are admitted to the Honours Program, you would then take the two Honours courses, SLGY 5110 and SLGY 5120, in your **fourth or final year**.

## **Application and Admission Process**

For the first step, to be done well in advance of the **May 1 application deadline** of your **third or second-to-last** year, you should meet with potential supervisors (defined as full-time Mount Royal University Sociology faculty) to discuss your interest in the Honours Program and possible topics for an Honours thesis or project. As part of your application, you are required to submit a detailed description of your proposed Honours research to the Department of Sociology & Anthropology. Your description should result from discussions with the person whom you would like to supervise your research.

In order to apply for entrance into the Honours Stream, students must complete an Application for Admission into the Honours Program, available online. Before applying for Honours, students must also have declared a major in the Honours discipline. Students may apply for entrance into Honours between March 1 and May 1 of the academic year in which they have successfully completed twenty (20) courses. To be **admitted** into the Sociology Honours Program, a student must present a minimum Grade Point Average of 3.30 in the last 10 courses completed.

After May 1, the full-time Sociology faculty will meet to review applications and decide which students will be accepted into the Honours Program. At this meeting, both GPA and the proposed thesis topic will be considered, with emphasis placed on the fit between the projects proposed by the students and the research expertise and interests of full-time Sociology faculty members. By **June 1**, the Sociology Coordinator will informally notify you whether you have been accepted into the Honours Program and, if you have, who will be your thesis supervisor. Formal notification of acceptance into the Honours Program will come from the Chair of the Department over the summer. In this notification, students will be given instructions on how to accept the offer.

## **5. CONTINUED ENROLLMENT IN THE HONOURS PROGRAM**

### ***Continuance Requirements — Honours***

To continue in the Honours program, a student is required to maintain a GPA of 3.3 in each semester. Should a student fail to maintain a term GPA of 3.30, that student will revert to the Majors stream for a BA in Sociology.

## **6. GRADUATION**

### ***Eligibility to Graduate***

To be eligible to graduate from a Mount Royal program, a student must have been officially admitted into that program and normally must complete at least 25% of the graduation requirements as a student within the program, except where written approval has been given by the dean/director of the faculty/centre/school.

To be eligible to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts with a Major, students must satisfactorily complete all the General Graduation Requirements for the BA with a Major as well as all the Specific Graduation Requirements for their Major area of study. To be eligible to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours, students must also satisfactorily complete all the General Graduation Requirements for the BA with Honours as well as all the Specific Graduation Requirements for the BA with Honours for their area of study. Students completing the Honours Program who have failed to satisfy all the requirements for an Honours degree but who have satisfied all requirements for a BA Major degree shall receive a BA Major degree upon graduation. Students must follow the graduation application procedure outlined in the current Mount Royal Calendar. Applications must be submitted by the date published in the Calendar.

A student who has graduated with a Bachelor of Arts may not apply to enter Honours in the same discipline in which he or she has received the Bachelor of Arts degree.

## 7. AREAS OF EXPERTISE OF FULL-TIME SOCIOLOGY FACULTY

**Esra Ari-Erol, Ph.D.**, I welcome opportunities to advise students in my research areas. My primary areas of interest are the sociology of migration and Critical Race Theory (CRT). My research examines how racialization intersects with immigration, citizenship, and identity construction. My recent research also engages with postcolonial literature to explore the complex relationship between the everyday experiences of racialized groups and global power structures. Feel free to contact me if you work in these areas and are passionate about your work. My expectation from students who are willing to work with me is an in-depth theoretical and critical discussion. I will be happy to discuss your research project with you.

**Muhammad Ayyash, Ph.D.**, I would be happy to supervise students in several areas. My teaching and research interests include the study of violence, social and political theory, postcolonial studies, transnational social movements, youth and social change, as well as the history, culture and politics of the Middle East and North Africa.

Please feel free to contact me if you think your project may fall within one or more of these areas. I will expect theoretical and analytical depth from your work. If you are committed and passionate about your project, and if you are willing to challenge yourself and push the limits of your thinking and writing, then we will be able to work well together throughout this important and fulfilling process.

**David Aveline, Ph.D.**, I began my academic career late in life after a number of jobs, including race track groom, underground miner, and counselor to young offenders. I did not attend university until age 33. Subsequently, I earned a B.A. and M.A. in Sociology at Concordia University (Montreal) and a Ph.D. at Indiana University (Bloomington) with a concentration in Human Sexuality. I would be happy to supervise any student willing to put the effort into formulating and executing an Honours-level thesis providing that person has a good sense of direction and a willingness to learn. My research interests are primarily in beliefs in the paranormal, 2SLGBT+ studies, and human sexuality, and I also have secondary interests in the Sociology of the Body and the Sociology of Religion.

**Tom Buchanan, Ph.D.**, I came to Mount Royal in 2012 and am transitioning back into teaching after ten years as Chair. Please do not hesitate to email me to set up an appointment. I would be more than happy to discuss the honours program and potential topics or supervisors with you at any time. I work with students on research from time to time and may be open to an honour's student. My work has involved examining race and gender gaps and differences in work, pay, and parenting. I am also interested in helicopter parenting and its impact on well-being. I have also examined university faculty attitudes regarding students experiencing disabilities and the impact of accommodations on academic

performance. I would encourage you to look at my profile on the department's webpage to get a sense of my research topics. Given the tight timeframe of the honours program, I would be most interested in a quantitative project using secondary data. I have presented and published with students and am very interested in students' successful transition from university, whether that be working in a sociological job directly or going to a graduate program in a sociological or professional field.

**Brant Downey, Ph.D.**, I am willing to work with students on a broad range of topics. My theoretical interests are wide; however, I do not have a strong background in statistical analysis. Qualitative analysis is my preferred approach, although including some descriptive statistics or a minor quantitative aspect is certainly not a problem. That means I am open to discussing a variety of theoretical frameworks for student projects, as opposed to dictating one approach. Students who are already certain about a theoretical structure for their thesis will find a supportive ear, and perhaps some novel ideas on how to best proceed. In addition, I believe that good writing comes only from careful editing and rewriting, and so I take my role of providing critical feedback throughout the process seriously. As for getting started, I suggest you arrange to meet with me, and then come to my office with a one-page outline of your proposal, as well as some initial questions to help move your project forward.

**Terri-Lynn Fox, Ph.D.**, My teaching, research, and supervision are grounded in Indigenous research methodologies, relational accountability, and community-engaged scholarship. I work closely with students who are interested in qualitative research, Indigenous and decolonizing approaches, health and wellness, family and kinship, recovery and healing, governance, and community-based social change.

As an honours supervisor, I support students in developing projects that are ethically grounded, theoretically informed, and meaningful to both the student and the communities they are engaging with. I value research that is reflective, respectful, and attentive to lived experience, particularly projects that center Indigenous perspectives, relational ethics, and strengths-based approaches.

I am especially well-suited to supervise honours projects using qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, storytelling, narrative and thematic analysis), community-engaged or participatory approaches, and projects that explore social issues such as health and wellness, mental health and addictions, family systems, Indigenous governance, culture-based healing, and social policy. I welcome students who are curious, reflective, and committed to learning how research can be done in a good way.

**Caroline McDonald-Harker, Ph.D.**, I welcome opportunities to supervise students in a number of different areas in which I have expertise, including: sociology of the family, parenthood/parenting, children and adolescents, disaster, mental health, trauma and resilience, gender, domestic violence/abuse, social psychology, and mixed methods (quantitative and/or qualitative research methods). If you are interested in pursuing an Honours thesis in the areas listed above, or in other related areas, please feel free to contact me to further discuss your areas of interest. When advising students, my approach/style is very hands-on. From the very beginning, I provide an outline for your thesis and will work very

closely with you to guide you in completing each section of the thesis, including the development of research questions, selection of theoretical framework(s) and methodological approach(es) for collecting and analyzing data, and completion of an ethics application (if applicable). I provide specific deadlines for when you are to hand in drafts of your thesis in order to provide you with detailed and timely feedback. Throughout the Honours program, you can expect to meet with me bi-weekly for approximately one hour, and as needed. I am willing to dedicate as much time and effort in assisting you with your Honours thesis and helping you succeed in the program. I will challenge you to do the very best work that you possibly can to produce a high-quality Honours thesis in Sociology.

**Shane Gannon, Ph.D.**, I remember loving two things about writing my Sociology honours thesis: the sheer delight in engaging in an in-depth research project that emerged out of my academic interests; and the relationship that I developed with my honours supervisor. Partially because of this, I think that it is really important to find a supervisor who works well with you and your project. To speak to the latter, I can supervise students who wish to engage theoretically with various fields of Sociology: imperial studies/colonialism/post-colonialism, historical Sociology, cultural studies, globalization, pedagogy, gender and sexuality. While I dabble in various theoretical perspectives, my strengths are rooted in post-colonial, post-structural, and critical theories, with a preference for theories of the subject and queer theory. I warn you: if you approach me as a potential supervisor, I will do my best to transform your project into a theoretical one!

Since I think that the relationship that an honours student has with her/his supervisor is central to the process, I prefer a face-to-face -- if not dialogical -- style of interaction. The best ideas are born of engagement and collaboration. Consequently, I would usually prefer that students approach me with their topic and see how our dynamic interpretations translate it into a project. To facilitate such a meeting, I prefer that potential students bring a one- or two-page proposal of the possible topic to the discussion; it can range from a statement of interest to a fully fleshed-out proposal. Not only do I want to see how we collectively understand the project, but I want to ensure that I am competent to give any honour student all that they deserve in a supervisor.

Further to my vision of the relationship between an honours student and supervisor, if we agree to work together, I like to meet with honours students once a week for approximately one hour. Again, I think that ideas germinate and flourish in active discussion. If this is too onerous for you, I might not be the best supervisor for your project.

**Tim Haney, Ph.D.**, I welcome opportunities to advise students in several areas. My primary areas of expertise are environmental sociology, the sociology of disaster, sociology of science, and urban sociology. Across all of these areas, my overarching focus is on issues of inequality, social justice, environmental justice, sustainability, social networks, and resilience. Although I have advised qualitative honours projects, my primary interest is in unique and innovative approaches to quantitative analysis, either drawn from survey data or Census data.

Students working in these areas should feel free to approach me and discuss ideas that you have in mind. By our first formal meeting, I will likely ask you to write a short memo on your proposed project so that I can properly assess the extent to which I can be of assistance. Since the honours thesis combines theory, method, and particular areas of interest, I will expect you to address all three. Ideas evolve over time, but your memo will provide a starting point for our collaboration. As an honours thesis advisor, I will challenge you to make your project one of theoretical depth and clarity, methodological rigour, and substantive importance. To achieve that goal, I will provide detailed feedback within a reasonable timeline, but I expect that students will also meet all deadlines and will submit new drafts that are responsive to my prior comments (not warmed-over rehashing). In other words, I expect you to continually revise and improve your writing, and I look forward to working with you through this process.

**Tracy Nielsen, Ph.D.**, I am willing to work with students who want to use the practice and theory of radical Sociology toward a close scrutiny of any aspect of domination, oppression and resistance (race, sexuality, gender). My research and pedagogy stress the dialectical nature of consciousness and social structure, and thus students should be interested in social dynamics of consciousness, experience and socialized self.

**Roberta Pamplona, Ph.D.**, I am willing to work with students on a broad range of topics. My areas of specialization include postcolonial theories, violence, law and society, social movements, feminist theories, and transnational sociology. My research and teaching examine how structures of power shape experiences of violence and resistance across social contexts, how legal and institutional responses to violence are produced and contested, and how these dynamics affect communities and collective action. I am interested in how political forces intersect to inform responses to harm and inequalities, and what these processes mean for activism and public policies.

In my role as a supervisor, I approach mentorship with care and a critical perspective. I work closely with students to foster their intellectual curiosity while helping them develop strong sociological thinking and research skills. Through a supportive, structured supervisory relationship, I hope to encourage students to ask meaningful questions and build confidence in their sociological perspective, enabling them to integrate research with their interests.

**Irene Shankar, Ph.D.**, I welcome opportunities to advise students in several areas. My primary areas of interest are the sociology of health and the history of medicine. I am particularly interested in examining issues of health and social inequality (such as gender, race, ability, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, and class). My research involves a critical social (de)construction of health and illness. For instance, my interest lies in understanding how a certain illness or disease (such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) is understood and constructed by society. My secondary areas include qualitative methodology, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies.

The above areas represent a broad overview of my areas of competence and expertise. Students working in these areas should approach me with an idea of what research project they would like to complete. As an honours thesis advisor, I will challenge you to make your project one of theoretical depth and clarity, methodological rigour, and substantive importance. To achieve that lofty goal, I will provide detailed feedback within a reasonable timeline, but I expect that students will also meet all deadlines and will submit new drafts that are responsive to my prior comments. In other words, you will continually revise and improve your writing.

**Isha Sharma, Ph.D.**, My primary topics of interest in advising students in their honours thesis are in the areas of inequality and globalization. This sounds too broad, so let me narrow it down. In the area of inequality, I am most passionate about questions pertaining to class and material inequality. I would be eager to work with students who would like to explore various aspects and effects of material inequality. I am also interested in assisting students who wish to pursue the examination of class inequality comparatively. I would be interested to work with students doing research work in areas of income inequality, poverty and well-being.

Concerning globalization, I am particularly interested in investigative work pertaining to the impact of global economic policies on particular societies. For instance, I would be interested in guiding students in looking at how projects/policies conceived by international institutions like the World Bank or International Monetary Fund have impacted on third world societies. In general, I am interested in helping students form questions and find answers around how Sociological theories contribute to the understanding and explanation of the globalizing processes/policies as advocated by the global economic institutions. These kinds of studies are mostly case studies based on library research.

## **8. SLGY 5110 and SLGY 5120: THE HONOURS COURSES**

Students who are enrolled in the Honours stream in Sociology must complete two courses: SLGY 5110 – Honours Research I (normally to be completed in the fall) and SLGY 5120 - Honours Research II (normally to be completed in the winter). These courses will provide the opportunity for students to be engaged in an original sociological research project. In SLGY 5110, students will develop research competence through discussions with their supervisors and their honours students' cohort, conduct an in-depth literature review on their specified topic, and formulate an honours thesis proposal at the end of the semester.

The primary objective of SLGY 5110 is to provide students with fundamental research skills, clear and concise writing skills, and formal public speaking skills. In particular, faculty efforts will be geared toward building students' research and writing skills. Emphasis will also be placed on the students' ability to think critically and independently, to organize their time efficiently, and on their ability to design a significant and well-planned research project. Students will be expected to work independently, take personal responsibility and initiative for a variety of tasks, and be diligent and persistent in achieving their goals. Although students will work closely with their faculty supervisors, each student is the primary agent of all phases of the research and this course.

## **9. WHAT IS AN HONOURS THESIS?**

The Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Sociology requires you to complete an Honours thesis under the supervision of a full-time faculty member, known as your “supervisor.” The Honours thesis will normally be 30 – 60 pages in length. Note that this refers to the body of the thesis text and does not include title pages, notes, references cited, figures, tables, maps, or appendices. In undertaking an Honours thesis, your goals are (1) to develop the capacity to conduct and report on independent research and (2) to demonstrate that your analysis answers the research question(s) you have laid out for the thesis. The thesis must be submitted in written form and presented orally.

Your supervisor has the primary responsibility to guide you in the development of your thesis topic and in your research and writing processes. After initial discussion, you and your supervisor may choose to invite a Reader or an Adjunct to contribute his or her expertise to the thesis research. A Reader is a full-time faculty member at Mount Royal, either in Sociology or in another department or discipline on campus, who has expertise relevant to your thesis topic. An adjunct is a scholar who is not a full-time faculty member at Mount Royal or who may in fact be from outside the University, but who has expertise related to your thesis topic.

## **10. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Your supervisor will guide you, but the Honours thesis is your project! It is your responsibility to:

- formulate your ideas,
- plan your research,
- conduct your research,
- plan your thesis,
- organize and write drafts of your thesis,
- meet regularly with your supervisor and/or Reader or Adjunct,
- complete and submit your thesis,
- prepare and give your oral thesis presentation, and
- meet all deadlines.

Expect to meet regularly with your supervisor and to attend these meetings well prepared to discuss progress on your Honours thesis or project.

## **11. YOUR SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

- It is your supervisor's responsibility to guide and instruct you in the research process, not to design or conduct your research or to write your thesis.
- Your supervisor should be available to meet with you. As a guideline, a meeting should take place normally a minimum of once per month.
- Your supervisor should advise you on the establishment of a realistic timeline for the completion of the various steps involved in your thesis research.
- Your supervisor will grade your work in SLGY 5110 and SLGY 5120.

## **12. RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR READER OR ADJUNCT (OPTIONAL)**

- An external reader is optional, and that person will be identified during either SLGY 5110 or SLGY 5120.
- The Reader or Adjunct may provide specialized knowledge, research stimulus, guidance, and/or feedback on a regular or occasional basis to help you design and carry out your thesis research and to write your thesis. His or her role is **supplementary** to that of the supervisor.
- A Reader or Adjunct is not involved in formally assigning grades to your work in SLGY 5110 or SLGY 5120.

## **13. WRITING YOUR HONOURS THESIS**

An Honours thesis normally includes a research question(s), a literature review, methodology, results, and a discussion of the significance of your findings. It should demonstrate that the student is familiar with published literature on the topic, that appropriate research methods

have been selected and correctly applied, that critical interpretation or analysis has been undertaken, that the findings have been contextualized, and that any original contributions to the field of study have been clearly identified.

## **Format and Style**

Normally, the thesis will include the following:

- ❖ Title Page
- ❖ Abstract (150-250 words)
- ❖ Acknowledgements (optional)
- ❖ Table of Contents
- ❖ List of Tables (if any)
- ❖ List of Figures, Maps, and Illustrations (if any)
- ❖ List of Symbols, Abbreviations, Nomenclature (if any)
- ❖ Contents (30 to 60 pages) are determined by the supervisor but may include the following:
  - Introduction
  - Literature Review
  - Theoretical Framework
  - Research Methods
  - Analyses/Findings/Discussion
  - Conclusions
- ❖ References Cited/Bibliography
- ❖ Appendices (if any)

Text must be in 12-point font. (If the selected referencing style allows footnotes, they may be in a smaller font.)

Normally, a single style of font must be used throughout the entire thesis.

The left margin must be 1.5 inches. All other margins must be 1 inch.

Lines of text must be double-spaced.

Topic headings may be used, but are not required.

It is recommended that all pages of the thesis be numbered. The first page of the body of the text is page 1. Pages preceding it, with the exception of the title page, are numbered using lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.).

## **14. PRESENTATION OF YOUR THESIS RESEARCH**

You will not be required to present your research proposal at the end of SLGY 5110; however, you and your supervisor can request to present your research proposal during the Anthropology Honours Research Proposal Presentation. At the end of SLGY 5120, each Honours student will make an oral presentation of his or her thesis research, alongside other Honours students within the department (Sociology and Anthropology Honours students).

### **RESOURCES**

Becker, Howard S.

1986. Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article. Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press.

Greetham, Bryan.

2009. How to Write Your Undergraduate Dissertation. Palgrave Study Skills. Hounds-mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lipson, Charles.

2005. How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper. A Chicago Guide to Writing, Editing and Publishing. Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press.