



**The BA Thesis**  
**ANTHROPOLOGY**  
**Requirements, Recommendations, and Resources**

**The BA thesis in anthropology at Maynooth is a capstone project providing students with a unique opportunity to explore in depth a social problem, scholarly question, or cultural phenomenon from an anthropological perspective. Because the discipline comparatively and holistically addresses every aspect of human experience and practice, just about any topic can be given anthropological salience. Students therefore have a chance to conduct serious, sustained inquiry into their own sources of fascination.**

**The pathway described in this document is intended to clarify and strengthen the relationship between students and their thesis advisors, to afford productive use of the first semester of the third year, and to articulate prudent milestones in the second term of the third year for completing the thesis in a timely fashion. This explainer specifies these milestones, and provides basic information regarding the BA thesis as a finished document.**

## **Requirements for Completion.**

- Theses should be approximately 10,000 words in length.
- The thesis should be formatted according to the Style Guide below.
- Each thesis must include (in this order): Title Page, Abstract (page i), Disclaimers regarding GDPR and plagiarism (page ii), (optionally) Acknowledgements (page iii), Table of Contents (page iv), main text (e.g., Chapters, beginning on page 1), and Works Cited. Some students may wish to add a Preface, List of figures, Appendices, and so on, as necessary.
- Final drafts of theses are due by 5PM, the second Friday of May.
- Provided the manuscript complies with Department requirements, students should provide one bound copy of the finished document for archiving in the Department Library and a .pdf of the final printed thesis should also be returned to [anthropology.office@mu.ie](mailto:anthropology.office@mu.ie), as well as to the student's thesis advisor.

## Style guide for the Maynooth BA Thesis in Anthropology.

- All BA theses submitted to the Department of Anthropology should use the style and citation guidelines of the American Anthropologist.
- These guidelines must be applied to the Abstract, main text, Works Cited, Figures, Tables, and so on. All citations must include complete reference information in the Works Cited section.
- The thesis should be sequenced as follows: Title Page, Abstract (page i), Disclaimers regarding GDPR and plagiarism (page ii), (optionally) Acknowledgements (page iii), Table of Contents (page iv), Main Text (beginning on page 1), and Works Cited. See pertinent examples following these guidelines. Some students may wish to add a Preface, Lists of Figures, Appendices, and so on, as necessary.
- All pages in your thesis should be numbered at the bottom center using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3 . . .), including Main Text, Works Cited, Figures, and Tables). The Title page is not numbered. Preliminary pages (Abstract, Table of Contents, Lists of Figures, Acknowledgements, use small Roman numerals (i, ii, iii . . .).
- The thesis must include an Abstract of 100-200 words immediately following the Title page. The abstract concisely summarises the thesis (research problem or issue, methods, and major arguments). Do not cite references in the abstract.
- All theses are produced using Helvetica in 12pt, double-spaced.
- The use of footnotes or endnotes for “additional information” is discouraged. If necessary, use endnotes rather than footnotes. Endnotes appear in sequence at the end of the main text as a separate section titled “Endnotes”; in the text they are indicated in superscript. The Endnotes section is single-spaced, double-space between each note.
- The thesis should include a complete “Works Cited” section—*this is not a “Bibliography”*—and should follow the American Anthropologist style indicated above. The Works Cited must include both *all* and *only* the references formally cited in the thesis. The thesis advisor can be consulted on appropriate citations for archival sources, interviews, museum records, and other research data.
- Figures and tables should be sharp, clear, readable, and directly referenced in the thesis text. Figures include: diagrams, photographs, drawings, graphics, illustrations, and maps. They should be numbered in sequence “Figure 1,” “Figure 2,” and so on. Tables are labelled in a separate letter sequence, e.g., “Table A,” “Table B”. Like figures, to be included, tables must be referred to at least once in the text.
- The text, tables and figures of the thesis should have a 2.5 cm margin on all sides. Text should be double spaced except for the Title Page, Abstract, Table of Contents, long quoted passages (“block” quotes), Works Cited, and Endnotes, Captions, etc., when appropriate.

## **Title Page Format**

Your title page is unnumbered. All text of the title page should be centered and have the same font as the main text. Your title page should have the following elements (note the use of upper and lower case):

**[TITLE OF THE UNDERGRADUATE THESIS IN UPPER CASE]**

**By**

**[Author's Name]**

**Submitted to the  
Department of Anthropology  
Maynooth University**

**Thesis Advisor: [name of the Thesis Advisor]  
Head of Department: [Name of HoD]**

**[Year]**

I consent for my thesis to be shared with other Anthropology students. I understand that access will be granted and monitored via the staff of the anthropology office.

I do not consent for my thesis to be shared with other Anthropology students.

I have read and understood the Departmental policy on plagiarism.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education.

Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

# The BA Thesis

# ANTHROPOLOGY

## Requirements, Recommendations, and Resources

## Timeline

### By Friday 17 May 2024:

All single honours anthropology students or others wishing to pursue the BA thesis in anthropology must notify the Anthropology Department by Friday 17 May 2024. Students need to identify a possible advisor, communicate with them directly (via email, Teams, etc.), and agree on a working thesis title with them. The proposed advisor and title must be emailed to [anthropology.office@mu.ie](mailto:anthropology.office@mu.ie) by 5PM on 17 May. This is the student's responsibility. Students planning to do the BA thesis in anthropology also must sign up for the third year BA thesis preparation module in semester one of the 2024-25 school year.

### Summer 2024:

Students generally begin thesis research over this period of time, either in archival or library contexts, or else by making initial forays into ethnographic fieldwork. Whether pursuing a library thesis or one based on fieldwork, students should use skills learned in AN210 to dive into their own research projects.

### Third Year, First Semester:

All thesis students must register for AN307. Though AN307 is conducted as an independent study, over-seen and assessed by the thesis advisor, each student completes the same series of tasks and meets the same milestones over the course of the semester. Completion of these tasks and milestones form the basis for module assessment. At the same time, students continue conducting the research activities (fieldwork, library research) they may already have begun.

The assignments to be returned to advisors are:

#### ***Search Storm & Radar (Due by the Third Friday of the Term, Friday 11th October 2024):***

Spend several hours exploring online sources for answers to the major questions of your thesis and the gaps in your knowledge they reveal. Note where you 'begin.' Is it Google? Bing? YouTube? Wikipedia? Which search strings are most interesting or produce more fruitful results? Record which URLs seem the most useful, productive, confusing, provocative. Figure out ways to stay updated regarding (to 'monitor' or 'listen to') your research topic; these could include identifying 'hashtags' associated with your topic, or may involve other internet devices of various kinds, such as Google 'news updates,' or apps like 'Mention,' that allow for regular updates on your topic. Check out recent social science about the relationship between social science and social media. Always remain reflexively critical about online 'data,' just as you would about any of the other evidence you collect in research. (Consider: What is a hashtag? What makes some hashtags useful versus others? What exactly does a hashtag index? For example, *who* uses some versus others?) Going forward, use these tools on a daily or weekly basis (or perhaps hourly: turn on notifications?) as forms of 'radar' for scanning the online/social environment for evidence or events pertaining to your research topic.

Spend some time considering ways of organising your online search storm and radar results. What apps, plug-ins, old-fashioned technologies, and so on, might be useful in assembling your results? For example: might you use Evernote? Pocket? Pinterest?

Consider whether and how you and your research practices may participate directly in the online connections you are mapping. Is it a good idea or bad idea to do so? Is it *ethical* not to participate, but simply 'lurk'? Alternatively, be mindful of protecting your own interests and the unique vulnerabilities of social life online. Reflect on 'participant observation' as an idea when applied to online spaces, versus those offline. Above all, be mindful of the ethical implications of your participation, or non-participation, in such fora (see the next assignment).

Produce a printed document, three or four pages or more, reflecting your search storm and radar. This could include the main URLs you see as useful, the main hashtags or search terms you find useful, and some commentary on each of them. You may describe how you are choosing to use Onenote or Evernote to organise your evidence, and to 'code' it using the organisational methods different applications offer. The Search Storm and Radar is like an annotated 'bibliography,' but it is oriented toward the kind of data and information you can discover especially online. Given the possibility of Covid-19 related restrictions, such sources of evidence about the social world are more important than ever. Include your reflections on which online social arenas seem relevant and possibly helpful.

### ***Ethical Exigencies (Due the Fourth Friday of the Term, Friday 18th October):***

While anthropologists are bound by the major statements on research ethics that govern the discipline, see especially the statement of the American Anthropological Association, research online presents special difficulties with respect to questions concerning privacy, personal identity, consent, and so on. Consult the discussion of research ethics by the Association of Internet Researchers (<https://aoir.org/ethics/>). Write three pages describing ethical issues or dilemmas you may face in your research, including both those entailed in fieldwork offline, and those entailed in observing online worlds.

### ***Theory Query (Due the Monday following mid-term break, Monday 4th November 2024):***

This is a bibliographic exercise. Using 'official anthropological' and 'social science'/ academic indexes (AnthroSource, JSTOR), as well as research skills gained in AN210, spend a few hours looking exhaustively at the published literature on your topic of inquiry. Consider browsing the library stacks where books relevant to your topic are located. Consider also 'browsing' virtual bookstores that may be helpful. Produce two pages of *theory* references that seem potentially useful to your project. Note the keywords associated with the articles or books. Consult carefully with your supervisor what differentiates references pertaining to 'theory,' from those pertaining to empirical, descriptive, or historical information pertinent to your thesis.

### ***Outline Time (Due by third Friday of November, Friday 15th November 2024):***

Like fieldwork, ethnographic writing is open ended. There is no 'formula' for how best to organise a BA anthropology thesis. Each topic, mode of research, and student will inevitably shape in a unique way their own outcomes. In this exercise, we begin 'imagining' a thesis structure, based on what was found out through prior exercises.

*Draft a rough outline of your thesis.*

Consider: How many 'chapters' or 'sections' will your thesis have? How will the chapters be topically organised and what order will they occur in? What sections do you think are necessary for a thesis?

Consider: Try to be specific where possible: indicate what kinds of evidence will be used and where it fits. For example: sort out or imagine which interviews, observations, cultural

texts, bibliographic sources, online chats, and so on will you use to describe and analyze each 'sub topic' (= chapter) within your thesis. This is a \*brainstorm\* exercise, so the rationale is not to 'set in stone' what your thesis will look like, but to begin thinking ahead to the writing process.

Consider: How will you open your thesis topic, or draw the reader in? Many ethnographic texts begin with a 'vignette': a sample of ethnographic reportage that sites the research in a specific place and time and that introduces a topic or problematic.

Consider: What will your title be?

Consider: What will the primary analytic lens or theoretical focus be? Here you might especially return to the 'theory query' exercise, reviewing what seemed to be the most useful or potentially productive avenues of analysis.

### ***Chapter Craft (to be returned by 17 January 2025):***

The intention of this assignment is to get students writing as soon as possible. The chosen chapter to be drafted could be any of those identified in the "Outline Time" assignment. This chapter draft must be turned into the thesis advisor no later than 17 January. This is a first step toward completing the final draft and to refocusing student attention away from research as such and towards questions pertaining to writing, representation, and so on.

### **Third Year, Second Semester:**

In the second semester, thesis students will work more independently, under the guidance of their advisors. Different students and advisors will prefer different modes of working. Some will prefer weekly meetings, others less frequent ones. Students and advisors will specify writing deadlines. Nevertheless, thesis students collectively can expect following:

#### ***By 14 February:***

Written feedback from their thesis advisor on written work and progress made.

#### ***By mid-term:***

In addition to the first chapter draft returned in mid-January, students should aim to complete a draft of another chapter by the Friday prior to the mid-term break. Students will have met with their advisors at least twice. Students can expect feedback on written work returned during the first semester, and any returned during the second semester. Students and advisors will agree a work-plan for finishing the thesis.

***Final draft of the thesis, properly formatted, must be returned to the Anthropology Department by 5PM, 9th May 2024.***



Modernity may call itself post-modern, but that it is only to lighten the unbearable weight of paperwork.  
Marilyn Strathern