**Texas A&M International University**

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**Master of Arts in Sociology**

**Graduate Handbook**

**Revised Spring 2020**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction …………………………………………………………… 2

* Objectives of the Masters Program ……………………………………… 2

II. Admission …………………………………………………………… 2

* Admission Requirements for the Program ……………………………… 2
* Stemwork ……………………………………………………………….. 3
* Financial Support ……………………………………………………….. 3

III. Degree Requirements ……………………………………………… 5

* Thesis Program …………………………………………………………. 5
* Non-Thesis Program …………………………………………………….. 6
* Thesis / Non-Thesis Program Comparison ……………………………… 7
* Additional Degree Requirements ……………………………………….. 8
* Retention Requirements ………………………………………………… 8
* Timeline/Deadlines ……………………………………………………… 8
* Graduate Advisory Committee ………..………………………………. 9
* Advice to Graduate Students ……………………………………… 10
* Thesis ……………………………………………………………… 10

IV. Curriculum ………………………………………………………… 11

* Courses …………………………………………………………………. 11
* Graduate Two Year Course Cycle ……………………………………… 14

V. Graduate Faculty …………………………………………………… 15

VI. Additional Resources & Forms …………………………………… 15 .

## I. Introduction

**Objectives of the Masters Program**

The educational objectives of the MA degree in Sociology are:

* To prepare students for a doctoral program in sociology
* To prepare students for teaching sociology in community colleges and institutions of higher education
* To enrich students' background for teaching sociology in high school
* To prepare students for jobs related to sociology in social services, education, government and the private sector.

The principal aim of graduate study is to develop in the student the power of independent inquiry in theory and research.  Consequently, the character of work expected of graduate students is different from that of undergraduate students.  A wide knowledge of the major subject and related subjects will be expected.  To this end, the student will do assigned readings, attend lectures and conferences, and make use of the library in equipping himself/herself/themself to do effective study.

With the thesis or research paper and the oral and written examinations, students in the Master of Arts in Sociology program will demonstrate:

* The ability to do independent research (field or library based)
* An understanding of the scientific method
* Familiarity with the social science literature relevant to their research
* Advanced knowledge in specific social scientific content areas as chosen by their research paper topics and the elective courses they selected.

The specific objectives of the thesis and non-thesis track for the Master of Arts in Sociology are:

* The thesis track prepares students for a Doctoral Program in Sociology
* The non-thesis track prepares students for teaching sociology in community colleges and institutions of higher education
* Both tracks prepare students for careers in social services, education, government and the private sector.

## II. Admission

**Admission Requirements for the Program -**

* A candidate must have a bachelor’s degree in sociology or a related field (related fields such as Criminal Justice, History, Political Science, Psychology, or Public Administration).
* The student’s entire record will be considered including the completed application for admission, overall undergraduate GPA of 2.5, GPA of 3.0 in the discipline (a student with a GPA between 2.75 and 3.0 will be admitted on probation), and a Statement of Purpose.
* Approval of the sociology component of the graduate committee of the Department of Social Sciences. The decision by the Sociology committee will be based on the interests the candidate has in sociology and if a graduate faculty member is able and willing to work with the candidate. The candidate’s interest will be determined by the personal statement (statement of purpose) that the candidate writes for admission. The statement should describe what research the student is interested in doing in the program and how working with a faculty member(s) in the Department can achieve this. Students are strongly encouraged to contact potential mentors prior to applying (http://www.tamiu.edu/coas/).
* Admission to the thesis program will be determined by the acceptance of the student by a temporary or permanent advisor. A student’s admission for a thesis can be denied because the student’s interest does not match any research program available. A student can be admitted to the non-thesis track without an advisor but the students will be required to take a comprehensive exam to complete the degree.
* Students must submit transcripts from all institutions attended to the Office of Graduate Studies for acceptance into the MA program. The GRE is not required for admission to the progam in sociology.
* Students will not be admitted to the graduate program of the university until all of the above entrance requirements are met. If an applicant does not meet these requirements, the Graduate Council may approve admission of the applicant on a conditional basis. Final admission to the MA in Sociology program is by approval of the sociology graduate committee of the Department of Social Sciences. (This should be done before course work begins.) The decision by the committee will be based on the interests the candidate has in sociology and if a graduate faculty member can and will work with the candidate.
* All admitted students will begin their coursework in sociology in the Fall semester of the academic year. If a student is admitted after the Fall semester of a given academic year has already begun, and wishes to begin graduate coursework in the Spring semester, they will have the option to take courses in their minor.

**Stemwork**

It is strongly recommended that a student seeking a Master in Sociology already have a Bachelors degree with a major in Sociology or related field. However, if a student is seeking a Masters in Sociology degree without a Bachelors in Sociology, then the following are the minimum requirements as preparation for the graduate coursework: Sociology 1301 (Introduction to Sociology); Sociology 3304 (Sociological Theory); Sociology 3301 (Research Methods) and Sociology 4380 (Senior Proseminar). These stemwork requirements may be waived at the discretion of the Sociology graduate committee if similar work has been undertaken in a related field. A candidate without a degree in sociology must have an overall GPA of 2.5 in their bachelor's program and a GPA of 3.0 in stem work for the Master in Sociology to be admitted to the program. In addition, the student should give a justification that is accepted by the Sociology graduate committee of the Department of Social Sciences as to why they are seeking a degree in Sociology. The GPA includes stem work taken before the application and all stem work required by the Sociology graduate committee of the Department of Social Sciences to fulfill the requirement.

The Sociology program graduate committee may require additional courses if thought necessary to prepare the student for a specific field in sociology.

**Financial Support**

The Office of Graduate Studies has more information on financial support.

<https://www.tamiu.edu/gradschool/fellowships.shtml>

SCHOLARSHIPS:

* Up to $2000 per year ($1000 each Fall and Spring semester).

FELLOWSHIPS

* Awards up to $4,000 per academic year for 10 hours of part-time work per week.

($2,000 each Fall and Spring semester)

SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP ELIGIBILITY:

* Must be a fully admitted graduate student who is working towards a master's or doctoral degree.
* Must maintain a good academic standing with a minimum overall GPA of 3.500.
* Must enroll in 6 graduate hours each Fall and Spring semester.

ASSISTANTSHIPS:

* An assistantship is a financial award to a graduate student for part-time work (up to 20 hours per week) in teaching, or research while pursuing study towards an advanced degree. Graduate Assistant awards will be up to $15,000 per academic year for a 9-month term (part-time work/20 hours per week).

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ASSISTANTSHIPS:

* Must be a fully admitted graduate student who is working towards a masters or doctoral degree.
* Must enroll in 9 graduate hours each semester that you receive scholarship funds.
* Must maintain a minimum overall GPA of 3.25.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENTS:

* Travel reimbursements are available for Graduate Students attending conferences or other professional development events.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENTS:

* Must be a fully admitted graduate student who is working towards a master's degree and be in good standing.
* Student must be actively participating (presenting a poster or a paper, serving as panelist, etc.) in the conference/meeting.

More information, forms and brochures can be found at the following website:

<http://www.tamiu.edu/gradschool/lamar_bruni_vergara.shtml>

## III. Degree Requirements

There are two program tracks for the Master of Arts in Sociology degree.

**Thesis Program** 30 Semester Credit Hours

**Required Courses[[1]](#footnote-1)**: 9Semester Credit Hours

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SOCI | 5303 | Seminar in Sociological Theory 3 hours |  |
| SOCI | 5304 | Racial, Social Class, and Gender Inequalities 3 hours |  |
| SOCI | 5321 | Social Inquiry 3 hours |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Three elective courses chosen from:** 9Semester Credit Hours | | | |
| SOCI | 5301 | [Contemporary Studies of Social Probems](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5301.shtml)1 |  |
| SOCI  SOCI | 5305  5306 | Sociology of Health and Illness[[2]](#footnote-2)  [Sociology of Education](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5306.shtml) |  |
| SOCI | 5309 | [Immigration and Biculturalism](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5309.shtml) |  |
| SOCI | 5312 | [Applications in Social Planning](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5312.shtml) |  |
| SOCI | 5322 | [Advanced Quantitative Methods](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5322.shtml) |  |
| SOCI 5340 Seminar in Study of Social Change | | | |
|  | | | |

**Minor** Curriculum 6Semester Credit Hours

|  |
| --- |
| Two 5000-level graduate courses from one discipline |
|  |

**Thesis**

**6 Semester Credit Hours**

Twenty-four hours must be completed prior to

enrollment in SOCI 5398 or SOCI 5399

SOCI 5398 and SOCI 5399

Total for Degree:  **30 Semester Credit Hours**

1 May be repeated once when the topic changes to fulfill the requirement of three SCH.

2Select from Criminal Justice/English/History/Public Administration/Political Science/Psychology/Spanish.

**Non-Thesis Program**

**Required Courses: 9 Semester Credit Hours**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SOCI | 5303 | Seminar in Sociological Theory 3 SCH |
| SOCI | 5304 | Race, Social Class and Gender Inequalities 3 SCH |
| SOCI | 5321 | Social Inquiry 3 SCH |

**Sociology Electives**: **18 hours**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Six courses chosen from:** | | | |
| SOCI | 5301 | [Contemporary Studies of Social Problems](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5301.shtml)1 |  |
| SOCI  SOCI | 5305  5306 | Sociology of Health and Illness  [Sociology of Education](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5306.shtml) |  |
| SOCI | 5309 | [Immigration and Biculturalism](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5309.shtml) |  |
| SOCI | 5312 | [Applications in Social Planning](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5312.shtml) |  |
| SOCI | 5322 | [Advanced Quantitative Methods](http://www.tamiu.edu/catalog/current/courses/soci5322.shtml) |  |
| SOCI | 5340 | Seminar in the Study of Social Change |  |

**MINOR CURRICULUM2 9 Semester Credit Hours**

Total for Degree: 36 semester credit hours

1 May be repeated once when the topic changes.

2 Select from Criminal Justice/English/History/Public Administration/Political Science/Psychology/Spanish.

**Thesis / Non-Thesis Program Comparison**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Non-thesis | Thesis |
| Required Courses | SOCI 5303/5304/5321 9 | SOCI 5303/5304/5321 9 |
| Elective Courses | Graduate Sociology  Courses 18 | Graduate Sociology  Courses 9 |
| Minor Elective Courses | Minor courses 9 | Minor Courses 6 |
| Thesis Courses | n/a | SOCI 5398/5399 Thesis 6 |
| TOTAL | 36 | 30 |

Students comparing the thesis and non-thesis options should not solely consider tuition cost. Although the thesis track requires six fewer hours, the thesis itself involves a major piece of research, is very intensive, and requires a high level of commitment. A thesis is generally undertaken in preparation for entrance into a doctoral program. Upon graduation, both thesis and non-thesis students are eligible to teach at community college and institutions of higher education in addition to a wide variety of other employment.

**Additional Degree Requirement Details**

* The Thesis track requires a thesis, six hours of seminar on the thesis and a successful public defense. Thesis research can be quantitative, qualitative, or both.
* Students in the non-thesis track must pass a written comprehensive exam (valid for one year). If the written exam is failed two times, the entire program will need to be repeated. Non-thesis students must complete the exam by mid-November or mid-April prior to the semester of graduation. A comprehensive exam is not be required for thesis students, but they will be expected to show a broad knowledge of sociology at their oral thesis defense with the discretion of the advisory committee.
* Courses taken in this program are valid for five years.
* A graduate student cannot take an undergraduate course for credit, but can take a graduate course cross-listed as undergraduate and graduate for credit in the B.A./M.A program.
* A graduate student cannot take a cross-listed course for graduate credit if the student has passed (with an A, B, or C) a similar course for undergraduate or graduate credit.

**Retention Requirements** (see Academic Regulations – Graduate in University catalog)

* A minimum grade point average of 3.0 (“B”) on a 4.0 scale computed on all graduate work attempted must be maintained in the major.
* No more than three (3) semester credit hours with a letter grade of “C” earned at this university will be accepted for a master’s degree.

**Timeline / Deadlines**

These are suggested times for completing the thesis or non-thesis degree in two years.

1. University application filed by:

* April 30 for summer or fall semester entry.
* November 30 for spring semester entry.

1. Transcripts in Office of Graduate Studies

* Transcripts should be submitted with application.

1. Graduate School Acceptance Letter

* May for summer or fall semester entry.
* January for spring semester entry.

1. Approved Degree Plan

* Complete advisory committee formed by end of second semester.
* Request a faculty member for advisory committee no later than middle of first semester.
* Degree plan approved no later than end of second semester.
* Discussion of thesis proposal, if applicable, by the end of second semester.

1. Thesis Proposal Submitted (if applicable)

* By the end of the third semester including completed thesis proposal coversheet form. The thesis committee should be formed and the thesis proposal orally defended and completed prior to committee chair sign off for successful completion of the first semester of thesis.

1. Thesis Proposal Approved (If applicable)

* Committee will meet with student and provides recommendations to improve thesis (see below for Thesis Proposal Coversheet).
* By the end of the third semester.

1. Completion of Course Work

* Third semester for thesis, fourth semester for non-thesis.

1. Comprehensive Exam (If applicable)

* Taking the comprehensive exam for a non-thesis student during the last semester of course work.

- Students must indicate their intention to take the exam in fall semester to the Chair of the Department of Social Sciences by the last Friday of October. Fall comps are typically scheduled for the first week of November.

- Students must indicate their intention to take the exam in spring semester to the Chair of the Department of Social Sciences by the last Friday of March. Spring comps are typically scheduled for the first week of April.

1. Application for Graduation

* Beginning of final semester.
* For thesis-track students, the Oral Defense of Thesis should occur in the middle of final semester.

1. (Thesis Track) Final Thesis Cleared

* Original submission for review by graduate office about four weeks before end of semester (See Graduate Office Thesis page for exact date)
* Final submission during Final Exam Week (See Graduate Office Thesis page for exact date).

All degree requirements must be completed within 5 years of the beginning of the master’s degree.

**Graduate Advisory Committee**

Each student will have an graduate advisory committee that will design a degree plan in consultation with the student. The committee will prepare and evaluate the comprehensive examination for a non-thesis student or, for a thesis student: assist with the thesis and research; reading and evaluating the thesis; and preparing, administering and evaluating the defense of the thesis and review paper. The committee will consist of two members of the sociology graduate faculty and a third from another discipline chosen by the student with advice from the student's major professor/thesis chair. Another member of the committee from another department or university can be added by the thesis student's request, if the committee agrees that the additional member can contribute to the student's thesis research. The chair of the advisory committee will be the student's major professor for the thesis research.

**Advice to Students Following the Non-Thesis Program**

Graduate students are encouraged to pick electives that are connected to their broader career goals. Depending on the student’s trajectory, it may be advantageous, for example, to take additional courses in methods, or electives in a specific field (e.g. Criminal Justice).

*The semester before a student plans to take the comprehensive exams*, students are encouraged to meet with the faculty members with whom they have taken theory, methods, and one elective course to discuss the content of the comprehensive exam questions and practice writing responses to hypothetical exam questions. The comprehensive exam consists of one question on sociological theory, one question on sociological methods and research design, and one question on a substantive area of interest (e.g. health/education/gender/race). The faculty member who taught the course on each of these topics will be responsible for writing the exam question for that area. For example, if a student took Sociological Theory with Professor Kilburn, Professor Kilburn would be responsible for drafting the comprehensive exam question on theory for that student.

Comprehensive exams are scheduled twice a year (once in early April and once in late October or early November). Students should sign up as soon as they are able to do so if they plan to pursue this option. Students must pass each of the three questions with a score of 80 or higher to earn a passing score on the exam as a whole. If a student fails to pass one question on the exam, he/she will have the chance to have an oral re-test on this question. If a student fails to pass two or more questions, he/she will need to retake the comprehensive examination during the next semester.

# Advice to Graduate Students Following the Thesis Program

A graduate student chooses his/her own faculty advisor for a thesis-based degree plan. Some students enter the university with the intention of working with a particular member of the faculty; others are not as certain about their specific interests, yet others have a thesis topic in mind. Upon entering, a student will be assigned a temporary advisor to guide him/her in planning his/her coursework and in selecting a possible thesis topic. The student is under no obligation to conduct thesis research with his/her temporary advisor, and many students decide to work with another faculty member. The faculty has the student’s best interests in mind, and will help the student make the best choice of advisor and thesis topic.

The overall timetable for completion of the MA-degree requirements usually spans two to two and a half calendar years. Some students are able to finish earlier, while others require more time. During the first semester, a student’s temporary advisor will advise him/her in planning his/her course of study and choosing the thesis or non-thesis track. During the second semester, the thesis track student chooses a thesis advisor and establishes a thesis committee. It is recommended that the student begin thesis preparation by reading intensively and working on study design prior to thesis enrollment. During the third semester, the student generally completes necessary course work while continuing thesis research, and the fourth semester is generally devoted to completion of the thesis research, writing, and defense of the thesis.

Some students find it necessary to complete the thesis with subsequent registrations. Many require more time to complete the degree requirements because of the nature of the research, financial needs, or other factors. In such cases, the student should maintain contact with the committee chair and continually register or maintain status in the MA-Sociology program if taking more than two semesters to complete the thesis. The Graduate School has established a time limit of 5 calendar years for completion of the MA degree.

# Thesis

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research has a thesis manual available online. However, consult with your thesis chair/major professor and committee on the format of your thesis. The thesis is published online after initial completion and may require additional formatting changes at the request of Graduate College advisement.

## IV Curriculum

**Courses**

**SOCI 5301**

*Contemporary Studies of Social Problems*

Three semester credit hours.

This course offers advanced study of various topics in sociology that reflect the needs of students and expertise of the faculty. Topics may include, but are not limited to, sociological theory, research methods, sociological practice, poverty, medical/health, family violence and aging. May be repeated for credit when the topic changes. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

**SOCI 5303**

*Seminar in Sociological Theory*

Three semester credit hours.

Study of the process of formulation of theory. In-depth analysis of the work of classical, contemporary, multicultural and postmodern theorists. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

**SOCI 5304**

*Racial, Ethnic, Social Class and Gender Inequalities.*

Three semester credit hours.

An overview of racial, ethnic, social class and gender theory. Analysis of how race, ethnicity, social class and gender impact individual life outcomes and group stratification. Social policy issues are examined using qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques useful for community organizations. Prerequisite: Graduate Standing.

**SOCI 5305**

*Sociology of Health and Illness*

The course is designed to examine and analyze the social antecedents, causes, correlates, and consequences of health, disease, illness, and medicine. It is focused on understanding the nexus between social dimensions and health, disease and illness; and on the application of sociological concepts and perspectives -- including research methodological techniques -- to issues and inquiries pertaining to disease, illness, health, and health care.

**SOCI 5306**

*Sociology of Education*

Three semester credit hours.

Sociological analysis of the formal and informal sociocultural structures of educational organizations and educational learning theories in light of historical and present-day social conditions. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

**SOCI 5307**

*Multicultural Domestic Violence*

Three semester credit hours.

Survey of theory and research on domestic violence in ethnic communities with a focus on Hispanics and new immigrants. Areas addressed will include both dating and intimate partner violence, social policy and coordinated community interventions.

**SOCI 5309**

*Immigration and Biculturalism*

Three semester credit hours.

The study of the social demography of the new immigration; social dynamics of relations between sending and receiving countries for new immigrants; context of reception of new immigrants in the host country and occupational and economic incorporation; and types of acculturation, assimilation and multiculturalism among the new immigrants. Prerequisites: Graduate standing.

**SOCI 5312**

*Applications in Social Planning*

Three semester credit hours.

The study of specific social problems with an assessment of governmental response, availability of relevant social policies and development of skills in writing and submitting proposals. Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

**SOCI 5321**

Social Inquiry

Three semester credit hours.

An orientation to the scientific study of social phenomena. Topics include the philosophy of science; ethical considerations in human subjects research; measurement; theory-building; reviewing and integrating existing research; research design (experiments, quasi-experimental designs, surveys, non-obtrusive methods, observation); and written and oral presentation of research. Prerequisite: SOCI 3301 (formerly SOCI 3305), PSCI 3301, or similar undergraduate coursework in social scientific research methods, or consent of instructor.

**SOCI 5322**

*Advanced Quantitative Methods*

Three semester credit hours.

An advanced course in the practical application of quantitative research methods in social scientific research. Topics include data management using statistical packages (e.g., SPSS, SAS, or R); bivariate and multivariate statistics, including ordinary-least-squares regression, limited dependent variable regression models (logit/probit), longitudinal data analysis and presentation of results from quantitative research.

**SOCI 5398**

*Thesis*

Three semester credit hours.

To be scheduled by the student in consultation with his/her major professor. Prerequisites: Graduate standing and permission of major instructor/advisor. If grade of IP received, student must enroll again for credit. Evaluation of performance in this course is on CR/NC basis.

**SOCI 5399**

*Thesis*

Three semester credit hours.

To be scheduled by the student in consultation with his/her major professor. Prerequisites: Graduate standing and permission of major instructor/advisor. If grade of IP received, student must enroll again for credit. Evaluation of performance in this course is on CR/NC basis.

**Two-Year Cycle for Graduate Courses (subject to change)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SOCI 5301 | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| SOCI 5303 |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  | |
| SOCI 5305 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| SOCI 5306 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| SOCI 5307 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| SOCI 5309 |  | X |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| SOCI 5321 |  | X |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| SOCI 5322 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SOCI 5398 and 5399 Thesis |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
|  | X | X |  |  | X | X |  |  | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |

## V. Graduate Faculty

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Faculty Member** | **Degree & Institution** | **Field of Study** | **Teaching & Research** |
| Dr. John Kilburn | PhD Sociology; Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge | Border Studies,Urban Sociology, Violence | Urban Sociology, Criminology  Grant Writing , Sociology of Education |
| Dr. Pamela Neumann | PhD Sociology; University of Texas at Austin | Gender  Political Sociology Environmental sociology | Gender Domestic Violence  Social Movements/ Social Change |
| Dr. Marcus Antonius Ynalvez | PhD Sociology; Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge | Sociology of Science and Technology; Sociology of Health and Illness; Social Networks | Quantitative Research Methods; Sociology of Science and Technology; Sociology of Health and Illness |

**VI. Additional Campus Resources & Forms**

* **TAMIU Academic Calendar:** <https://www.tamiu.edu/academiccalendar/>
* **Department of Social Sciences Online Comprehensive Exam Request Form**: <https://www.tamiu.edu/coas/dss/compexam.shtml>
* **SOCI MA webpage**: <https://www.tamiu.edu/gradschool/sociology/index.shtml>
* **Library:** <https://www.tamiu.edu/library/>
* **Career Services**: <https://www.tamiu.edu/gradschool/sociology/index.shtml>
* **Writing Center:** <https://www.tamiu.edu/uc/writingcenter/index.shtml>
* **Student Health Services:** <https://www.tamiu.edu/health/services.shtml>
* **Refer to the TAMIU Graduate School Handbook (**<https://www.tamiu.edu/gradschool/documents/graduate-handbook.pdf>) **for the following forms.**
  + Request for Service on a Graduate Advisory Committee
  + Comprehensive Examination Form
  + Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet
  + Written Thesis Approval Form
  + Graduate Change of Catalog/Concentration/Minor Form

1. In the event that a required course is not offered during a student’s coursework, students may request that another elective course in sociology be substituted for the requirement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. SOCI 5305 is a required course for thesis-track students who entered the program under some course catalogs prior to Fall 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)