

Senior Honors Thesis Seminar

University of California, Berkeley
Spring 2025

Laleh Behbehanian

Tuesday 12:00 –2:00 (211 Dwinelle Hall)

Email: lalehb@berkeley.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 12:00 – 1:00

*Sign up at wejoinin.com/LalehBehbehanian

The honors seminar is structured to guide you in the design, research, and writing of a senior honors thesis. Last semester, you formulated and designed your project and took steps to begin your research. This semester you will complete the **data collection** and **analysis**, explore the **sociological implications** of your findings, **present** your research, and write your **thesis**.

Your thesis should be between 35 to 50 pages inclusive of front/back material. Occasionally a thesis may be longer, but under no circumstances should it exceed 80 pages. To facilitate your progress, you will complete **five written assignments**: a revised prospectus; a research/writing schedule with updated annotated bibliography; preliminary data analysis; second draft of data analysis; and a thesis draft.

Towards the end of the semester, students will do formal **presentations** summarizing their thesis research (April 8th – April 29th). The two thesis sections will meet jointly for these presentations. In each meeting, 5 students will present their findings to the entire senior thesis class.

The first complete draft of the entire thesis is due on April 22nd. You will have about 3 weeks to improve it. **The final thesis is due on May 13th.** There are no incompletes or extensions allowed for this course, except in highly extenuating circumstances. Whatever you have written by May 13th will stand as the final version of your thesis. Last semester you received an IP (In Progress). This semester you will receive a grade for the entire year based on both the quality of your final thesis, and your performance throughout the year (quality of submitted assignments, accountability to deadlines; seminar participation, etc.). Your thesis will also receive a designation (noted on your transcript) of honors, high honors, or (in exceptional cases) highest honors.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 21): Check in & Plan for the Semester

- Check in and discuss our plan for the spring semester
- Discuss editing process and first assignment due January 28th

Assigned Reading: Howard Becker, “Freshman English” (Pp.1-18)

Come to the first meeting prepared to share your (working) **title** for your research project.

Also bring the title of one of your favorite pieces of scholarship.

“Sometimes naming a thing – giving it a name or discovering its name – helps one to begin to understand it.” (Octavia Butler)

Week 2 (January 28): Data collection

- Workshopping plans for data collection

Come prepared to share your research question and your plan for gathering the data you need to answer it. Bring your interview questions, list of primary documents, or any other components of your proposed methodology.

Assignment #1: Revised Prospectus (Due 1/28)

Revise your prospectus aiming to incorporate the feedback you received and any other progress you’ve made. This should include a complete bibliography listing all the texts you have read.

Upload it to bCourses and bring a **hard copy to class** for your peer review partner.

Week 3 (February 4): Revise, Revise, Revise: *The Art of Editing*

1st Hour: Peer review of revised prospectus.

2nd Hour: Reconvene with larger group. Introduce your partner’s project and discuss editing process.

Assignment #2: Research/Writing Schedule (Due 2/11 – 2/18)

Draft a research and writing schedule for the semester, setting specific target dates for your progress. Also attach an annotated bibliography with entries for at least 3 new sources.

Upload to bCourses at least 24 hours before your scheduled individual meeting.

Week 4 (February 11): Individual meetings

Week 5 (February 18): Individual meetings

Week 6 (February 25): Presenting Preliminary Findings & Troubleshooting

Prepare to speak for about 5 minutes about your preliminary findings, including any challenges you have encountered (or anticipate).

Assigned Reading: Emerson et al. "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding & Memoing"
(Pp.142-162)

Assignment #3: First Draft of Data Analysis (Due 2/25)

This assignment serves as the first step towards drafting your data analysis. Begin writing about the data you've collected so far. (5-7 pages)

Upload it to bCourses and bring a **hard copy to class** for your peer review partner.

Week 7 (March 4): Presenting Preliminary Findings & Troubleshooting

1st Hour: Presentation of Preliminary Findings & Troubleshooting continued.

2nd Hour: Peer review of data analysis.

Week 8 (March 11): Individual meetings

Week 9 (March 18): Individual meetings

Spring Break – No Class (March 25)

Week 10 (April 1): Coffee, Community & Conclusion (Location TBA)

- Final Section Meeting: Preparing for Formal Presentations and Check out...

Assignment #4: Second Draft of Data Analysis (Due 4/1)

Submit a second draft of your data analysis (8-12 pages), including a discussion of the sociological implications of your findings.

Upload to bCourses and share with your peer review partner.

Week 11 (April 8): Formal Presentations (Joint Zoom Session)

Formal presentations of projects followed by questions and discussion.

Week 12 (April 15): Formal Presentations (Joint Zoom Session)

Week 13 (April 22): Formal Presentations (Joint Zoom Session)

Assignment #5: Complete Draft of Thesis (Due by 4/22)

Submit a complete draft of thesis (25-50 pages). Upload it to bCourses.

Share with your peer review partner and schedule meeting to share feedback.

Week 14 (April 29): Formal Presentations (Joint Zoom Session)

FINAL THESIS due MAY 13

Submit your completed thesis by uploading it to bCourses.

After you've received my approval, email it to Cristina Rojas (cmrojas@berkeley.edu)

to be filed in the Sociology Department.

SEMINAR POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS:

You are expected to attend *all* meetings (you should email me if you are ever unable to do so), and to arrive *on time* (given that this is a small seminar, late arrivals are especially disruptive).

You are responsible for keeping up with assignments and meeting all deadlines.

Grade Distribution:

Revised Prospectus	10%
Research/Writing Schedule	5%
First Draft of Data Analysis	10%
Revised Data Analysis	20%
Complete Draft of Thesis	25%
Final Thesis	30%

Late Policy: Assignments submitted after the specified deadlines will receive a late penalty and are not eligible for an A.