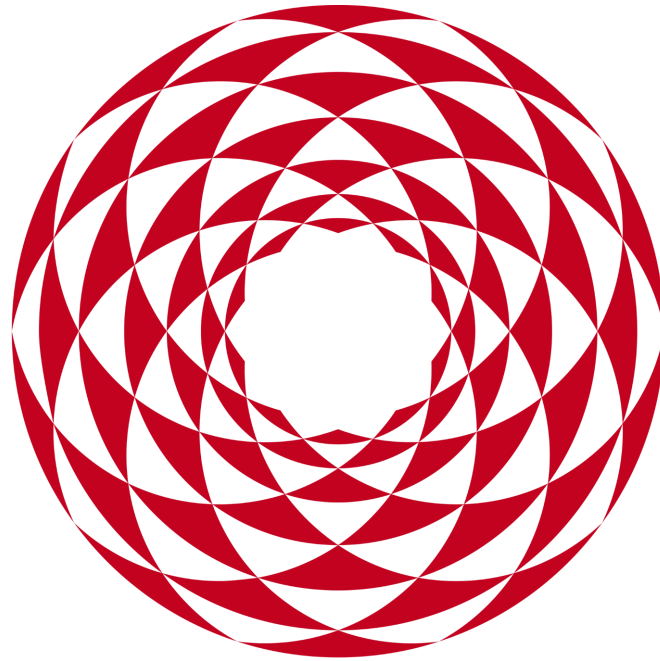# Sociology and Anthropology Handbook

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UNIVERSITY

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

(last updated July 2023)

Sociology and Anthropology at Ashoka

The undergraduate programme in Sociology and Anthropology (SOA) at Ashoka University is designed for students interested in cultivating an intellectually rigorous understanding of diverse social worlds and processes as they emerge, stabilise, transform, and dissolve all around us.

The Department builds on the unique relationship between sociology and social anthropology as it has developed and flourished in India. While our faculty is actively engaged in long-term fieldwork and ethnographic research across a range of subjects and sites, as a collective we emphasise the critical empiricism, theoretical engagement and comparative approach central to our best disciplinary traditions. In doing so, we constantly work at and move between multiple methods and modes of analysis: across the 'micro' and the 'macro', the 'general' and the 'particular', the 'local' and the 'global', the 'social' and the 'technical', the 'material' and 'abstract', and the 'qualitative' and 'quantitative.'

Our research and pedagogical practices also open up numerous possibilities for interdisciplinary explorations with students and scholars in allied fields of social thought and inquiry, including history, economics, political science, psychology, philosophy, linguistics, environmental studies, computer science, planning and design, natural sciences, arts and aesthetics, law, and media. This makes Sociology and Anthropology at once among the most grounded and the most fluid disciplines in the university.

The Undergraduate Major in Sociology and Anthropology

The Sociology and Anthropology Major at Ashoka trains future scholars and professionals to be engaged observers, attentive readers, clear writers, and rigorous social analysts. Over the course of their study, our students develop a critical awareness of changing social values and practices, the capacity to think relationally, and the skills to draw out vital but often invisible connections. In this way, they learn how to describe and explain complex social processes. Above all, our students engage with the world and come to inhabit it in ways that open up new possibilities for shaping shared futures. These possibilities are at the heart of what we think it means to nurture an anthropological imagination.

SOA Majors must complete 12 courses in the discipline to graduate with a B.A. (Hons.) in Sociology and Anthropology. All students will take 6 compulsory courses specially designed to introduce them to the "core" fields of the discipline: key concepts and themes that are at the centre of both classical and contemporary work in Sociology and Anthropology. Majors will then select a series of 6 electives from a wide range of course offerings. All SOA courses, both cores and electives, create space for students to explore their own individual interests and questions, but the electives are intended to give advanced undergraduates a sense of the breadth of the discipline and the frontiers of social anthropological research. The set of core courses also includes a hands-on Research Methods course that all Majors will take in their third year. Instead of confining the Sociology and Anthropology of India to a single course, the study of India and South Asia will be woven in throughout the curriculum, and critical themes (such as caste, hierarchy, and stratification) will be explored in multiple and interrelated courses.

The Six Core Courses

- **SOA 1101**: Sociology and the Making of Concepts is our Gateway Course. It is offered in both Spring and Monsoon semesters. This course is compulsory for all SOA Majors, Minors, and Concentrations, and should be taken before the end of the second year.
- **SOA 2101**: State, Stateless Societies and the Problems of Power
- **SOA 2102**: Gift, Commodity and the Exchange of Value
- **SOA 2103**: Magic, Science, Religion
- **SOA 2104**: Kin, Friends and Enemies

- **SOA 3101**: Anthropology's Methods is a research methods course specially designed for our Majors. Although there is no thesis requirement for the 3rd year, all students will learn ethnographic research and proposal-writing skills in this course. Students planning to stay on for a fourth year to complete an Advanced Major in Sociology and Anthropology will use this course to develop proposals for their thesis fieldwork and research projects. It is compulsory for SOA Majors in their final semester.

Important Note: SOA 1101 is usually offered in both Monsoon and Spring semesters. SOA 2101 and SOA 2103 are usually offered in the Monsoon semester. SOA 2102 and SOA 2104 are usually offered in the Spring semester. SOA 3101 is usually offered in the Spring semester.

It is recommended that Majors complete SOA 1101, SOA 2101, SOA 2102, SOA 2103, and SOA 2104 by the end of their second year. After taking SOA 1101, the 2000-level electives can be taken in any order depending on course sequencing in a given year.

Elective Courses

Electives emerge from and deepen student engagement with the concepts and approaches developed in the core courses while drawing on diverse faculty and student interests. Electives are designed as advanced undergraduate seminar courses.

Majors will take a total of 6 electives, of which *at least* 4 must be 3000-level courses, while the other 2 could be any department or cross-listed electives on offer (including both 2000-level and 3000-level electives). The elective course offerings will change from year to year, but the list below provides a sense of the range and depth of the electives that our faculty members have taught in the past and are excited to develop and teach in future semesters at Ashoka:

- Language and Power in South Asia
- Visuality, Power, and Truth
- Being Human: Anthropology and the Anthropocene
- The Right to Water
- Political Ecology and Modes of Resistance
- Agrarian Worlds
- Cities, Villages, and What Lies Between

- The Anthropology of 'Remoteness': Highlands, Islands and Rainforests
- Questioning Development
- What is Globalisation?
- Work, Labour, Industry
- Market Ethnographies
- Fiscal Anthropology
- Nationalism, Ethnicity, Violence
- Freedom and Sovereignty
- Hierarchy
- Local Bureaucracies and the Everyday State
- Trajectories of Capital
- The Cultural Politics of Space, Place and Time
- Borders and Crossings
- Travel, Mobility and Identity
- Gender, Sexuality and The Body
- War and Media
- Cybersociality
- Data, Algorithms and the Anthropology of Numbers
- The Anthropology of Dreams
- Islam and Anthropology
- The Secular and the Sacral
- Medicine and Society
- Anthropology of Mental Health
- Anthropology, Archive and History
- Anthropology and Allied Arts
- Anthropology and Philosophy
- Statistics for Sociologists
- Monks, Monastery, Modernity
- Gender and Land, Rivers and Livelihoods
- Music in Rural India: Gender and Genre
- Ethnography of Political Violence

<h1 style="text-align:center">Degree Requirements</h1>

Major in Sociology and Anthropology

Each student will take a total of **12 courses** towards their major. For completing a major in Sociology and Anthropology, one **must** take the following courses (1+4+1 core courses and 4+2 elective courses):

- **One** gateway course:
    - **SOA 1101**: Sociology and the Making of Concepts (Offered every semester; <u>to be completed by the end of year 2</u>)
- **Four** 2000-level core courses:
    - **SOA 2101**: State, Stateless Societies and the Problems of Power (Offered every Monsoon Semester)
    - **SOA 2102**: Gift, Commodity and the Exchange of Value (Offered every Spring Semester)
    - **SOA 2103**: Magic, Science, Religion (Offered every Monsoon Semester)
    - **SOA 2104**: Kin, Friends and Enemies (Offered every Spring Semester)
- **One** research methods course:
    - **SOA 3101**: Anthropology's Methods (Offered every Spring Semester, <u>must be taken in the third year</u>)
- **Any four 3000-level elective courses** offered by, or cross-listed with, SOA.
- **Any two** other elective courses offered by or cross-listed with SOA. These can be **either 2000-level electives *or* 3000-level electives.**

Important note: Students who had already completed the now-discontinued old 2000-level core courses — "Language, Signs, and the Problem of Representation," and "Natures Futures" — can still make these count towards their Major.

Minor in Sociology and Anthropology

Each student will take a total of **6 courses** towards the minor. For completing a minor, a student **must** take the following courses (1+3 core courses and 2 elective courses):

- **One** gateway course:
  - **SOA 1101**: Sociology and the Making of Concepts (Offered every semester)
- **Any three out of the following four** 2000-level core courses:
  - **SOA 2101**: State, Stateless Societies and the Problems of Power (Offered every Monsoon Semester)
  - **SOA 2102**: Gift, Commodity and the Exchange of Value (Offered every Spring Semester)
  - **SOA 2103**: Magic, Science, Religion (Offered every Monsoon Semester)
  - **SOA 2104**: Kin, Friends and Enemies (Offered every Spring Semester)
- **Any two** 3000-level electives offered by or cross-listed with SOA

Important note: Students who had already completed the now-discontinued old 2000-level core courses — "Language, Signs, and the Problem of Representation," and "Natures Futures" — can still make these count towards their Minor.

Concentration in Sociology and Anthropology

Each student will take a total of **4 course**s towards the concentration. For completing a concentration, a student **must** take the following courses (1+2 required courses and 1 elective):

- **One** gateway course:
  - **SOA 1101**: Sociology and the Making of Concepts (Offered every semester)
- **Any two out of the following four** 2000-level core courses:
  - **SOA 2101**: State, Stateless Societies and the Problems of Power (Offered every Monsoon Semester)
  - **SOA 2102**: Gift, Commodity and the Exchange of Value (Offered every Spring Semester)
  - **SOA 2103**: Magic, Science, Religion (Offered every Monsoon Semester)
  - **SOA 2104**: Kin, Friends and Enemies (Offered every Spring Semester)
- **Any one** 3000-level elective offered by or cross-listed with SOA

Important note: Students who had already completed the now-discontinued old 2000-level core courses — "Language, Signs, and the Problem of Representation," and "Natures Futures" — can still make these count towards their Concentration.

Course Prerequisites

The usual prerequisite for a 3000-level SOA course is that the student should already have taken SOA 1101 (the gateway course) as well as at least two 2000-level SOA core courses. If a student who does not meet these requirements wishes to take a 3000-level elective, they will have to seek approval from the faculty member first.

1000-level and 2000-level courses do not have prerequisites, and we welcome students from other Departments to take these courses subject to availability.

In the event that any other course has prerequisites, relevant information will be communicated at the beginning of the semester.

Advanced Major in Sociology and Anthropology (for Ashoka Scholars Program, 4th year)

The fourth-year will give Majors an opportunity to pursue an independent, original, and closely supervised research project which will culminate in an undergraduate thesis. To obtain a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research (DipASR) in Sociology and Anthropology, ASP students **must complete 24 SOA credits, including an undergraduate thesis**. Third-year students should approach potential advisors with a thesis proposal in May. Please note that **the SOA Advanced Major comprises 24 credits while the overall Ashoka Scholars Program requires 32 credits from the University**. The following are the guidelines for those considering the Advanced Major in Sociology and Anthropology:

- The core course "Anthropology's Methods" will help prospective Advanced Majors to develop research proposals and plans. Fieldwork for the thesis is usually conducted over the summer between semesters 6 and 7, continuing into semester 7.
- In addition to working under the guidance of a faculty advisor, Advanced Majors will

participate in an ASP Workshop I (Monsoon) and ASP Workshop II (Spring), for **4 credits each**. These will be intensive weekly sessions facilitated by a member of the faculty and will focus on critical aspects of the research process: framing questions, fieldwork methods, data analysis, working on annotated bibliographies, developing anthropological arguments, and ethnographic writing. Students will make regular presentations and share their writing with each other.

- The final thesis should be between 10,000-15,000 words. The thesis will be evaluated by the faculty advisor and will cover **8 credits** (split into 4 credits for each semester).

- ASP students will also have the opportunity to gain experience as Teaching Assistants , getting **2 credits** for the Teaching Practicum.

- The ASP cohort will conceptualise, curate, and organise an annual Symposium in the Spring semester hosted by the department, for **2 credits**.

- To complete the required 24 credits for the advanced major, fourth-years will be able to take an additional 1 departmental elective to broaden and deepen their engagement with the discipline, for **4 credits.**

- The credit structure of the Advanced Major is therefore: Two thesis workshops (4×2=8 credits), One thesis (4×2=8 credits), One TAship (2 credits), One Symposium (2 credits), One elective (4 credits), totalling **8+8+2+2+4=24 credits**.

- Please note that ASP students can take more than one course either in SOA or in other subjects during their ASP programme, but that **will not count towards the 24 credits for an Advanced Major in SOA**.

- Additionally, **completing an Advanced Major in SOA does not mean automatic completion of the ASP, since the Advanced Major requires 24 credits whereas the ASP requires 32 credits at minimum**. Students therefore need to obtain at least 8 credits excluding their Advanced Major in SOA.

The Department also welcomes students who wish to stay on for a fourth year at Ashoka and utilise the Ashoka Scholars Programme (ASP) to complete a Concentration, Minor or Second Major Equivalent in Sociology and Anthropology, as well as those fourth years keen to expand their intellectual exploration through utilising our course offerings beyond formal degree requirements. However, graduating as a Major student from the Department is required to opt for the Advanced Major and write a thesis with the Department.

People of the Department

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Ashoka University currently comprises nine full-time faculty members, while a few other faculty teach at Ashoka on a visiting basis.

To help you navigate through your journey at Ashoka, the student body elects Student Representatives, and the Department appoints UG and ASP coordinators. They can help you understand the curriculum, graduation requirements, course selection etc., throughout the year as the need arises. They can also give advice on any matter related to undergraduate life at Ashoka. The following information is valid for the academic year 2023-2024 only:

Student Representatives: Can be reached at <soa.rep@ashoka.edu.in>

Aditya (aditya.tiwari_asp24@ashoka.edu.in)

Aman Gwjwn (aman.gwjwn_ug24@ashoka.edu.in)

UG Coordinator: Prof. Mitul Baruah (mitul.baruah@ashoka.edu.in)

ASP Coordinator: Prof. Amita Baviskar (amita.baviskar@ashoka.edu.in)

Head of Department: Prof. Kathryn Hardy (kathryn.hardy@ashoka.edu.in)

Department Manager: Pratima Kadian (pratima.kadian@ashoka.edu.in)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is the 1000/2000/3000-level system equivalent to the 100/200/300-level system?
A: Yes.

Q: Is it mandatory to complete the 2000-level core course requirement by the end of the second year?
A: It is not mandatory, but we strongly recommend that you do so, since 3000-level electives require at least two of the 2000-level core courses as prerequisites and you will get much more from these courses if you have already taken the set of 2000-level cores.

Q: What is the policy on cross-listed courses?
A: Cross-listed courses are courses that arise out of a department other than SOA but are given an SOA course code so that students can make them count towards their SOA degrees. This is usually done when the course has significant disciplinary and methodological overlap with Sociology and Anthropology. There is **no cap** on how many cross-listed courses an SOA student can take.

Q: Do the prerequisites also apply to the 3000-level cross-listed courses or summer courses?
A: Yes.

Q: I took a course in Monsoon 2019 which was cross-listed with SOA. It is being offered again in 2021 but is not showing as cross-listed. Is this a problem?
A: No. It is normal for courses to not be cross-listed with other departments in every semester that they are offered. If you took a course,which was cross-listed in the semester that you took it, it will count towards your degree. Please cross-check the course code of such courses in your AMS. Additionally, you can write to the Student Representatives to request that a course be cross-listed.

Q: Can I write a thesis in the third year?
A: No. Only ASP students can write a thesis with the department.

Q: I'm going on a semester abroad. Can I substitute the required courses with a summer abroad course?
A: The specific course along with its detailed syllabus will need to be shared with the Department's HoD, and a decision will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Q: I am interested in TAing. How should I proceed?
A: The Department notifies students of TAship positions at the beginning of the semester and calls for applications through a centralised form. Only third-year students, ASP students, and MLS students are eligible to apply. Among the eligible, ASP and MLS students are prioritised since TAing is a graduation requirement for these degrees.

Q: Whom should I contact for further queries?

A: You can email the Student Representatives (soa.rep@ashoka.edu.in, aditya.tiwari_asp24@ashoka.edu.in, aman.gwjwn_ug24@ashoka.edu.in) for any queries. You can also get in touch with the UG Coordinator Prof. Mitul Baruah (mitul.baruah@ashoka.edu.in), ASP Coordinator Prof. Amita Baviskar (amita.baviskar@ashoka.edu.in) or Head of Department, Prof. Kathryn Hardy (kathryn.hardy@ashoka.edu.in).

Q: I am confused about which 2000-level (or 3000-level) courses to opt for. Is there someone I can talk to?
A: You may consult the course descriptions provided on the AMS or may reach out to your peers or seniors who have already taken courses you may be interested in. Feel free to reach out to the Student Representatives (soa.rep@ashoka.edu.in, aditya.tiwari_asp24@ashoka.edu.in, aman.gwjwn_ug24@ashoka.edu.in). You can also consult your University-assigned academic advisor.

Q: Is there a definitive order that courses have to be taken?
A: We recommend that you take the 1000-level course first. Then take the core 2000-level core courses. This will not only ensure that you have fulfilled the prerequisites for the 3000-level electives, but you will get much more from the advanced elective courses when you take them.

Q: Can I take 2000-level courses before the 1000-level introductory requirement?
A: Technically, yes, you can take the 2000-level core courses before the 1000-level course, but we strongly recommend that you take SOA 1101 as your first course in the Department, and *then* opt for 2000-level core courses.

Q: Can I opt for 3000-level courses while taking 2000-level courses at the same time?
A: Yes, you can, provided you fulfil the prerequisite for 3000-level electives, which is SOA 1101 and any two 2000-level core courses.

Q: Can the elective requirements be fulfilled by any 2000 or 3000-level courses?
A: Majors are required to take six electives, of which four *must* be 3000-level, and the other two can be 2000-level *or* 3000-level electives.

After reading this Handbook, if any queries remain, please contact the Student Representatives at <soa.rep@ashoka.edu.in>.

If you prefer reaching out to one of them personally, they can be found at aditya.tiwari_asp24@ashoka.edu.in and aman.gwjwn_ug24@ashoka.edu.in.

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