

Sociology and Anthropology Handbook



ashoka
UNIVERSITY

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
(last updated August 2026)

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 9 compulsory courses 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 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 Nine Core Courses

SOA 1101 Sociology and the Making of Concepts (4 credits) - 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.

2000 Level Disciplinary Cores

SOA 2101	State, Stateless Societies and the Problems of Power (4 credits)
SOA 2102	Gift, Commodity, Exchange of Values (4 credits)
SOA 2103	Magic, Science, Religion (4 credits)
SOA 2104	Kin, Friends and Enemies (4 credits)
SOA 2105	Language, Signs and the Problems of Representation (4 credits)
SOA 2106	Orders of Difference (4 credits)

3000 Level Methods Series

3000	Reading Ethnographies (Monsoon; 4 credits)
3101	Anthropology's Methods (Spring; 4 credits)

Important Note: SOA 1101 is usually offered in both Monsoon and Spring semesters. SOA 2101, SOA 2103, and SOA 2106 are usually offered in the Monsoon semester. SOA 2102, SOA 2104, SOA 2106 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 core courses 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.

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

Degree Requirements

Major in Sociology and Anthropology: 4 Years (Hons. Without Research)

Each student will take a total of **18 courses** towards their major. For completing a major in Sociology and Anthropology, one **must** take the following courses: The gateway course + 9 Cores + 9 Electives.

- **One gateway course:**

- **SOA 1101:** Sociology and the Making of Concepts (Offered every semester; to be completed by the end of year 2)

- **Six 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)
- **SOA 2105:** Language, Signs and the Problems of Representation (4 credits)
- **SOA 2106:** Orders of Difference (Spring 4 credits)

- **Two 3000 Level Methods Series**

- 3000 Reading Ethnographies (Monsoon; 4 credits)
- 3101 Anthropology's Methods (Spring; 4 credits)

- **Minimum five 3000-level elective courses** offered by, or cross-listed with, SOA
- **Any four** other elective courses offered by or cross-listed with SOA. These can be **either 2000-level electives or 3000-level electives.**

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 six 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)
- **SOA 2105:** Language, Signs and the Problems of Representation
- **SOA 2250:** Orders of Difference

- **Any two 3000-level electives** offered by or cross-listed with SOA

Concentration in Sociology and Anthropology

Each student will take a total of **4 courses** 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 six 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)
- **SOA 2105:** Language, Signs and the Problems of Representation
- **SOA 2250:** Orders of Difference

- **Any one 3000-level elective** offered by or cross-listed with SOA

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.

- The overall credit requirement for the three year degree in SOA is 52 credits. Please write to the Office of Academic Affairs for specific major requirements.

Major in Sociology and Anthropology: 4 Years (Hons. With Research)

The fourth-year will give SOA Majors an opportunity to pursue an independent, original, and closely supervised research project which will culminate in an undergraduate thesis. Students who opt for the 4 year programme **must complete 18 SOA courses and an undergraduate thesis across these 4 years**. They are also required to complete two TAs for TP/internship credit. The overall credit requirement for the 4 year degree in SOA is **84 credits**.

In addition to the (1+6+2) core courses specified, students will also participate in Thesis Workshop I (Monsoon) and Thesis Workshop II (Spring), for **8 credits overall**. 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.

Students must complete **Five** 3000 level electives offered by the SOA department, and any other **two** electives either offered by or cross-listed with the SOA department. These could be either 2000 or 3000 level electives. However, the electives taken in the 4th year must be 3000 level or higher.

One gateway course:

- **SOA 1101:** Sociology and the Making of Concepts (Offered every semester; to be completed by the end of year 2)

• Six 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)
- **SOA 2105:** Language, Signs and the Problems of Representation (4 credits)
- **SOA 2106:** Orders of Difference (Spring 4 credits)

• Two 3000 Level Methods Series

- 3000 Reading Ethnographies (Monsoon; 4 credits)
- 3101 Anthropology's Methods (Spring; 4 credits)

- **Minimum five 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**.

The overall breakup of credits for the four year programme is (for 2025):

Course Type	Credits	Courses
Core Courses	36	All of the following eight (08) courses: 1. SOA 1101: Sociology and the Making of Concepts 2. SOA 2101: State, Stateless Societies and the Problems of Power 3. SOA 2102: Gift, Commodity and the Exchange of Value 4. SOA 2103: Magic, Science, Religion 5. SOA 2104: Kin, Friends and Enemies 6. SOA 3101: Anthropology's Methods 7. SOA 3000: Reading Ethnographies 8. SOA 2015: Language, Signs and the Problems of Representation 9. SOA 2016: Orders of Difference
Electives	28	Five 3000 level SOA Electives + Any other two SOA courses (cross-listed courses with SOA code are allowed)
Thesis Workshops	8	Thesis Workshop I (4 credits) Thesis Workshop II (4 credits)
Thesis	12	Thesis Capstone I Thesis Capstone II
Overall credit breakup	32+40+12 = 84	

Third-year students should approach potential advisors with a thesis proposal in May. The following are the guidelines for those considering the four year programme 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.
- The final thesis should be between 10,000-15,000 words.
- Fourth year students will also have the opportunity to gain experience as Teaching Assistants, getting **2 credits each** for the two Teaching Practicum.
- The fourth year cohort will conceptualise, curate, and organise an annual Symposium in the Spring semester hosted by the department.

The Department also welcomes students who wish to stay on for a fourth year at Ashoka 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, there is no provision for a student who opts for the four year programme to graduate as a Major without writing a thesis.

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: <soa.rep@ashoka.edu.in>

Head of Department: Ravindran
Sriramachandran <ravindran.sriramachandran@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.

Q: Can I write a thesis in the third year?

A: No. Only fourth year 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, fourth-year and MLS students are eligible to apply. Among the eligible, fourth years 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) for any queries. You can also get in touch with the UG Coordinator, ASP Coordinator or Head of Department.

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). 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.