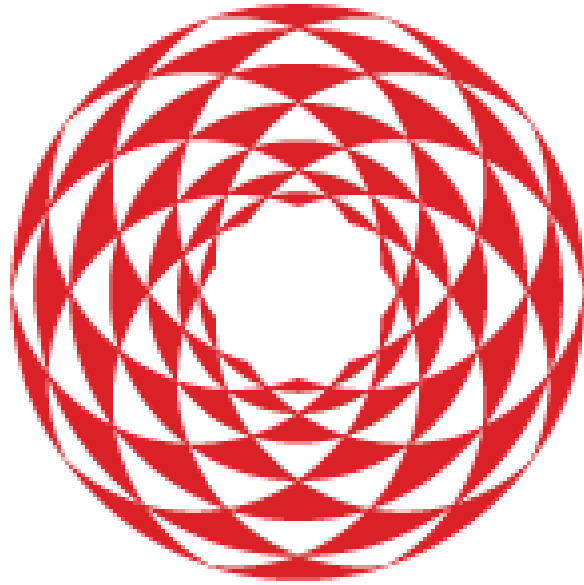


# Sociology and Anthropology Handbook



**ASHOKA**  
UNIVERSITY

SOA UNDERGRADUATE HANDBOOK

Monsoon 2021

## Department of Sociology and Anthropology

### 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 fluid disciplines in the contemporary university.

#### **The Undergraduate Major in Sociology and Anthropology**

The Sociology and Anthropology Major at Ashoka will train future scholars and professionals to be engaged observers, attentive readers, clear writers, and rigorous social analysts. Over the course of their study, our students will 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 will learn how to describe and explain complex social processes. Above all, we are convinced that our students will 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. 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, will create space for students to explore their own, individual interests and questions, but the electives are especially intended to give advanced undergraduates a sense of the breadth of the discipline and the frontiers of 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 and may be taken in the first or second year at Ashoka. It is compulsory for all SOA Majors, who must complete this course by the end of the second year.

In addition, **Majors are required to take the following 4 courses**. Most Majors will complete this set of courses in their second year, but they can be taken in any order depending on course sequencing in a given year. Typically, SOA 2101 and 2103 are offered in the Monsoon and SOA 2102 and SOA 2104 in the Spring semester

- 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 3<sup>rd</sup> year, all students will learn 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.

### **Electives**

Electives will 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 will be designed as advanced undergraduate seminar courses.

Majors will take a total of 6 electives, of which at least 4 must be 3000-level courses and the rest could be any two department or cross-listed electives on offer.

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

## **Requirements**

## Majors in Sociology and Anthropology

**Requirements:** 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 required courses and 4+2 electives):

- **SOA 1101:** Sociology and the Making of Concepts (to be completed by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year)
- The following four 2000-level core courses:
  - **SOA 2101:** State, Stateless Societies and the Problems of Power (Monsoon Semester)
  - **SOA 2102:** Gift, Commodity and the Exchange of Value (Spring Semester)
  - **SOA 2103:** Magic, Science, Religion (Monsoon Semester)
  - **SOA 2104:** Kin, Friends and Enemies (Spring Semester)
- **SOA 3101:** Anthropology's Methods (Must be taken in the third year)
- Four 3000 level electives in SOA
- Any other two courses in SOA (selected from the two remaining core courses or the electives) or cross-listed courses with SOA code

(\*Please note that UG 22 and UG 23 who had completed the former 2000 cores, i.e. Language, Signs, and the Problem of Representation, and Natures Futures can make these count towards their Major)

## Minors in Sociology and Anthropology:

**Requirements:** Each student will take a total of 6 courses towards the minor. For completing a minor, a student has to take the following courses (3 required courses and 3 electives):

- **SOA 1101:** Sociology and the Making of Concepts
- Any three of the below 2000 level core courses:
  - **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
- Any two 3000 level electives in SOA

(\*Please note that UG 22 and UG 23 who had completed the former 2000 cores, i.e. Language, Signs, and the Problem of Representation, and Natures Futures can make these count towards their Minor)

## Concentration in Sociology and Anthropology:

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

- **SOA 1101:** Sociology and the Making of Concepts
- **Any two** of the following core courses:
  - **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
- **Any one** 3000 level elective in SOA

(\*Please note that UG 22 and UG 23 who had completed the former 2000 cores, i.e. Language, Signs, and the Problem of Representation, and Natures Futures can make these count towards their Concentration)

### Pre-requisites

If a student from outside of the Department wishes to take any 3000-level elective, they will have to seek approval from the faculty member first. 1000 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, it will be communicated at the start of the semester.

### Courses to be offered in Monsoon Semester 2021

#### Cores

- Sociology and the Making of Concepts by Prof Swargajyoti Gohain
- Magic, Science and Religion by Prof Durba Chattaraj
- States, Stateless Societies and Problems of Power by Prof Mitul Baruah
- ASP Workshop I by Amita Baviskar

#### Electives

- Anthropology of Mental Health by Bhrigupati Singh
- Nationalism, Ethnicity and Violence by Prof Ravindran Sriramachandran
- Right to Water by Mitul Baruah
- War and Media by Deepak Mehta
- Thinking with Things by Rita Brara Mukhopadhyay

The electives offered in Monsoon '21 are a mix of both 2000 level and 3000 level courses.

### The Ashoka Scholars Program (4<sup>th</sup> year) in Sociology and Anthropology

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 an **Advanced Diploma in Sociology and Anthropology**, third-year students need to submit a thesis proposal in May. The following are the guidelines for those considering the Advanced Major in Sociology and Anthropology:

- The course, **Anthropology's Methods** will help prospective Advanced Majors to develop research proposals and plans. Fieldwork can be conducted over the summer between semesters 6 & 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**), each for 4 credits. 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 and cover 8 credits (4 each semester). The thesis will be evaluated by the faculty advisor.
- Fourth-years will also have the opportunity to gain experience as **Teaching Assistants** (getting 2 credits for the Teaching Practicum).
- The ASP cohort will also organise (for 2 credits per student) an **annual Symposium** in the Spring semester hosted by the department and conceptualised, curated and organised by the fourth-year students.
- To complete the required 24 credits for the advanced major (the ASP requires 32 credits at minimum), fourth-years will be able to take an **additional 1 departmental elective** to broaden and deepen their engagement with the discipline.

Please note that ASP students can take more than one course either in Sociology or other subjects during their ASP programme, but that would not count towards 24 credits.

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 our course offerings beyond formal requirements. Graduating as a Major student from the Department is required to opt for the advanced major and write a thesis with the Department.

**UG Coordinators**

To help you navigate through your journey with the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Ashoka University, the Department created the positions of UG and ASP coordinators. They will help you to understand the curriculum, graduation requirements, course selection etc. throughout the year. They will also give advice on any matter related to undergraduate life at Ashoka. The following faculty have been nominated as the UG Coordinators for 2021-2023.

**UG Coordinators:** Prof. Durba Chattaraj, Prof. Mitul Baruah

**ASP Coordinators:** Prof Amita Baviskar (Monsoon 21) and Prof Durba Chattaraj (Spring 22)

### **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 taken the set of 2000-level cores.

**Q: What is the policy on cross-listed courses?**

**A:** Cross-listed courses are those courses that arise out of a discipline different from SOA but are cross-listed with SOA. **There is no cap on the cross-listed courses.**

**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 LMS.

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

**A:** No. Only ASPs 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 for the Monsoon semester. How should I proceed?**

**A:** Only ASP students are eligible to TA for courses. The Department notifies all ASPs of TA requirements at the beginning of the semester and calls for applications.

**Q: Whom should I contact for further queries?**

**A:** You can email the Student Representative **Uttamasha Dutta** ([uttamasha.dutta\\_ug22@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:uttamasha.dutta_ug22@ashoka.edu.in)) for any queries or you can get in touch with the UG Coordinators, **Prof. Mitul Baruah** ([mitul.baruah@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:mitul.baruah@ashoka.edu.in)) and **Prof. Durba Chattaraj** ([durba.chattaraj@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:durba.chattaraj@ashoka.edu.in)) or the Head of the Department, **Prof Swargajyoti Gohain** ([swargajyoti.gohain@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:swargajyoti.gohain@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 LMS or may reach out to your peers or seniors who have already taken courses you may be interested in. You can also consult your year advisor for seeking guidance.

**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:** Yes, you can take the 2000 level core courses before the 1000 level courses, but we recommend that you take 1101 as your first course in SOA 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 1101 and any two 2000 level courses.

**Q: Can the elective requirements be fulfilled by any 2000 or 3000 level courses?**

**A:** After fulfilling the required number of level-based requirements, you are free to take 2000 or 3000 level courses to fulfil your remaining requirements