

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN
AND
2019/2020 UNDERGRADUATE SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM REPORT

Department of Sociology and Criminology

Contributors (in alphabetical order):

Lori Holyfield

Shauna Morimoto

Anna Zajicek

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Statement of Mission: Undergraduate Program in Sociology

The mission of the undergraduate program in sociology is to provide the learning environment to meet the program goals and develop the skills listed below. Faculty members have been encouraged to tie the syllabi for every course into the program goals.

Program Goals (3-4)

(Program goals are broad general statements of what the program intends to accomplish and describes what a student will be able to do after completing the program. The program goals are linked to the mission of the university and college.)

The discipline of sociology is characterized by its breadth and the diversity of its subfields and specializations. Hence, of particular importance to the sociology undergraduate program are the following general goals included in our mission statement:

1. to provide knowledge and understanding of the historical, social, intellectual bases of human culture and environment;
2. to provide habits of thought and investigation useful in later life;
3. to encourage exploration and development of ethical values; and
4. to offer the necessary foundation for professional competence or further training in professional or graduate schools.

Student Learning Outcomes (6-8)

(Student Learning Outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will know and be able to do as a result of completing a program. These student learning outcomes are directly linked to the accomplishment of the program goals.)

By graduation, students with the B.A. Degree in Sociology should be able to:

1. effectively use communication skills in writing, editing, speaking and listening
2. effectively use analytical and computer skills to include the tools to analyze qualitative and quantitative data
3. effectively conceptualize and solve problems, and engage in critical thinking, effective reasoning, and decision-making
4. effectively use social skills to include cooperative learning and group problem-solving
5. be able to translate the sociological perspective into everyday life and problems.

In addition, students in sociology should have acquired the more specific set of skills:

1. an understanding of the theoretical foundations of the discipline of sociology.
2. an understanding of the methodological foundations of the discipline of sociology
3. an understanding of the sociological perspective (society's structures and processes) emphasizing the relationship between the individual and society.

Process for Assessing Each Learning Outcome

(A process must be defined and documented to regularly assess student learning and achievement of student learning outcomes. The results of the assessment must be utilized as input for the improvement of the program.)

In the Department of Sociology and Criminology, the undergraduate SOCI committee has the responsibility for reviewing and evaluating our assessment procedures, and for offering suggestions to the faculty. The Department Chair and the Undergraduate Director/Vice-Chair, in collaboration with

the Undergraduate Committees, are responsible for developing, administering, and reviewing the exit undergraduate and alumni surveys, including individual and group questionnaires, and for informing the faculty of the results.

1. Timeline for assessment and analysis

(Must include specific timeline for collection and analysis of assessment data.)

- Data collection takes place on an annual basis during spring and fall semesters.
- In 2019/2020, data collection took place between November 15 and December 19, and May 5 and June 15.
- The analyses of assessment data took place between May 15 and June 30.

2. Means of assessment and desired level of student achievement

(Must include at least one direct and one indirect method of assessment for each learning outcome.)

We use two methods of assessment: 1) a required senior research paper, and 2) exit surveys and exit interviews with graduating seniors. In addition, we do follow-up assessment through an alumni survey.

- The Senior Writing Requirement is the same as the one required by the College of Arts and Sciences and follows the guidelines currently in practice for the department. This paper requires that the student demonstrate skills in the areas described above.
- The exit survey gives us an objective measure and the exit questionnaires administered in our SOCI Senior Capstone course provide additional insight into the department's effectiveness at meeting the students' goals.
- Finally, the follow-up alumni survey helps us determine if our program has been successful in preparing students for careers and/or further professional study.

3. Reporting of results

(Must at least report annually to the Dean of college/school.)

- Results will be reported annually by July 15

2019/2020 Academic Assessment Report

DEGREE PROGRAM: SOCI, BA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CRIMINOLOGY (July 8, 2020)

The Department of Sociology and Criminology employed several measures to assess the academic achievement of its sociology and criminology majors:

- A. Senior Writing Requirement
- B. Senior exit survey
- C. Individual questionnaire and group feedback in the Senior Capstone course
- D. Alumni Survey

The results of these various methods indicated that the department was performing well and accomplishing its goals.

The Senior Writing Requirement

Senior Writing Requirement (SWR): every SOCI and CRIM major must complete a major written report in an upper level course (Junior/Senior Level) in order to complete the Fulbright writing requirement. All students who graduated during AY 2019-2020 submitted the Senior Writing Requirement (i.e., adequate analytic/research papers) in accordance with our and the ARSC College writing requirement.

Importantly, the department revised the Senior Writing Requirement in the Fall of 2019 to be more specific and standardized. Attached to the SWR is a reflective essay (see below) that addressed the High Impact Goals for the value-added curriculum. Each faculty member who teaches an upper level course now includes the SWR option for up to 5 students (although faculty members can approve more). The department agreed to this approach in the Spring of 2020 (to be implemented Fall 2020) in order to better serve all majors in the department and the ensure a structured approach to the completion of the paper. The department restructured the paper in 2019 Students must choose from one of the options below:

- Option One
 - Traditional Research paper 12 pages (not including references)
- Option Two:
 - Multiple papers -- will require students to submit 3 mini-papers of 4 pages (for a total of 12 pages) in any given course.
- Option Three
 - Multiple papers -- will require students to submit 4 mini-papers of 3 pages (for a total of 12 pages) in any given course.
- Important:
 - The paper if in several smaller sets (option 2 and 3), will need to build on the 1st (cumulative argument).
- Important:
 - The paper(s) should incorporate peer-reviewed, scholarly research to support the argument.
- Important:
 - The final delivery should be 12 pages in total (not including references), regardless of the option.

In addition to the paper, students are required to provide a **reflective essay** that incorporates both ethical and critical thinking. The essay includes three components:

- Written Communication Abilities
- Characteristics on Inquiry and Action/Conducting Ethical Research in Social Science
- Critical Thinking and/or Ethical Reasoning

The SWR and Reflective Essay will be assessed according to a common 4- point rubric by the course instructor, and a sample of both SWR and Reflective essays will be reviewed and submitted by the Undergraduate Director and/or Undergraduate Committees. The combination of the SWR and essay meets the value-added (General Education) learning outcomes 1.2, and 6.

The Capstone Course and Individual and Group Questionnaires

SOCI 4043, Senior Seminar, is the capstone course for the undergraduate degrees in sociology and criminology. There were 35 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043: Senior Seminar during Fall 2019. Among them, 33 (94%) students passed, one did not pass, and one withdrew. There were 23 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043 during Spring 2020. Of these, 91% (N=21) passed, one student received an incomplete grade, and one student withdrew.

Individual and Group Questionnaire Protocol

The capstone course is used to administer individual and group questionnaires for sociology majors and sociology and criminology double majors. Individual and group questionnaires are an integral part of the course, and all graduating seniors are asked to complete it. The instructor, Dr. Doug Adams, explained the purpose of the course to each student, described the types of information to be collected, and how this information would be used to improve the quality of our undergraduate programs. The instructor also informed each student that the feedback was anonymous, the information would be reported in a way that he/she could not be identified. Subsequently, Dr. Adams, provided each student with an anonymous questionnaire to complete during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters (questions are listed below). After the individual questionnaires were completed, the students were put into groups of three people, and each group was asked to provide additional information.

Individual Questions

1. What is your major?
2. When did you declare your major?
3. Did you do an internship?
4. Did you work with a professor on research?
5. Your favorite class?
6. Your favorite teacher?
7. How was your overall experience with the SOCI/CRIM Department?
8. What did you like best about your courses in the department?
9. If you could, what would you change about the SOCI/CRIM Department?
10. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Graduate School?

The following descriptive summaries and our interpretive findings are based on student and group answers from the questionnaires administered in Fall 2019 as this class was larger. The responses come from the students that attended class (N = 29) on Thursday, December 19, 2019. After the

individual questionnaires were collected, the students were randomly assigned to three-person groups. Each group discussed three (3) instructor-provided questions and submitted 3 x 5 index cards with group-based responses to the questions. Finally, the group responses were reviewed, and used to guide class-based discussion.

QUESTION 1: What is your Major?

- There were slightly more SOCI CMJS Double Majors (13) than SOCI Majors (10).
- Of the other Double Majors (6), all were ARSC or Social Work. There were more Double Majors overall (19), then SOCI-only (10) Majors.

QUESTION 2: When did you declare your Major?

- Most SOCI – CMJS/CRIM Majors declared their major in their sophomore year (14) or in their Freshman year (12).

QUESTIONS 3 and 4: Did you do an Internship? Did you work with a professor on research?

- Internships? No, was the response from 17 students, almost 60% of the students.
- Work with Professor? No, was the response of 20 students, almost (almost 70%).

QUESTION 5: Your Favorite Class?

- The following list included only classes that were listed by two or more students:
- A total of eighteen classes were listed. Of those, eight (8) were mentioned 2 or more times.
 - Approximately 50% of these classes represent Sociology and 50% represent Criminology. This suggests a balanced selection of classes: SOCI - Seminar in Sociology (5); SOCI - Race, Class and Gender (4); CRIM - Criminal Law 4; CRIM - Criminal Investigation (3); CRIM/SOCI Corrections (2); CRIM - Human Trafficking (2); and SOCI - Social Psychology (2)

Question 6: Your Favorite Teacher?

- A total of nineteen (19) Instructors were listed. Of those, nine (9) were mentioned 2 or more times. Almost all of those listed represent Sociology; very few represent Criminology.
- Overall, the list of faculty represents a diverse and inclusive cross-section of the faculty.

QUESTION 7: How was your overall experience with the SOCI/CRIM Department?

- Of the twenty-nine students, 95% reported "Very Good" or "Good" experiences.

QUESTION 8: What did you like best about your courses in the department?

- There were twenty-one (21) items listed by the students.
- A review of the list provides four (4) items (that were mentioned 2 or more times): Relevant Topics (9); Interesting Classes (6); Enlightening/Critical Thinking/Discussion (4); and Professors that care/Passionate about topic (4)

QUESTION 9: If you could, what would you change about the Sociology Department?

- Eighteen (18) items were listed by the students. Condensing the responses yields the following: More Career/Graduation Opportunities (5); Frustration with the Writing Requirement (5); More Variety of Topics (3); Less Paper Writing (2)

QUESTION 10: Where do you see yourself in five years? Graduate School?

- About 61% mentioned "working" and about 39% listed a variety of graduate degrees (MA, JD, Ph.D.).

Group Question and Responses

QUESTION: What are your three most important concerns and/or suggestions?

- Greater attention should be given to elective classes, especially those that "Apply to Life" and that are "fun" (like Social Media).
- Internships should not be required, but strongly encouraged. Given that student's work demands and/or time conflicts, internships that are flexible, are paid, or that lead to employment with the organization after graduation should be increased.
- More emphasis on Career Development and Advising.

Interpretive Findings

- Consideration should be given to career development opportunities that leverage the unique skill set of Double Majors (vs. Single Majors).
- Double Major disciplines/departments outside of the Social Sciences or Fulbright College, that align with the SOCI Strategic Plan (ex. Biology) should be considered.
- Recruitment processes might be different for each year/group, based on variation in their focal concerns (for example, social gatherings for Freshman vs. career events for Sophomores).
- Students appreciate the value of internship/research opportunities. They welcome additional information that encourages participation. However, they strongly resist the idea of "required" or "mandatory" internships/research opportunities.
- Overall, most of the students reported a strong and positive experience with the Department.
- Quite a few students reported frustration related to the ARSC Writing Requirement.
- A number of the comments suggest greater emphasis on Career/Post-Graduation career information.

Online Survey, Fall 2019-Spring 2020

An online, electronically administered 28 item questionnaire collected evaluations from students who have applied for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 graduation regarding the adequacy of their education and the skills they obtained. The survey that was used the most in this report is the Fall 2019 survey. The reason for this is that we had a greater number of respondents. The survey from Fall 2019 received responses from 33 participants, whereas the Spring 2020 survey received responses from 16 participants (COVID-19). The survey from Spring 2020 was used when there are significant differences between the two surveys.

Of the 33 total participants that replied to the survey request, 34% (N=11) respondents identified as male, 66% (N=21) identified as female; 75% were white (N=24), 22% (N=7) were Black/African-American; 3% (N=1) were multi-racial; and, 10% (N=3) answered that they were of Hispanic or Latino(a) origin. Half of the participants indicated they were combined SOCI-CRIM majors; 34% of the participants were Sociology majors only. Thirty participants were seniors. The majority of findings are based on a total of 32 completed surveys, but we did include the results of the incomplete survey.

Analyses show that students generally were satisfied with the content of course work in the major, the relevancy and difficulty of the curriculum, the depth and breadth of course offerings, and the adequacy of instruction and advising. A significant number of them planned to further their education, many would select their major again, and nearly everyone would recommend their major to others. We discuss specific findings in detail below.

Findings:

1. **Quality of the curriculum.** Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the content, difficulty, and variety of the curriculum. On a scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, students rate their agreement with the statements “I am satisfied with the variety of courses offered by my degree program” (Q-6) and “I am satisfied with the content of the courses in this program” (Q-7). Overall agreement with both statements was average, with 69% of students rating their agreement as 4 and higher.
2. **Difficulty of the curriculum.** Students rated their agreement with a statement of satisfaction regarding the difficulty of the curriculum. Responses to Q-8 show that the level of difficulty is “about right” (74%).¹
3. **Program Goals.** We measured our program goals by asking questions related to understanding of the historical, social, intellectual bases of human culture and environment, among others. Responses to Q 13 indicates 91% of respondents agreed that their major helped them gain the ability to recognize diversity and inequality.² Responses to Q-14 indicate that almost all (94%) students reported high level of insight in the relationship between individual and society.

As Figure 1 (Q-12) demonstrates, about 78% of the respondents agree or strongly agree they have learned how to conduct research in their major area.

Q12 I learned how to conduct research in my area of study (sociology, criminology, or criminal justice).

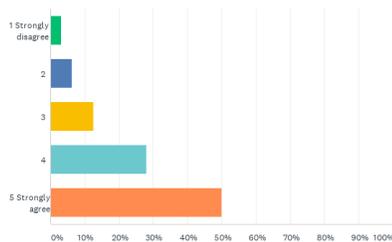
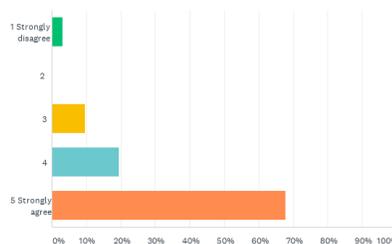


Figure 2 (Q-9) indicates that over 87% of our students agree or strongly agree that they have learned several theories in their area. ³

Q9 I learned several theories in my area of study (sociology, criminology, or criminal justice).



¹ With regard to rating the difficulty of courses, Spring 2020 survey responses were similar.

² Spring 2020 results dropped slightly for insight in the relationship between individual and society (80%), although the number increased for the ability to recognize diversity and inequality (100%).

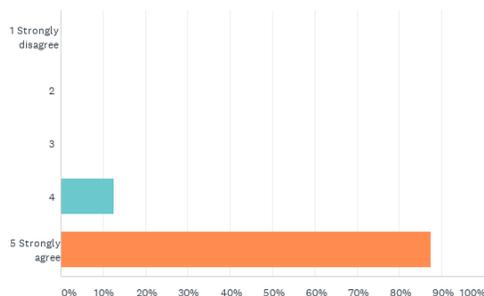
³ Spring 2022 results increased to 95% with regards to having learned how to conduct research in their major area.

4. Student Learning Outcomes. Finally, we asked a set of questions asking students to reflect on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they have acquired and be able to do as a result of our program.
 - a. Overall, students feel very positively about our performance. Responses suggest that the department is meeting the programmatic goals consistent with our mission. Specifically, the majority of students (72%) agreed that the major improved their ability to understand and interpret data (Q-17/18); or they (79%) developed the ability to make data-informed decisions (Q-19).
 - b. With regard to critical thinking (Q-20) and writing abilities (Q-21), 73% and 88% of the respondents agreed with statements courses helped develop their critical thinking skills, and 85% agreed courses helped improve their writing skills. This is the third time that we have asked questions related to data literacy. At the same time, the department began to place more emphasis on data literacy in our courses. Our findings suggest that data literacy, writing skills, and critical thinking skills represent the three areas in which we observe some substantive improvements. We will continue to monitor these areas.
 - c. Additional findings indicated that the majority (79%) of the respondents feel the degree is valuable (Q-22). 75% of the respondents reported that they would recommend their major to others (Q-24).⁴

5. Diversity and Inclusion. In Spring 2020 we added four questions related to diversity and inclusion, which is part of our core mission. This was the first time we asked these questions. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement on statements related to diversity and inclusion on a scale of 1-5 (strongly disagree- strongly agree).
 - a. 100% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that it is important to interact with students, faculty, and staff from diverse groups (Fig. 3, Q-6).
 - b. The majority (77%) agree or strongly agree that the department should infuse more content related to diversity and inclusion in our courses (Fig. 4, Q-8).
 - c. All but one respondent agree or strongly agree that undergraduate and criminology students should have to take at least one course in diversity and inclusion as a requirement for graduation (Fig. 5, Q-9); and that sociology and criminology faculty treat students from diverse backgrounds with respect (Fig. 6, Q-20).

Fig. 3

Q6 It is important to me to interact with students, faculty, and staff, and from diverse groups.



⁴ Spring 2020 results show increase in those who reported that they would recommend their major to others at 90%.

Fig. 4

Q8 Department should infuse more content related to diversity and inclusion in our courses.

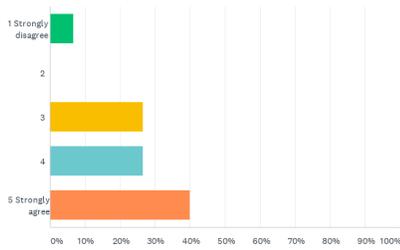


Fig. 5

Q9 Undergraduate sociology and criminology students should have to take at least one course in diversity and inclusion as a requirement for graduation

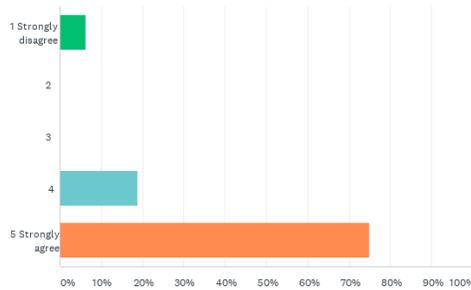
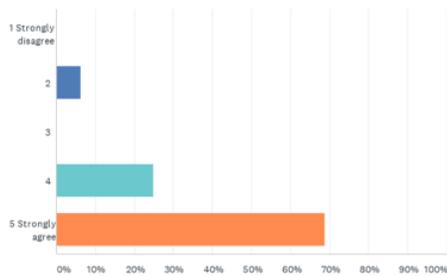


Fig. 6

Q20 Sociology and criminology faculty treat students from diverse backgrounds with respect.



Summary

In general, our survey findings confirm the information collected during informal interviews and via questionnaire. The mixed-method results indicate that our department is performing well. Our students are satisfied with their experiences in the department, have positive experiences with the professors, and benefit from the coursework. While we are meeting or exceeding all of our student learning objectives, we have improved several areas of our instruction, including the development of *research skills, data literacy, and critical thinking and writing skills*. The results regarding student perceptions of the value of their degree have also shown substantive improvement. In fall 2017, the department proposed a social

data analytics certificate within the SOCI major. This effort was stopped by stakeholders from other colleges. In 2018, we worked with other colleges to propose a social data analytics concentration. This concentration is scheduled to go live in fall 2021. Moreover, in line with our strategic priorities, since summer 2017, the department has provided several faculty members with additional funds to hire and work on research projects with our undergraduate majors. These funds will continue as long as the department has resources available to support undergraduate research.

Furthermore, we have continued to implement career-oriented content in our courses and our internship program is one of the best in Fulbright College. Given the importance of the internship experiences, we have developed an internship survey to assess student experiences with the program.