

**Group 2: Cycle 1 - Fall 2017 - Fall 2019****ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR Group 2: Cycle 1 - Fall 2017 - Fall 2019****Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Sociology for its undergraduate majors includes the following objectives: to enable them to understand, demonstrate, and apply sociological knowledge, approaches, principles, and statistical reasoning skills to the study of humans and groups and to develop depth and breadth in sociological knowledge and theories. The sociology program has a number of nationally recognized specialties to offer undergraduates and to serve the needs of a diverse population. Our program is tailored to emphasize training in Social Stratification and Inequality; Population and Health; and Social Psychology. The mission for the Department of Sociology for its undergraduate majors remains the same for the BA and the BS degrees as the major requirements are the same for both degrees, with only general education requirements varying. The BS degree contains a greater concentration on math and science, central skills necessary to become a professional sociologist. It is important to monitor the students and to continuously check on their performance. Although sociology is a very broad field we employ some metrics that are usable by faculty who represent various facets of the field.

**Goal 1.**

Content of the Discipline: Sociology majors should have basic knowledge of the components of sociological theories and substantive areas of the discipline upon completion of the degree.

**Curriculum**

Successful completion of required 300 level Sociology courses and substantive specialty courses numbered 300 or above.

**Learning Outcome 1.**

Sociology majors completing the required SOCY 303 capstone course will demonstrate they understand the general sociological perspective and the uses of sociological theory, can apply critical reasoning skills to evaluating theoretical explanations, and can identify uses and limitations of major sociological research methods in evaluating theories. Majors will evidence these ability to apply these skills to the study of social issues of broad impact and interest beyond the discipline.

**Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by the level of student performance in SOCY 303 courses required of all future sociology majors. At least 70% of students should demonstrate abilities in all three areas: theoretical understanding, critical reasoning and methodological assessment.

As we move to new required theory and integrative methods courses, rubrics will be refined and the emphases of each course will be stressed in metrics for assessments focused in those specific courses.

**Methods**

One required 303 course will be chosen at random (preferably in the Fall Semester). A qualitative evaluation a random sampling of 10-20 course research project papers will be separately graded by the instructor classifying papers as (a) demonstrating adequate understanding of core sociological theories and perspectives, (b) applying critical reasoning to theoretical explanations and (c) evaluating of methodologies underlying the evaluation of theories, using categories of (1=poor, 2=adequate, 3=good, 4=excellent). Success will be indicated by over 70 percent of papers scoring good or better. Instructors of the selected course will prepare a summary of assessment findings for the Chair and Undergraduate Program Director, who will evaluate results and share with the faculty during curriculum discussions.

Course papers in 303 are guided, but independently conducted full research projects or proposals with a full literature review, theoretical proposition or problem formulation, an explication of appropriate research methodology, data collection and analysis, including either final or pilot research results. The course is intended to serve as a 'capstone' integration of theoretical, methodological and substantive training from

prior coursework in the major. (note: based on prior assessment the objectives of this course are being split into two components in the future. However, for the coming assessment year those changes will not yet have been implemented).

The undergraduate director and undergraduate committee will recommend refined rubrics over time which should be possible through the standardized use of these required 303 courses rather than a randomly sampled 300-level course as in the past.

### **Results**

All assignments given in the course specifically addressed all three criteria, including multiple choice exams and short answer components in which students were asked to apply their knowledge to sample research design case studies. 71 percent of students were rated good or excellent in all three areas of theoretical understanding, critical reasoning and methodological assessment. 14 percent did not achieve this rating largely due to attendance issues and 14 percent were rated as adequate.

### **Use of Results**

Results were shared with the UPD for discussion with the faculty. This course is currently being elevated to the 500-level in curricular changes and results will be used in design of that course.

## **Learning Outcome 2.**

Sociology majors completing advanced substantive courses (500-level) will demonstrate they (1) understand the major sociological theories in a specific substantive area of specialization, (2) can critically evaluate competing theories in the field, and (3) can identify and critique major methodological approaches within the specialty area. Examples of substantive areas are Social Inequality, Social Psychology, Sociology of the Family, and Sociology of Medicine and Health.

### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by the level of performance in advance specialty area courses. At least 75% of students should demonstrate, on tests and assignments, an understanding of the state of knowledge and theories in the substantive area of the discipline, be able to critically evaluate major theories in the field and have knowledge of the principle methods used to evaluate theoretical explanations in the specialty area.

### **Methods**

One elective 500-level substantive course will be chosen at random. Evaluation methods in the course will be as described for SOCY 303 courses except that all metrics will emphasize more detailed and specialized understanding of theories within the specific area of specialization. Questions for qualitative or quantitative assessment of theoretical understanding for advanced substantive specialization will include an emphasis on critical comparison of competing theories in the field and the ability to apply the theories to social issues of broad interest and impact beyond the discipline.

### **Results**

Sociology 513 was randomly selected for this learning outcome assessment. Student performance using projects papers and tests in the course were rated as poor, adequate, good or excellent. For understanding of core sociological theories and perspectives 77% were rated as good or excellent. For application of critical reasoning to theoretical explanations 71% were rated as good or excellent. And for evaluation of methodologies 75% were rated as good or excellent.

### **Use of Results**

Results were shared with the UPD for discussion with the faculty. No substantive feedback for curricular changes was given to 500-level course instructors but greater access to training specifically in critical evaluation of theories has been enhanced through adding 500-level critical theory course offerings (SOCY 515).

## **Goal 2.**

Methods and Tools used in the Discipline: Sociology Majors will demonstrate proficiency in the use of basic statistical reasoning skills, and the ability to use and interpret elementary statistics.

### **Curriculum**

Successful completion of SOCY 220, Elementary Statistics for Sociologists, or a comparable elementary statistics course approved by the Department.

## **Learning Outcome 1.**

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Sociology majors will demonstrate an understanding and ability to use the following statistical tools: 1. The distinction between descriptive and inferential statistics; 2. Levels of measurement, ratios and rates; 3. Various measures of central tendency and statistical variability used to describe distributions; 4. Hypothesis testing, sampling and inference from sample estimates for a population; 5. Simple bivariate modeling techniques such as correlation and regression..

### **Measures and Criteria**

Success in this goal is indicated by the level of performance of the class in the aggregate. At least 70% of students should demonstrate an understanding and ability to use each of the tools in Learning Outcome 1. These more defined measures are also to be interpreted in context of evaluation of methodological skills under Goal 1 Learning Outcome 1 - the evaluation of the ability to use this knowledge in an active research context.

### **Methods**

One randomly selected, required, 220 course will be selected to evaluate the five key learning outcome concepts identified. Questions selected for assessment will be similar to GRE Exam preparation questions regarding these five concepts. Instructors will be allowed to embed these questions within a graded exam or administer a supplemental non-graded exam in class or on-line. No more than one evaluation question will be altered each year to preserve the continuity of assessment over time. A one page anonymous summary of examination outcomes for the five items will be provided by the instructor to the Chair and the Undergraduate Program Director and will be shared with the faculty during curricular discussion.

### **Results**

Use of embedded exam questions resulted in scores evidencing 78 percent competence in descriptive and explanatory statistics; 87 percent in ratios, rates and rates of change; 70 percent in measures of central tendency and variation, 83 percent in correlation and regression and 62 percent in hypothesis testing and sample estimates of populations.

### **Use of Results**

Results were shared with the UPD and instructors scheduled to teach SOCY 220 the following year. These results were used in adjusting the weight of emphasis on lab exercises in a wholesale revision of the 220 course emphasizing more practical applications to sample data.