

Assessment Report for Student Learning  
In the Sociology Major  
2006-2007 Academic Year

October 1, 2008

**Executive Summary**

This Assessment Report for the Sociology major assesses student learning during the 2007-2008 Academic Year. Assessment results indicate that students performed at an **excellent level for one of the three learning goals**. Results are not available for the other two learning goals due to the small number of students enrolled in one relevant class and the loss of data due to the retirement of faculty member for the other one. Improvement plans are discussed.

**Student Learning Goals**

The learning goals for the Sociology major are:

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze personal and social experiences by applying the sociological imagination.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to design a sociological research project, and communicate its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

The sociology faculty is committed to the Millikin mission and has designed a curriculum that intentionally prepares majors for professional success, democratic citizenship in a global community, and a personal life of meaning and value by producing graduates who are capable of thinking critically from a sociological perspective. The Sociology learning goals fit with the Millikin University Mission in the following ways.

Sociology graduates achieve the goal of *professional success* by demonstrating their ability to:

- a. analyze personal and social experiences by applying the sociological imagination,
- b. use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender, and their interrelationships, and
- c. design a sociological research project, and communicate its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Sociology majors will develop a discipline-based understanding of *citizenship in a global environment* goal by:

- a. using sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender, and their interrelationships, and
- b. designing a sociological research project, and communicating its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Sociology majors discover and develop a *personal life of meaning & value* as they:

- a. analyze personal and social experiences by applying the sociological imagination, and
- b. use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender, and their interrelationships.

### Snapshot

Given the relatively small number of sociology majors and minors, most sociology classes are providing service to the Human Services major and other University curriculum requirements, including the CAS Social Sciences requirement, US Studies, Global Studies, and Gender Studies.

The following table shows the classes taught in Sociology during the 2006-2007 Academic Year. Not included in this list are the Human Services classes taught by the Social Workers or the Statistics or Social Psychology classes taught by a Psychologist.

Fall 2007			Spring 2008		
Course #	Instructor	Level	Course #	Instructor	Level
SO10001	Crisler	28	SO10001	Crisler	40
SO10002	Crisler	36	SO10002	Crisler	39
SO23201	Crisler	27	SO12001*	Pippitt	30
SO31001	Fennessey	15	SO22101	Crisler	26
SO35101	Troy	26	SO22401*	Troy	15
SO36001	Troy	6	SO22402*	Troy	18
SO37201	Crisler	5	SO25001	Troy	15
SO45019	Troy	1	SO31101	Crisler	27
			SO33001	Fennessey	17
			SO45019	Troy	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>153</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>228</b>
	<b>Classes</b>	<b>Students</b>		<b>Classes</b>	<b>Students</b>
<b>Full-Time</b>	7	129	<b>Full-Time</b>	8	181
<b>Adjunct</b>	1	15	<b>Adjunct</b>	2	47

\* Cross-listed with an IN class

### The Learning Story

The sociology major uses the scientific method to study social groups and processes. Majors are intentionally exposed to the key social factors influencing human behavior, as well as, the methods for critically analyzing social patterns and values by sequenced coursework.

As students proceed through their plan of study taking introductory, sociology fundamentals, and elective course work in specialty areas of the discipline, they are exposed to the theoretical explanations and empirical evidence regarding a variety of social arrangements and come to recognize that it is only possible to understand their own identities in the context of the social groups to which they belong. Majors learn

that by examining the diversity of human experience we are ultimately able to locate and define ourselves. Sociology course work also helps majors develop strong analytical and quantitative reasoning skills from their required statistics and research methods courses. Students continue to learn the power of the scientific method of inquiry as they engage in research in the community and how to use computer-based statistics packages for analyzing and interpreting social data. These experiences culminate with the development of a research project, often commissioned by organizations within the larger Decatur community in the senior year.

Beyond exposure to the discipline, students learn skills necessary to assess and critically evaluate the diversity of human experiences, especially the impact of diversity as characterized by race, class, and gender of groups. The integration of service learning and experiential education throughout the sociology curriculum creates a pervasive theme that pushes students to examine questions of ethics and values as they study issues of social inequality and interpret the social forces producing such inequality. Whether studying the family, race and ethnicity, criminology, urban sociology, or deviant behavior, students learn to synthesize existing theoretical knowledge using research findings to develop practical solutions. Their training enables and empowers sociology majors to critically analyze complex, real-world problems, evaluate the merits of various remedies, and appreciate the role diversity plays in the analysis of human behavior, and its ethical implications for their personal and professional lives. In sum, the sociology major integrates the general education and major curriculum with pre-professional experiences and mentor relationships, to mirror the University goals of professionalism, citizenship, and a life of personal meaning and value by advocating and demonstrating the impact of life-long learning and service.

### **Assessment Methods and Data**

The Sociology faculty has decided to collect the following assessments of the sociology major:

1. Learning Goal 1 is assessed in Sociological Analysis SO450, the capstone course, through an analysis of the final exam, which asks students to write specifically to this learning goal. Given the presently small number of graduating majors, all sociology majors' assignments are evaluated.
2. Learning Goal 2 is assessed in SO224, Poverty and Welfare, which substitutes for one of the Sociology Fundamentals courses (SO 320 Social Stratification) by evaluating the term paper submitted in this class. Because of the small number of majors, all papers from Sociology majors are evaluated. Although this learning goal addresses inequalities of race and gender, as well as class, only papers concerning class inequality are assessed because other classes are taught by adjuncts.
3. Learning Goal 3 is assessed by evaluating the proposal for a research project that students turn in while they are students in SO221, Methods of Sociological Research.

4. Advising Survey – Each semester when course schedule advising is performed, the department will administer the Behavioral Sciences Advising Survey. This anonymous questionnaire data will be collected, analyzed, and reported to faculty and students, and used as an indicator and source of guidance for how faculty are serving student needs.

**Assessment Results**

*Learning Goal 1* – Only one student took SO450, Sociological Analysis (taught by Troy as an uncompensated Directed Study), during the 2007-2008 academic year. That student performed very well on the relevant assignments, but it is inappropriate to assess a program based on one student’s work.

*Learning Goal 2* – Using the appropriate rubric, term papers for the six sociology majors in SO224, Poverty and Welfare, were reviewed. Five of the six (or 83%) scored at or above the standard of 3. The scores for each student are as follows:

Student Number	Score
1	4
2	5
3	3
4	5
5	1
6	4

*Learning Goal 3* – When Dr. Crisler retired he disposed of all previous student work, so it is not possible to do the assessment on this learning goal for this year.

Summary of Assessment of Student Learning for the Learning Goals

Learning Goal 1	NA
Learning Goal 2	83%
Learning Goal 3	NA

*Advising Survey*

The Advising Survey results are still pending.

**Improvement Plan**

We should be able to assess Learning Goal 1 next year because SO450, Sociological Analysis, will be offered in Fall 2008.

In response to results indicating that students were not performing up to standards in 2006-2007 with respect to Learning Goal 3, we made changes in the assessment plan for 2007-2008. The plan was to assess this goal by scoring the final draft of a Research Proposal assigned in the required Methods of Sociological Research course, SO221. Greater weight was to be placed in the class for this research proposal, which would have increased the seriousness that students took the assignment. Unfortunately, with Dr. Crisler's retirement, we do not know if he, in fact, followed through with this plan. For the immediate future, Dr. Troy will teach this class and will require students to complete the assignment in a meaningful way.

## Appendix 1 – Sociology Assessment Rubric

Learning Objectives	Nominal (1 point)	Adequate (3 points)	Excellent (5 points)
<b>Goal 1:</b> Ability to analyze personal & social experiences by applying the sociological imagination. (Capstone Assignment)	Fails to understand or use the sociological imagination in problem solving or interpreting personal & social experiences. Fails to adhere to the ethical principles & standards of sociology, & shows minimal ability to match personal values to life goals.	General understanding & ability to evaluate personal & social experiences using the sociological imagination. Can, with minimal ethical errors or deviations from professional standards apply their knowledge & skills to serve professional & community needs.	Demonstrates thorough & insightful ability to evaluate personal & social experiences using the sociological imagination. Rigorous & conscientious appreciation of how the ethical principles & standards of sociology impact society as shown in their professional & community activities.
<b>Goal 2:</b> Ability to use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities race, class, & gender. (Term Paper for SO224)	Minimal understanding of the effects of race, class & gender on society, inability to develop hypotheses or solve problems using a sociological analysis.	General understanding & ability to evaluate the impact of race, class, & gender on society, some evidence of the ability to create hypotheses or solve problems using sociological analysis.	In-depth synthesis of perspectives of race, class, & gender & their societal impact, & can readily develop hypotheses & solve problems using sociological analysis.
<b>Goal 3:</b> ability to design a sociological research project, and communicate its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline. (Research Proposal for SO221)	Proposal fails to demonstrate an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings.	Proposal adequately demonstrates an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings.	Proposal demonstrates an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings to an excellent degree...

## Appendix 2 – Artifacts & Standards for Sociology

Artifact	Green	Yellow	Red
Capstone Research Project (Learning Goal 1)	70% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.	60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.	Less than 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.
Paper for SO224 (Learning Goal 2)	70% of majors achieve a a score of 3 or above.	60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.	Less than 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.
Research Proposal for SO221 (Learning Goal 3)	70% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.	60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.	Less than 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above.