

Assessment Report for Student Learning
In the Sociology Major
2008-2009 Academic Year

July 6, 2009

Executive Summary

This Assessment Report for the Sociology major assesses student learning during the 2008-2009 Academic Year. Assessment results indicate that students performed at an **excellent level for two of the three learning goals, and at an acceptable level for the third.** 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 2008			Spring 2009		
Course #	Instructor	Level	Course #	Instructor	Level
SO10001	Phillips	30	SO10001	Phillips	36
SO10002	Phillips	29	SO10002	Phillips	36
SO31001	Phillips	16	SO22101	Troy	18
SO35101	Troy	30	SO22401*	Troy	26
SO36001*	Troy	20	SO22402*	Troy	27
SO45001	Troy	10	SO25001	Troy	8
			SO33001	Medley-Rath	18
Total		135	Total		169
	Classes	Students		Classes	Students
Full-Time	6	135	Full-Time	6	151
			Adjunct	1	18

* 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 – Using the appropriate rubric, we analyzed student answers to the final exam for SO450, which was specifically written for this learning goal. Nine of the 10 (90%) scored at or above the standard of 3. The scores are summarized as follows:

Rubric Score	N
5	6
4	1
3	2
2	1
1	0

Learning Goal 2 – Using the appropriate rubric, term papers for the eight sociology majors in SO224, Poverty and Welfare, were reviewed. Six of the eight (or 75%) scored at or above the standard of 3. The scores are summarized as follows:

Rubric Score	Score
5	0
4	3
3	3
2	1
1	1

Learning Goal 3 – Using the appropriate rubric, research proposals for the five sociology majors in SO221, Methods of Sociological Research, were reviewed. Three of the five students (or 60%) scored at or above the standard of 3. The scores are summarized as follows:

Student Number	Score
5	0
3	0
3	3
2	1
1	1

Summary of Assessment of Student Learning for the Learning Goals

Learning Goal 1	90%
Learning Goal 2	75%
Learning Goal 3	60%

Advising Survey

The Advising Survey results are still pending.

Improvement Plan

Learning Goal 3 remains a problem for the sociology curriculum. Dr. Crisler's students had problems with this goal, and, in his first year teaching the class, Dr. Troy's students did not do as well as we had hoped. Student feedback indicates problems in both Course Organization and Communication. The instructor believes that students enter the class with expectations that are too low, and therefore they struggle when they are pushed to attain standards appropriate to the field. When the course is taught again in Spring 2010, several changes will be made. First, the course will be reorganized to focus on the ultimate outcome, the research proposal. Therefore, instead of an academic, somewhat theoretical, review of research methodology, the course will be more applied in focus. Second, models of acceptable research proposals will be distributed and reviewed in detail. Students will then be instructed more specifically on how to write each section of the proposal. As a result of these changes, students should be more aware of the task before them, and should be more likely to understand it and take it seriously.

Appendix 1 – Sociology Assessment Rubric

Learning Objectives	Nominal (1 point)	Adequate (3 points)	Excellent (5 points)
Goal 1: 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.
Goal 2: 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.
Goal 3: 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.