

Assessment Report for Student Learning
In the Sociology Major
2011-2012 Academic Year

June 15, 2012

Executive Summary

This Assessment Report for the Sociology major assesses student learning during the 2011-2012 Academic Year. **Assessment results indicate that students performed at an excellent level for one of the learning goals, and at an adequate level of the other two.**

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 US Studies, Global Studies, and Gender Studies. A relatively large number of students enrolled this year in SO250, Approaches to Sociological Theory, required for majors and minors, suggests that an increase in majors or minors may be developing.

The following table shows the classes taught in Sociology during the 2010-2011 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 2011			Spring 2012		
Course #	Instructor	Level	Course #	Instructor	Level
SO10001	Laundra	30	SO10001	Laundra	45
SO10002	Laundra	32	SO12001	Rauff	30
SO232/IN251	Laundra	32	SO22101	Laundra	32
SO310/IN251	Fennessey	30	SO22401/IN251	Troy	27
SO311/IN251	Laundra	35	SO22402/IN251	Troy	31
SO351	Troy	28	SO25001	Troy	19
SO365/IN350	Troy	31	SO311 (PACE)	Laundra	14
SO450	Troy	3	SO330/IN251	Fennessey	32
			SO361/IN251	Laundra	31
			SO365 (PACE)	Troy	20
			SO395 (DS)	Troy	1
			SO470 (DS)	Laundra	1
Total		221	Total		283
	Classes	Students		Classes	Students
Full-Time	8	191	Full-Time	10	249
Adjunct	1	30	Adjunct	1	32
			Directed Study	2	2

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. All 3 final exams were selected for assessment.
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. 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. A sample of 3 term papers from Sociology majors was assessed.

- 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. A sample of 3 proposals from Sociology majors was assessed.

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. The sample exams were scored on a five-point scale, and received an average of 4.3.

Learning Goal 2 – Using the appropriate rubric we analyzed term papers for Sociology majors in SO224. The sample exams were scored on a five-point scale, and received an average of 3.5.

Learning Goal 3 – Using the appropriate rubric we analyzed research proposals for Sociology majors in SO221. The sample proposals were scored on a five-point scale, and received an average of 3.2.

Summary of Assessment of Student Learning for the Learning Goals

	2010-2011	2011-2012
Learning Goal 1	3.00	4.3
Learning Goal 2	5.00	3.5
Learning Goal 3	3.67	3.2

Five-Year Trend for the Assessment of Student Learning in Sociology Percent of Students Achieving at an Acceptable Level

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Learning Goal 1	NA	90	100	67	100
Learning Goal 2	83	75	86	100	83
Learning Goal 3	NA	60	80	67	83

Discussion

We took a sample of 3 artifacts for each goal and assessed them according to the rubric. We then calculated the average score for the artifacts for each learning goal, and split the range into three equal parts: 1.00-2.39 = Nominal (Red); 2.40-3.79 = Adequate (Yellow); 3.80-5.00 = Excellent (Green). Using this methodology, the mean score for Learning Goal #1 was 4.3 (Excellent/Green), Learning Goal #2 was 3.5 (Adequate/Yellow), and Learning Goal #3 was 3.2 (Adequate/Yellow). We also show a five-year trend for the percentage of artifacts receiving at least a 3 (Adequate). Assessment results show that

students returned to the Excellent level for Learning Goal #1, and slipped back down to Adequate for Learning Goal #2 and, and remained at Adequate for Learning Goal #3.

Feedback Loop

The sociologists will continue to discuss these results during the 2012-2013 academic year, especially with respect to the continuing development of the Methods of Sociological Research class for Learning Goal #3.

Appendix 1 – Sociology Assessment Rubric

Learning Objectives	Nominal (1 point)	Adequate (3 points)	Excellent (5 points)
<p>Goal 1: Ability to analyze personal & social experiences by applying the sociological imagination. (Capstone Assignment)</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Ability to use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities race, class, & gender. (Term Paper for SO224)</p>	<p>Minimal understanding of the effects of race, class & gender on society, inability to develop hypotheses or solve problems using a sociological analysis.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>In-depth synthesis of perspectives of race, class, & gender & their societal impact, & can readily develop hypotheses & solve problems using sociological analysis.</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>Proposal fails to demonstrate an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings.</p>	<p>Proposal adequately demonstrates an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings.</p>	<p>Proposal demonstrates an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings to an excellent degree...</p>