Department: Sociology

Assessment Coordinator: Tsunokai/Cunningham

Departmental Mission:

The mission of the Department of Sociology is to provide a high quality, engaging and rigorous educational experience for undergraduate students. This experience is designed to make students more effective social actors by increasing their awareness and understanding of the social scientific approach, human behavior in groups, critical social issues, and diversity within American society and around the world. We also prepare our majors with the skills and real world experiences that will make them competitive in a modern workforce. Finally, the department provides the encouragement and support needed for faculty to sustain ongoing scholarship that engages students and to contribute to the larger community through their professional expertise.

Department Student Learning Outcomes:

In order to achieve its educational objectives, the Department of Sociology has organized its curriculum to maximize student learning outcomes in four areas: Methods of Sociological Research, Sociological Theory and Theoretical Reasoning, Substantive Sociological Knowledge and Applications, and General Skill Development (Communication and Information Literacy). Specific learning outcomes across these areas are listed briefly below:

1. Methods Assessment
2. Methods Application
3. Statistical Application
4. Theory Articulation
5. Theory Application
6. Cultural Awareness
7. Global Awareness
8. Area Application
9. Communication
10. Information Technologies
11. Disciplinary Writing
Table 1 describes in greater detail each of these specific learning outcomes and how each applies to the four degrees that we offer and our contributions to the General University Requirements.

**Table 1. Learning Outcomes by Degree**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of Sociological Research</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>BS</th>
<th>BA(Ed)</th>
<th>BA(SS)</th>
<th>GUR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Methods Assessment:</strong> Students will be able to apply the scientific method to explain social phenomena, evaluate the scientific merit of existing social research, and correctly evaluate claims of causality in social research</td>
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<td><strong>2. Methods Application:</strong> Students will be able to design and implement a quantitative or qualitative research study</td>
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<td><strong>3a. Statistical Application:</strong> Students will be able to conduct a basic statistical analysis (including multiple regression to elaborate a causal hypothesis) of social research data using a computer based statistical analysis program</td>
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<td><strong>3b. Statistical Application:</strong> Students will be able to use advanced statistical techniques to analyze large scale data sets</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sociological Theory and Theoretical Reasoning</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>BS</th>
<th>BA(Ed)</th>
<th>BA(SS)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Theory Articulation:</strong> Students will be able to articulate to others the basic tenets of major theories explaining the structure of social systems, processes of social change, and human behavior in relationships and groups</td>
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<td><strong>5. Theory Application:</strong> Students will be able to construct causal models to explain social phenomena using social theories and sound theoretical reasoning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SUBSTANTIVE SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATIONS</td>
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<td><strong>6. Cultural Awareness:</strong> Students will be able to articulate to others and demonstrate a sensitivity to how cultural background affects one’s values, behaviors, relationships, institutional forms and life prospects.</td>
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<td><strong>7. Global Awareness:</strong> Students will be able to articulate and demonstrate a sensitivity to global issues and processes of globalization.</td>
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<td><strong>8. Substantive Application:</strong> Students will be able to apply theories developed in their area of interest and training to explain phenomena in those areas (e.g., theories of organization, theories of family systems functioning, theories of demographic change, theories of crime and deviance, etc.).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GENERAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT</td>
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<td><strong>9. Communication:</strong> Students will be able to articulate ideas effectively through written, oral and visual modes of communication</td>
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<td><strong>10. Information Technologies:</strong> Students will be able to effectively and efficiently find and evaluate the adequacy of online information and social research.</td>
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<td><strong>11. Disciplinary Writing:</strong> Students will be able to write papers using a style appropriate to the discipline</td>
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With the change to an every-other year assessment schedule, our primary task for the first year (2014-2015) was to collect data on the effectiveness of our eight capstone courses. All capstone instructors completed an end-of-the-year survey that assessed their students’ preparation (n = 102) based on their expectations for completing assignments coming into their classes. Currently this survey covers all of the learning outcomes except for Outcome 8: Substantive Application. This survey asks about general preparation as well as preparation in specific outcomes relative to the general area. Instructors are only asked to evaluate areas that are relevant to their course content (e.g., courses that have no qualitative methods content are not asked about preparation in that area) and only report on students who were sufficiently engaged in the course to provide a valid assessment of their preparation. The questions are framed in terms of their assessment of what percent of the students in their course, who were sufficiently engaged, were sufficiently prepared to understand and complete course assignments to a level they assumed they should have been prepared. These responses were recorded into the categories: Satisfactory (80-100% of students were sufficiently prepared); Marginal (70-80% of students were sufficiently prepared); and Unsatisfactory (Less than 70% were sufficiently prepared).

Discussed below are some of our preliminary findings. Eight capstone courses were assessed, they include:

**Fall Quarter 2014:**
- Soc 456 – Seminar in Policing (5 credits / WP-3 / Professor Helms – 15 students enrolled)

**Winter Quarter 2015:**
- Soc 426 – Advanced Topics in Demography (5 credits / WP-3 / Professor Tedrow / 9 students enrolled)
- Soc 430 – Field Research Methods (5 credits / WP-3 / Professor Lois / 15 students enrolled)
- Soc 435 – Population Health Advocacy (5 credits / WP-3 / Professor Mogford / 11 students enrolled)

**Spring Quarter 2015:**
- Soc 426 – Advanced Topics in Demography (5 credits / WP – 3 / Professor Teachman / 7 students enrolled)
- Soc 460 – Advanced Topics in Family (5 credits / WP-3 / Professor Anderson / 15 students enrolled)
- Soc 461 – Advanced Sociology of Education (5 credits / WP-3 / Professor Bradley / 15 students enrolled)
- Soc 469 – Advanced Topics in Race and Ethnicity (5 credits / WP-3 / Professor Tsunokai / 15 students enrolled)
The results of this survey show that we have a diversity of capstone courses that in total sufficiently cover all learning outcome areas. Instructors also reported a high level of student engagement in their courses, thus providing a firm basis for making their assessments. For example, approximately 50% of the instructors indicated that 90% - 100% of their students made an effort to do well and were actively engaged in their respective course activities. The remaining four professors indicated that 70% - 90% of their students were actively engaged.

Results for specific learning outcomes are presented below. In reporting these results we consider a “Major Strength” to be any area where all instructors report that at least 70 percent of students were sufficiently prepared; a “Satisfactory Area” to be any area where most instructors report that at least 70 percent of students were sufficiently prepared; and an “Area Needing Improvement” to be any area where there was a sizable number of instructors reporting that less than 70 percent of students in their class had sufficient preparation. Ten substantive areas were assessed, they include: theory articulation, theoretical applications, methods assessment, methods application-quantitative, methods application-qualitative, statistical applications, cultural awareness, global awareness, communication skills, and information and technology skills.

Based on our preliminary analysis, it appears that three substantive areas need to be addressed in 2015-2016.

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<tr>
<th>Major Strengths</th>
<th>Satisfactory Areas</th>
<th>Areas Needing Improvement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Theory Articulation</td>
<td>Methods Assessment</td>
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<td>Global Awareness</td>
<td>Theoretical Applications</td>
<td>Methods Application – Quantitative</td>
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<td>Methods Application- Qualitative</td>
<td>Statistical Applications</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Information Technology Skills</td>
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The subsequent charts below provide greater details for each substantive area.
Theory Articulation: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were prepared to comprehend and utilize major theoretical frameworks (micro or macro) used in sociology to the extent required for success in your course?

Assessment Rating: Satisfactory Area
Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were sufficiently prepared in using theoretical frameworks to construct explanatory causal models of social phenomena to the extent required for success in your course?

One instructor survey was excluded from this analysis since he/she reported that his/her capstone course did not require student preparation in using theoretical frameworks to construct explanatory causal models of social phenomena.

Assessment Outcome: Satisfactory Area
Methods Assessment: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were prepared to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research designs used in existing studies?

One instructor survey was excluded from this analysis since he/she reported that his/her capstone course did not require student preparation in the evaluation of the scientific merit of existing social research.

Assessment Outcome: Area Needing Improvement
Methods Applications – Quantitative: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were prepared in research methodology to the extent required for success in your course?

Three instructor surveys were excluded from this analysis since they reported that their capstone courses did not require student preparation in the design and implementation of a quantitative research study.

Assessment Outcome: Area Needing Improvement
Methods Applications – Qualitative: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were prepared in research methodology to the extent required for success in your course?

Five instructor surveys were excluded from this analysis since they reported that their capstone courses did not require student preparation in the design and implementation of a qualitative research study.

Assessment Outcome: Satisfactory Area
Statistical Applications: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were sufficiently prepared in statistical analysis techniques to the extent required for success in your course?

Three instructor surveys were excluded from this analysis since they reported that their capstone courses did not require student preparation in the statistical analysis of research data.

Assessment Outcome: Area Needing Improvement
Cultural Awareness: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say had a sufficiently strong awareness of how cultural background affects values, beliefs, behaviors, relationships, institutional forms and/or life prospects to the extent required for success in your course?

One instructor survey was excluded from this analysis since he/she reported that his/her capstone course did not require that students have a strong awareness of how cultural background affects values, beliefs, behaviors, relationships, institutional forms and/or life prospects.

Assessment Outcome: Major Strength
Global Awareness: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say had a sufficiently strong awareness of global issues or processes of globalization to the extent required for success in your course?

Assessment Outcome: Major Strength
Communication Skills: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were prepared to present ideas in written, oral and/or visual form to the extent required for success in your course?

Assessment Outcome: Satisfactory Area
Information Technology Skills: Proportion Prepared

Question Asked: Among those students who were actively engaged in your course, what proportion would you say were prepared to effectively and efficiently find and evaluate sociological information from library sources or the internet to the extent required for success in your course?

Assessment Outcome: Satisfactory Area
In AY 2015-2016, we will begin the task of addressing the three substantive areas that were deemed to be in need of improvement. Preliminary discussions on these areas will commence at our annual departmental retreat in September 2015. Throughout the 2015-2016 AY, the department will continue the process to “close the loop” by making appropriate changes based upon the assessment findings from AY 2014-2015.

Finally, when filling out the assessment survey, capstone instructors were also told to evaluate the survey instrument itself— instructors were asked to provide feedback on any question(s) they perceived to be problematic. Although our questionnaire has been administered three years in a row, we have not had the opportunity to collect information about its perceived validity and reliability. A number of instructors who teach qualitative oriented capstones have recently voiced their concerns that the present assessment survey is more suited for quantitative type capstones (we offered three qualitative capstones in AY 2014-2015). By collecting data on the effectiveness of our current assessment instrument, we will be in a better position to make the necessary changes that will ultimately improve data quality and enhance our future assessment efforts.