

Program Outcomes and Assessment

Degree Program: Sociology

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Program Mission Statement: The baccalaureate (BS) program in Sociology prepares graduates to address societal concerns related to juvenile delinquency, education, teenage pregnancy, poverty and divorce. The program also equips graduates with critical thinking skills and the understanding of culture and social structures needed to work in the modern world characterized by diversity and societal change.

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 1: Graduates of the program will be able to apply the basic theories and concepts of sociology.

Outcome 2: Graduates of the program will be able to apply the accepted practices of sociological research.

Outcome 3: Graduates of the program will be able to examine the impact of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation within social institutions.

Outcome 4: Graduates of the program will be able to apply the critical thinking skills needed to pursue post baccalaureate degrees or careers in sociology-related fields.

Outcome 5: Graduates of the program will be able to connect their sociological training with larger ideas of social justice and foster a respect for community service and engagement.

Assessment Methods/Type of Evidence

Data Collection 1: Term paper or section of term paper administered in Sociological Theory (required course in the major)/overall grade of C or better on relevant paper component by 75% of students enrolled in course.

Data Collection 2: Journal research article analysis project & sociological research methods project, both administered in Sociological Research Methods (required course in the major)/overall grade of C or better on both projects by 75% of students enrolled in course.


Data Collection 3: Standardized test questions in the following upper-division major elective courses: Social Stratification; Race & Ethnicity; Gender & Sexuality. 75% of all sociology majors enrolled in these courses answering embedded questions correctly will constitute a successful meeting of this learning outcome.

Data Collection 4: Term paper in practicum administered during students senior year of study. This is a required course for all sociology majors; 75% must meet or exceed minimum paper expectations.

Data Collection 5: Graduating senior survey instrument administered in required practicum course. For students who complete an internship in Sociology, analysis of required paper section asking student to explain their perception of the internship and the organization at which they were placed in relation to its ties to social justice and service, and the section asking if the internship experience aided in the student better understanding Sociology in action/as a useful tool in analyzing the world beyond academe.

Data Collection Plan

As a relatively new program that has undergone transition in terms of its program chair and faculty, we are in the process of developing a comprehensive data collection plan that outlines when/where the evidence (see above section) will be collected and who will be responsible for collecting the various pieces of evidence. Below is the course mapping matrix that will be guiding the development of the data collection plan.

 Sociology Program Student Learning Outcomes Matrix Date revised: January 29, 2010																														
Student Learning Outcomes	Required Courses						Electives												Special Topics											
	1101 - Intro to Sociology	2293 - Marriage & Family	3010 - Sociological Theory	3510 - Social Statistics	4501 - Research Methods	4901 - Sociology Practicum	SOCI 3030 - Social Psychology	SOCI 3100 - Criminology	SOCI 3130 - Drugs and Society	SOCI 3210 - Family Formation & Development	SOCI 3220 - Adolescence	SOCI 3310 - Race and Ethnicity	SOCI 3320 - Social Inequality & Stratification	SOCI 3410 - Sociology of Religion	SOCI 3420 - Social Problems	SOCI 3550 - Program Evaluation	SOCI 3810 - Juvenile Delinquency	SOCI 4210 - Family Life Education	SOCI - Sport in Social Context											
1) Apply the basic theories and concepts of sociology	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x		x															
2) Apply the accepted practices of sociological research			x	x	x	x										x														
3) Examine the impact of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation within social institutions	x	x						x	x	x		x	x		x															
4) Apply the critical thinking skills needed to pursue post baccalaureate degrees or careers in sociology-related fields			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x												
5) Connect their sociological training with larger ideas of social justice and foster a respect for community service and engagement	x		x			x							x		x															

Discussion of Results and Changes

Learning Outcome 1: Graduates of the program will be able to apply the basic theories and concepts of sociology.

Since the founding of the sociology major in the Fall of 2008, the program has included a basic introduction to the major theoretical perspectives within the discipline in all upper and lower-division courses. For example, in SOCI 1101- Introduction to Sociology the three major perspectives of functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism are critical components in every chapter in the course text and are stressed as basic elements of the discipline. Likewise, these three major schools of thought and their numerous derivatives are also the foundation of most of our other courses.

Table 1: Pre & Post Test Comparison SOCI 1101

Outcome	Pre-Test (n=38)	Post-Test (n=33)
1. The student will learn the social forces that shape society.	60%	81%
2. The student will learn about the basic concepts of society, culture and socialization.	37%	80%
3. The student will learn to trace the influence of Western Civilization on modern social thought (e.g., the impact of the industrial revolution on social stratification).	40 %	63%
4. The student will learn to utilize appropriate analytic (e.g. scientific method) and conceptual tools (e.g., latent functions analysis and conflict theory) to understand present and future courses of action (e.g., social policy-making) by the U.S. and foreign nations.	53%	75%
5. The student will learn to describe factors that motivate individuals and result in the creation of social institutions.	45%	72%
Average Score Overall	47%	74%

Criteria for Success:

A post-test average class score of 70% on the assessment questions associated with Intended Outcomes 1-5.

Analysis:

SOCI 1101 met its established criteria for success with an average class score of 70% on the assessment questions associated with the intended Outcomes 1 – 5.

The class initially enrolled 38 students and 33 students completed the course. We had 1 No Show and 4 students drop the course by Mid-Term as a consequence of low test and quiz scores. The grade distribution was as follows: A = 6, B= 12, C= 8, D= 5, F= 2

These grades were the highest in this course of the past 3 semesters. Interestingly, this class had mostly traditional age students as well as one dual enrolled high school student and one recent home schooled student. The dual enrolled and the home school students were consistently top performers on quizzes and examinations. Also, for the most part, this class exhibited above average attendance.

The pre-test/post-test analysis of the intended outcomes, reflected consistently acceptable levels of learning for all of the course objectives, with the exception of Objective 3 which addressed the influence of Western Civilization. This is consistently the lowest area on all sections of this course. As this outcome deals substantially with historical and specific information related to specific social institutions. An apparent lack of general knowledge about Western Civilization seems to underlie these weaknesses.

Changes:

More emphases will continue to be directed to the early lectures and discussion of the socio-historical context of the development of the discipline and the major theoretical components of the discipline.

This is the first semester that a complete set of video lectures on each chapter have been made available to the students of this class in a seated format as back up and review. This has helped those students who need additional contact to grasp some of the material or who have missed a class because of illness or other absences. The down-side of this is that some students elect to not come to class and only watch the videos, but since a quiz is given almost every other class session, this seems to minimize this practice. The trend between attendance and the availability of video lectures will continue to be observed over the next couple of sessions to evaluate the cost/benefits of this option for students.

In addition, we are considering the addition of one or more videos related to the time period associated with the emergence of sociology as a discipline during the period of the French Revolution and the on-going turmoil, especially in Europe which was associated with the contributions of Marx and conflict theory to the development of the discipline.

Learning Outcome 2: Graduates of the program will be able to apply the accepted practices of sociological research.

In the analysis of student learning in SOCI 3420 a number of issues related to student mastery of sociological research skills were addressed. Tables 2 below shows the pre-post comparisons with respect to specific course-related outcomes.

Table 2: Pre & Post Comparison SOCI 3420

Objective	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Objective I – to learn and understand how sociologists define, study and respond to social problems, with special attention to those that influence human behavior in the United States.	43%	75%
Objective II – to learn and understand how resource disparities contribute to social inequalities within American society	48%	71%
Objective III – to learn and understand how deviant behaviors are socially defined and treated as social problems.	38%	68%
Objective IV – to learn and understand how institutional inconsistencies emerge as social problems.	24%	74%
Objective V – to learn and understand the macro-level consequences of societal and international social issues and problems.	35%	71%
Overall Average Score	38%	72%

Analysis:

Overall, we had a gain of 34% in student learning from the pre-test examination. Although, the overall average post-test score of 72% was barely above the required criteria of 70%. When examining scores related to specific objectives, students appear to be weakest in the area of Objective III and two of the other areas (objective II & objective V were just above the criteria for success).

Upon examination of potential reasons for the student weaknesses, three serious concerns emerged. The first concern was related to the amount of information that needed to be covered from the Mid-Term Examination to the Final. Material prior to the mid-term covered 6 chapters and the final examination covered 10 chapters. The faculty fear that there is too much information contained in the course to allow for in-depth understanding of concepts. The second concern was related to the class scheduling for this semester. This class was scheduled for 1 evening a week for a 3-hour class session. As a result, when students were absent they missed a considerable amount of material. In response to student requests, video lectures for each chapter were made available through the course web site as supplemental information. However, as a result, many students elected to miss class on a regular basis because they could access the video lectures. Low attendance rates appeared to be correlated with final grades in this course. The final major concern related to the requirement for students to complete a major research paper. It appears that this may have been the first upper-division course for many of these students in the sociology program. Serious concerns of academic honesty and clearly defining their research problem were frequent issues.

Changes:

Since this course will be offered next semester, a number of changes are being implemented. First, a restructuring of the examination schedule will eliminate the amount of material to be covered on each examination. Starting with Spring 2010 we will have a total of three examinations, each covering approximately 5 chapters. Also, after analysis of the curriculum in upper-division courses, some of the material will be dropped to avoid duplication. In addition, the course will be offered as a twice a week course and quizzes will be required over almost every chapter to motivate prompt attention to the material and to insure attendance. The video lectures will remain available as a course supplement. Also, with regard to the concerns related to term-paper preparation, all students will be required to submit their papers to Turnitin.com prior to their final submission to help them identify issues of academic dishonesty. A sample template for the conduct and presentation of a term paper will be provided. Also, a web-site link to the ASA Citation Guide will be added to the course web site. Finally, item analysis of examination questions revealed that a number of questions will either be replaced or reworded because of a consistent pattern of responses indicating confusion over language or excessive ambiguity.

Learning Outcome 3: Graduates of the program will be able to examine the impact of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexual orientation within social institutions.

Issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexual orientation comprise a major component of the SOCI 3420 Social Problems course. Objective II in Table 2 above indicates the student learning gains with respect to this part of the curriculum. While the post-test score is just above the 70% criteria for success, we are not planning to make any changes to the material that is covered in this particular course. Instead, we plan to collect additional data from the upper-division courses where the topic is covered more fully

Learning Outcome 4: Graduates of the program will be able to apply critical thinking skills needed to pursue post-baccalaureate degrees or careers in sociology-related fields.

As a relatively new major at Clayton State University sufficient time has not passed to allow analysis of post-graduate performance of sociology majors. However, outcome 4 Table 1 above provides evidentiary support for a significant gain in student learning in the assessment of related critical thinking skills.

As previously noted in the analysis and changes for Outcome 1, more emphasis will continue to be directed to the discussion of the socio-historical context of the development of the discipline and the major theoretical components of the discipline. It is felt that this action will help reinforce relevant critical thinking skills. However, only the tracking of graduates with regard to graduate enrollment or career success in the future will actually address Learning Outcome 4.

Learning Outcome 5: Graduates of the program will be able to connect their sociological training with larger ideas of social justice and foster respect for community service and engagement.

We recognize that this outcome needs to be studied longitudinally because it relates to changes in student attitude. As a result, a graduating senior survey instrument will be administered in the required practicum course. For students who complete an internship in Sociology, we plan to analyze two sections of a required paper. One section asks student to explain their perception of the internship and the organization at which they were placed in relation to its ties to social justice and service and the other asks if the internship experience aided in the student better understanding Sociology in action/as a useful tool in analyzing the world beyond academe.