



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

### PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT AY 2009-2010

**Report Date:** July 26, 2010

**School/College:** Arts and Sciences

**Department/Program:** Sociology

**Person completing the Report:** Joshua Gamson

1. **Overview Statement:** Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken this academic year, indicating:
  - a. Learning outcomes 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, and 3a-e were assessed this year using course-embedded questions and scoring rubrics. The graduation exit survey was revised in Fall 2009, and administered in Fall 2009 and Spring 2010. A total of 16 students completed the survey—not a large number, clearly, but enough to get a sense of their assessment of their own learning.
  - b. **Joshua Gamson** served as the assessment coordinator for AY 2009-2010. He implemented the plan, collected the data, and wrote the report. **Gamal Adam** (Introduction to Sociology), **Anne Bartlett** (Sociological Theory and Research Methods), **Josh Gamson** (Introduction to Sociology and Honors Seminar), **Nikki Raeburn** (U.S. Inequalities and Social Justice), **Cecilia Santos** (Global Inequalities and Social Justice), **Stephanie Sears** (Research Methods and Senior Capstone), **Katherine Thomson** (Introduction to Sociology and Sociological Theory) completed the rubrics for their respective courses.

2. **Please Answers the Following Questions for Each of the Student Outcomes Assessed:**
  - a. **What did you do?**

Learning outcomes 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, and 3a-3e were assessed in Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 using course-embedded questions and scoring rubrics. Our graduation exit survey, created in Spring 2009, was administered to the department's fall and spring graduates. (We assessed 1a, 1b, 1c, and 2a in Spring 2009, and in addition to assessing new outcomes, we reassessed those this year for the purposes of comparison and to have a larger, cumulative picture on those items.)

**OUTCOME 1A:** Define, give examples of, and use meaningfully at least six of



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

the following: culture; status; role; norms; deviance; social structure; social mobility; social change; socialization; stratification; institutions; race; social class; ethnic group; gender.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Introduction to Sociology* exam questions and scoring rubrics. Three Intro instructors created exam questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 12.

**OUTCOME 1B:** Identify both macrosociological and microsociological aspects of social life, and discuss examples of these from at least one substantive area of sociology

Direct Assessment Tools: *Introduction to Sociology* exam questions and scoring rubrics. Three Intro instructors created exam questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 12.

**OUTCOME 1C:** Describe at least two "intersections" between structural inequalities of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nation, and/or class.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Global Inequalities and Social Justice* and *U.S. Inequalities and Social Justice* exam questions and scoring rubrics. Two instructors created exam questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 12.

**OUTCOME 2A:** Describe, compare, and contrast basic theoretical orientations, such as functionalism, conflict theories, and interactionism.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Sociological Theory*, *Honors Seminar*, and *Senior Capstone* exam/paper questions and scoring rubrics. Three instructors created exam and paper questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 12.

**OUTCOME 2B:** Describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics. Two instructors created paper and project questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 12.

**OUTCOME 3A:** Describe, compare, and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering sociological data, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Research Methods*, *Honors Seminar*, and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics. Two instructors created paper and project questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 11.

**OUTCOME 3B:** Design a research study in an area of choice and explain why various decisions were made, including sampling, variables, measures, methods of data collection, and data analysis.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics. Two instructors created paper and project questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 11.



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

***OUTCOME 3C:*** Use computerized and on-line databases to find published sociological research.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics. Two instructors created paper and project questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 11.

***OUTCOME 3D:*** Critically assess a published research report in an area of choice.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics. Two instructors created paper and project questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the Department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 11.

***OUTCOME 3E:*** Clearly convey data findings in writing.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics. Two instructors created paper and project questions that measured this outcome, completed scoring rubrics in the area, and submitted the scoring rubrics to the department's assessment coordinator.

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey. Students were asked to report their self-perceived level of competence in this area. Exit survey question 11.

**b. What did the faculty in the department or program learn this year?**

Summarize your findings and conclusions as a result of the assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses in student learning demonstrated by this assessment.



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

**OUTCOME 1A:** Define, give examples of, and use meaningfully at least six of the following: culture; status; role; norms; deviance; social structure; social mobility; social change; socialization; stratification; institutions; race; social class; ethnic group; gender.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Introduction to Sociology* exam questions and scoring rubrics.<sup>1</sup>

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
203 students	3	15	36	78	70
% of students	1%	7%	18%	38%	34%

Indirect Assessment Tool: Graduation exit survey question 12.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
93%	7%	0%	0%

**OUTCOME 1B:** Identify both macrosociological and microsociological aspects of social life, and discuss examples of these from at least one substantive area of sociology.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Introduction to Sociology* exam questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
162 students <sup>2</sup>	7	24	53	40	38
% of students	4%	15%	33%	25%	23%

<sup>1</sup> Please note that due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%

<sup>2</sup> Please note that for one of the Intro classes, the assessment of 1b was lost in a hard drive crash; the total number of students reflects this.



2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

Indirect Assessment Tool: Graduation exit survey question 12.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
87%	13%	0%	0%

**OUTCOME 1C:** Describe at least two “intersections” between structural inequalities of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nation, and/or class.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Global Inequalities and Social Justice* and *U.S. Inequalities and Social Justice* exam questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
52 students	5	9	16	15	7
% of students	9%	17%	31%	29%	13%

Indirect Assessment Tool: Graduation exit survey question 12.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
87%	13%	0%	0%

**OUTCOME 2A:** Describe, compare, and contrast basic theoretical orientations, such as functionalism, conflict theories, and interactionism.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Sociological Theory, Honors Seminar, and Senior Capstone* exam/paper questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
62 students	2	11	12	20	17
% of students	3%	18%	19%	32%	27%



2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

Indirect Assessment Tool: Graduation exit survey question 12.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
53%	40%	7%	0%

**OUTCOME 2B:** Describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* exam/paper questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
11 students	0	5	4	2	0
% of students	0%	45%	36%	18%	0%

Indirect Assessment Tool: Graduation exit survey question 12.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
67%	33%	0%	0%

**OUTCOME 3A:** Describe, compare, and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering sociological data, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Research Methods*, *Honors Seminar*, and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
58 students	4	5	13	15	21
% of students	7%	9%	22%	26%	36%



2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey question 11.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
63%	38%	0%	0%

**OUTCOME 3B:** Design a research study in an area of choice and explain why various decisions were made, including sampling, variables, measures, methods of data collection, and data analysis.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
11 students	2	4	4	1	0
% of students	18%	36%	36%	9%	0%

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey question 11.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
56%	31%	13%	0%

**OUTCOME 3C:** Use computerized and on-line databases to find published sociological research.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
11 students	0	3	5	3	0
% of students	0%	27%	45%	27%	0%





2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey question 11.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
69%	13%	19%	0%

**OUTCOME 3D:** Critically assess a published research report in an area of choice.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
11 students	0	6	3	2	0
% of students	0%	54%	27%	18%	0%

Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey question 11.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
88%	13%	0%	0%

**OUTCOME 3E:** Clearly convey data findings in writing.

Direct Assessment Tools: *Honors Seminar* and *Senior Capstone* paper/project questions and scoring rubrics.

	Very Poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very Good
11 students	1	6	1	3	0
% of students	9%	55%	9%	27%	0%



Indirect Assessment Tools: Graduation exit survey question 11.

Significantly Attained	Somewhat Attained	Attained to a Small Degree	Not Attained at All
69%	31%	0%	0%

**Summary and conclusions:**

Overall, we learned two major lessons from the above findings.

- First, we are achieving our foundational (introductory and intermediate level) learning outcomes well, and increasingly so, with room for improvement in two areas.
  - Faculty reported that 90% of students are learning at least six core concepts (72% of those well or very well), with only 8% falling short; 93% of graduating seniors who completed the exit survey said they had reached this goal to a significant degree. These findings show an improvement over last year’s assessment, with 17% more students assessed as reaching the goal well or very well.
  - Faculty reported that 81% of students are mastering the macro-micro distinction (58% of them well or very well), with 19% falling short; 87% of graduating seniors who completed the exit survey said they had reached this goal to a significant degree. This also shows an improvement, though a less dramatic one than for 1a, on this learning outcome.
  - Faculty reported that 73% of students are able to describe intersecting inequalities (42% of those well or very well), with only 26% falling short; 87% of graduating seniors who completed the exit survey said they had reached this goal to a significant degree. These findings show a small drop over last year’s assessment, and suggest that this remains an area that needs attention.
  - Faculty reported that 78% of students are learning at least six core concepts (59% of those well or very well), with 21% falling short; 53% of graduating seniors who completed the exit survey said they had reached this goal to a significant degree. These findings show a small drop over last year’s assessment, and suggest that this remains an area that needs attention.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The change here may reflect the inclusion of the low-performing Honors and Capstone students in this year’s assessment, in addition to Sociological Theory students. In the other more advanced learning outcomes, the numbers and percentages are based solely on that small group of Honors and Capstone students.



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

- Second, at the more advanced level, particularly in the area of research practice, students are only partially achieving the learning outcomes. While the number of students on which this assessment is based is rather small on some outcomes, we were already aware through reports from instructors that there were large difficulties, and these numbers confirm those reports.
  - In the area of basic methodological approaches, students are mostly achieving mastery. Faculty reported that 84% of students are reaching this goal (62% well or very well); all of the graduating students surveyed said they'd achieved this to some degree, and 63% said they'd achieved it significantly.
  - However, in more advanced research design, faculty rated 54% of the students (seniors, in this case) below average, 45% average or good, and reported that none of the students had achieved excellence; the surveyed students rated themselves higher, with 56% reporting they had reached this goal significantly.
  - Faculty reported that 45% of the students were only somewhat able to describe and apply theoretical orientations to an area of interest, 54% rated average or good in this area, and that none of the students achieved excellence in this area; the surveyed students again rated themselves higher, with 67% saying they had reached this goal significantly, and the rest reporting they'd achieved it somewhat.
  - Faculty reported that 72% of students were able to effectively use computerized and online databases, but that 27% were not skilled in this area; the surveyed students rated themselves similarly, with 69% reporting they had reached this goal significantly, and 19% saying that'd attained it to a small degree.
  - Faculty reported that 54% of students rated very poorly in their ability to critically assess published research reports, 45% were average or good in this area, and none had achieved excellence; the surveyed students again rated themselves higher, with 88% reporting they had reached this goal significantly.
  - Finally, faculty assessments indicated that 64% of students rated poor or very poor in their ability to clearly convey findings in writing, that 36% could do so adequately or well, and that none had reached excellence in this area; exiting students again self-assessed more highly, with all of them saying they'd attained this goal somewhat, and 69% saying they'd attained it significantly.
- Overall, it's clear that at the upper levels, the Department is only partly attaining our learning outcomes in the area of research design and implementation, and critically reading of research reports. This may be a



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

somewhat anomalous finding—we will know more as we reassess these items in the coming year—reflecting a period of time in which quite a few faculty members were on leave, and some core courses (including Research Methods) were canceled due to low enrollments. The findings at the more introductory levels give us reason to be optimistic, as it is clear that we are providing the current students a strong foundation for more successful achievement of the more advanced research-related learning outcomes.

### **What will be done differently as a result of what was learned this year?**

Discuss how courses and/or curricula will be changed to improve student learning as a result of the assessment. Include a discussion of how the faculty will help students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

The raw data and this report will be submitted to the Sociology faculty at our first fall faculty meeting, and discussed. We will also discuss the issues raised by the assessment at our Departmental retreat on September 19, 2010, as part of a larger discussion of the curriculum. In particular, we will be diagnosing the problem at the upper levels, and discussing ways in which students can enter the Capstone and Honors Thesis<sup>1</sup> courses with stronger research knowledge and skills, and how those courses can further build and solidify research-related knowledge and skills.

### **c. What actions were taken this academic year “to close the loop” relative to what was discovered from last year’s assessment activities?**

Last year’s assessment did not indicate a need for concerted actions to close the loop, though the assessment has further solidified teaching that is more explicitly directed toward the foundational learning outcomes (in part by preparing students to be examined on core terminology, micro-macro distinctions, and so forth); this year’s numbers indicate that these more focused actions have further improved student learning in those areas. Our discussion will be focused on how to improve student learning in the assessment areas added this year, on which achievement seems to be relatively spotty.

### **3. Attach a copy of the components of the department/program assessment plan that have been modified since its initial submission:**

---

<sup>1</sup> Due to difficulties in the Honors Thesis Workshop over the past two years, we have already made a change: While Honors Thesis will remain an option for students, it will be offered this year as a Directed Study rather than as a Workshop course; our hope is that self-motivated and well-prepared students will pursue this option, with the rest entering the Capstone course.



## 2009-2010 Sociology Assessment Plan Report

- a. Program Mission: No changes since initial submission.
- b. Program Learning Goals: No changes since initial submission.
- c. Program Learning Outcomes: No changes since initial submission.
- d. Program Learning Rubrics aligned with outcomes: No changes since initial submission.
- e. Curriculum map that shows the courses that pertain to the outcome: No changes since initial submission.

**Please return to: Provost Office by June 1, 2010**

**You can send your replies as either a Word attachment (to: [marin@usfca.edu](mailto:marin@usfca.edu)) or as a hard copy to: Provost Office, Lone Mountain Rossi Wing 4<sup>th</sup> floor.**

**If you have any questions, please contact: William Murry, Director of Institutional Assessment ([wmurry@usfca.edu](mailto:wmurry@usfca.edu) or x5486).**