Department of Sociology
2016-2017 Yearly Assessment Report
College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)

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Mission Statement:
In the Department of Sociology, students learn to apply sociological frameworks to their everyday lives and to "real world" social problems. They will critically examine social patterns and inequalities and will develop sociological perspectives to become engaged participants in this globalized world. Our program equips students with the tools to challenge interlocking systems of oppression and privilege and build just societies as advocates, policymakers, activists, and scholars.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
1. Sociology majors should be able to analyze critically social practices, structures, and inequalities, such that the student will be able to:
    a. Define, give examples of, and use meaningfully at least six of the following: culture; status; role; norms; deviance; social structure; social class; social mobility; social change; socialization; stratification; institutions; race; social class; ethnic group; gender.
    b. Identify both macrosociological and microsociological aspects of social life, and discuss examples of these from at least one substantive area of sociology; and describe at least two "intersections" of structural inequalities.
    c. Describe inequalities at the regional, international, and/or global levels of analysis.

2. Sociology majors should be able to discuss, differentiate, and apply major sociological theories, frameworks and traditions, such that the student will be able to:
    a. Describe, compare, and contrast basic theoretical orientations, such as functionalism, conflict theories, and interactionism.
    b. Describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.

3. Sociology majors should be able to formulate, conduct, and communicate independent social research, such that the student will be able to:
    a. Describe, compare, and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering sociological data, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

b. Design, implement, and convey data findings in writing for 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.

c. Use computerized and online databases to find published sociological research and critically assess a published research report in an area of choice.

4. Sociology majors should be able to connect sociological analysis to practical social action, such that the student will be able to:

a. Explain the implications for the practical action of sociological theory and research in an area of choice.

b. Develop a sociologically informed action plan in an area of choice.

c. Conduct at least twenty-five hours of service or activist work in an area of choice, and explain what they have experienced from a sociological framework.

Insert Curriculum Maps

Program Learning Outcomes X Courses	Sociology majors should be able to analyze critically social practices, structures, and inequalities	Sociology majors should be able to discuss, differentiate, and apply major sociological theories, frameworks and traditions	Sociology majors should be able to formulate, conduct, and communicate independent social research	Sociology majors should be able to connect sociological analysis to practical social action
Courses or Program Requirement				
Soc 150: Introduction to Sociology	I	I		I
Soc 302: Global Inequalities & Social Justice	M	D		D
Soc 306: Sociological Theory		M		
Soc 308: Research Methods		D	M	
Soc 410: Honors		M	M	
Soc 450: Capstone	M	M	M	M

Key:
I = Introductory
D = Developing
M = Mastery

Institutional Learning Outcomes X Program Learning Outcomes	PLO1 Sociology majors should be able to analyze critically social practices, structures, and inequalities	PLO2 Sociology majors should be able to discuss, differentiate, and apply major sociological theories, frameworks and traditions	PLO3 Sociology majors should be able to formulate, conduct, and communicate independent social research	PLO4 Sociology majors should be able to connect sociological analysis to practical social action
Institutional Learning Outcomes				
1. Students reflect on and analyze their attitudes, beliefs, values, and assumptions about diverse communities and cultures and contribute to the common good.	X			X
2. Students explain and apply disciplinary concepts, practices, and ethics of their chosen academic discipline in diverse communities.		X		
3. Students construct, interpret, analyze, and evaluate information and ideas derived from a multitude of sources.	X	X	X	X
4. Students communicate effectively in written and oral forms to interact within their personal and professional communities.		X	X	
5. Students use technology to access and communicate information in their personal and professional lives.		X	X	
6. Students use multiple methods of inquiry and research processes to answer questions and solve problems.		X		X
7. Students describe, analyze, and evaluate global interconnectedness in social, economic, environmental and political systems that shape diverse groups within the San Francisco Bay Area and the world.	X	X	X	X

Which of your PLOs did you assess Spring 2017?

At the end of our 2016-2017, we shared in our Assessment Report that we would design measurement tools more aptly suited for the task of assessing our students understanding of research logic and methods. The Assessment Committee designed a standardized assessment tool that was used within our Research Methods classes. It specifically addressed PLO 3a ("Describe, compare, and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering sociological data, including both quantitative and qualitative methods").

Methods

Description of student work used assess PLOs:
The department Assessment Committee developed a pre- and post-test to assess student mastery of PLO 3a. Students were presented with a handout describing four research projects and asked to identify various aspects of the methodology involved in each case (research question, type of method, variables, unit of analysis, sampling method, quantitative vs. qualitative data, and obtrusive vs. unobtrusive research). Instructors of Research Methods administered the assessment at the beginning and end of the course in order to track student progress. See Appendix A.

What tools did you use to evaluate the student work?
Student work was evaluated using a rubric developed by the Sociology Assessment Committee.
See Appendix B.

The student work products were read and evaluated by two full-time faculty members, one of
whom was an instructor in the Research Methods course (Prof. Noriko Milman) and one of
whom was not (Prof. Joshua Gamson). Through considerable discussion, the raters developed
an answer key noting the acceptable answers for each question.

In order to calibrate their rating, each rater applied the rubric to the first five pre-tests and the
first five post-tests. The faculty raters then noted any discrepancies and discussed the source of
those discrepancies. When they reached agreement, they adapted the answer key to assure
consistency in the rating process.

What indirect methods did you employ?
    None

What were the direct data results?

In each of the areas of knowledge measured by the assessment tool, there were indications of
improvement from the start to the end of the semester -- some more dramatic than others.
(Note: 18 students took the pre-test and 19 took the post-test.) Change appeared to be
weakest in the areas of identifying research methods and distinguishing quantitative from
qualitative research; students already came with that core knowledge, and retained it or
strengthened it a bit over the semester. Growth was strongest in the areas of identifying units
of analysis (3 students met or exceeded expectations in the pre-test, 10 in the post-test, and a
big drop in the number of students who were below expectations), distinguishing obtrusive
from unobtrusive researcher role (5 students met or exceeded expectations in the pre-test, 14
in the post-test) and identifying sampling method (8 students met or exceeded expectations in
the pre-test, 15 in the post-test). Growth was moderate in the areas of identifying research
questions (7 students met or exceeded expectations in the pre-test, 13 in the post-test,
although a third of students remained below standards in the post-test) and identifying
variables (7 students met or exceeded expectations in the pre-test, 11 in the post-test, although
nearly half remained below standards in the post-test). See data results below.

Identify Research Questions

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
Pretest	0	7	9	1
Post Test	2	11	3	3

Identify Research Methods

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
Pretest	1	13	4	0
Post Test	5	11	3	0

Identify Variables

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
Pretest	0	7	8	3
Post Test	0	11	6	2

Identify Units of Analysis

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
Pretest	0	3	3	12
Post Test	0	10	3	6

Identify Sampling Method

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
Pretest	0	8	7	3
Post Test	0	15	4	0

Distinguish Qualitative from Quantitative Data

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations

Pretest	0	15	3	0
Post Test	0	18	1	0

Distinguish obtrusive from unobtrusive researcher role

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
Pretest	2	3	11	2
Post Test	5	9	5	0

How do you interpret these results? What do they mean?

We believe these results show that PLO 3a is being partially achieved before students arrive in the Research Methods class, presumably in Introduction to Sociology and courses across the curriculum in which basic methodological approaches are discussed. We also see evidence that the Research Methods class is moving students closer to reaching the other elements of PLO 3a that engage them in the language and logic of sociological research methods, including sampling, units of analysis, and obtrusive vs. unobtrusive research. Finally, our students still struggle considerably with the elements that are more centrally involved with the logic of inquiry -- identifying research questions and variables.

Closing the Loop

Which of the following actions did you take as a result of the assessment results?
Assessment Instrument
Overall, we found the assessment instrument effective, but plan on revisions before using it again. For example, we did not indicate that students identify and distinguish between *independent* and *dependent* variables. We suspect that including this in the exercise instructions will alter how students perform on this specific measure. Additionally, this clarification may also affect students' specificity in stating research questions for particular cases.

We also realized while devising the rubric that some of the cases were more complex than we originally understood them. For the next round of assessment, we can revise these cases so that they are more clear cut. We could also state in the exercise instructions that responses do not have to be "either/or," for example in determining type of sample (currently "probability" *or* "non-probability") and type of data yielded (currently "quantitative" *or* "qualitative"). Making these modifications to the assessment instrument might reveal that many more students actually exceed expectations on some of these measures.

<u>Instruction</u>
We also want to use this round of results to inform instruction. Based on *post-test* results, we are most concerned with: 1) the statement of the research question, 2) the identification of variables, and 3) though students showed considerable growth over the semester, we want to see more of them performing at the meets/exceeds expectations levels when identifying units of analysis. Research Methods instructors should continuously refer to these concepts and related vocabulary throughout their courses, even when students are doing more inductively-driven research and/or using qualitative methods. Additionally, instructors need to encourage students to identify these specific features in their own research projects, as well as for the examples used to teach about and demonstrate different methods.

It concerns us that per *pre-test* results, so many students in the sample (most of whom, at the time, were at 3rd year status), struggled with these concepts/vocabulary. Based on this, we'd also recommend that these concepts/vocabulary be reinforced throughout the sociology curriculum, through frequent application to other scholars' research and by students having the opportunity to design and conduct their own original research in other sociology courses.

APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT TOOL

Identifying and Evaluating Research Methods
(adapted from D. Burlington, "The Four Sources of Evidence," *ASA/TRAILS*, 2012)

Project A: Dr. Cheney researches culture and social movements, specifically how social movements generate social change by challenging commonly-held values. In order to study this process, she focused on an organization, Vegan World Network, which attempts to persuade community members to forgo the use of animal products for food or clothing. Since no previous research had been conducted on a group of this type, Dr. Cheney decided to attend the group's monthly meeting. During the meeting she introduced herself, her research project, and asked permission to observe the group during meetings, protests, and other activities, which she was granted. After 6 months of observation Dr. Cheney began to ask group members a series of open-ended questions about their eating habits, political goals, and biographical history.

	What is the *research question*?	Which *method(s)* is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What *variables* are being studied?	1) What *unit of analysis* did the researcher use? 2) And what was their *sampling method* (probability or non-probability)?	What *type of data* (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an *obtrusive or unobtrusive* role?
Project A						

Project B: Dr. Hernandez researches the impact of media on society. Previous research indicates that people exposed to advertisements are impacted by them in significant ways. In order to test this, he randomly places volunteers in one of two identical computer labs. In the first lab, the volunteers are shown Saturday morning cartoons and then asked about which mayoral candidate they would be most likely to vote for. In the second lab, the volunteers are shown a series of political advertisements for the upcoming election and then asked the same series of questions about which mayoral candidate they would be most likely to vote for. Afterwards, Dr. Hernandez compiles the answers of each group and compares them against each other.

	What is the *research question*?	Which *method(s)* is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What *variables* are being studied?	1) What *unit of analysis* did the researcher use? 2) And what was their *sampling method* (probability or non-probability)?	What *type of data* (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an *obtrusive or unobtrusive* role?
Project B						

Project C: Dr. Asamoah studies the relationship between religion and politics. Findings from her mentor's research suggested that strength of religious beliefs were the most significant predictor of support for public policy. In order to assess this finding she constructs a series of close-ended questions that gathered basic demographic information, level of religious commitment, political ideology, and support for recently proposed government policy. These questionnaires were then mailed to randomly selected individuals around the country. After the questionnaires were returned and tallied, they were analyzed.

	What is the *research question*?	Which *method(s)* is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What *variables* are being studied?	1) What *unit of analysis* did the researcher use? 2) And what was their *sampling method* (probability or non-probability)?	What *type of data* (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an *obtrusive or unobtrusive* role?
Project C						

Project D: Dr. Kagawa researches patterns of incarceration over time. Previous theoretical writing on the subject suggests that punishment levels reflect changes in economic prosperity and labor market conditions, with incarceration rates rising during periods of declining economic prosperity. He begins by collecting statistics on economic prosperity (such as unemployment rates and GDP) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Next, he collects figures on incarceration from the Bureau of Justice. Using computer-assisted software he then checks the statistical correlation between the economic measures and imprisonment.

	What is the *research question*?	Which *method(s)* is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What *variables* are being studied?	1) What *unit of analysis* did the researcher use? 2) And what was their *sampling method* (probability or non-probability)?	What *type of data* (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an *obtrusive or unobtrusive* role?
Project D						

APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Below Expectation (1)
	Fully achieves outcome in all 4 cases, and explains reasoning.	Fully achieves outcome in 3 cases, partially achieves outcome in 1 case.	Does not achieve outcome fully in more than 2 cases.	Does not achieve outcc in any of the cases.
Identify research questions.				
Identify research methods.				
Identify variables .				
Identify units of analysis.				
Identify and explain sampling method.				
Distinguish qualitative from quantitative data.				
Distinguish obtrusive from unobstrusive researcher role.				

Program Learning Outcomes X Courses	Sociology majors should be able to analyze critically social practices, structures, and inequalities	Sociology majors should be able to discuss, differentiate, and apply major sociological theories, frameworks and traditions	Sociology majors should be able to formulate, conduct, and communicate independent social research	Sociology majors should be able to connect sociological analysis to practical social action
Courses or Program Requirement				
Soc 150: Introduction to Sociology	I	I		I
Soc 302: Global Inequalities & Social Justice	M	D		D
Soc 306: Sociological Theory		M		
Soc 308: Research Methods		D	M	
Soc 410: Honors		M	M	
Soc 450: Capstone	M	M	M	M

Key:
I = Introductory
D = Developing
M = Mastery

Institutional Learning Outcomes X Program Learning Outcomes	PLO1	PLO2	PLO3	PLO4
	Sociology majors should be able to analyze critically social practices, structures, and inequalities	Sociology majors should be able to discuss, differentiate, and apply major sociological theories, frameworks and traditions	Sociology majors should be able to formulate, conduct, and communicate independent social research	Sociology majors should be able to connect sociological analysis to practical social action
Institutional Learning Outcomes				
1. Students reflect on and analyze their attitudes, beliefs, values, and assumptions about diverse communities and cultures and contribute to the common good.	X			X
2. Students explain and apply disciplinary concepts, practices, and ethics of their chosen academic discipline in diverse communities.		X		
3. Students construct, interpret, analyze, and evaluate information and ideas derived from a multitude of sources.	X	X	X	X
4. Students communicate effectively in written and oral forms to interact within their personal and professional communities.		X	X	
5. Students use technology to access and communicate information in their personal and professional lives.		X	X	
6. Students use multiple methods of inquiry and research processes to answer questions and solve problems.		X		X
7. Students describe, analyze, and evaluate global interconnectedness in social, economic, environmental and political systems that shape diverse groups within the San Francisco Bay Area and the world.	X	X	X	X