

Assessment Report for Student Learning  
In the Sociology Major  
2013-2014 Academic Year

June 15, 2014

**Executive Summary**

This Assessment Report for the Sociology major assesses student learning during the 2013-2014 Academic Year. **Assessment results indicate that students continue to perform at an excellent level for the Learning Goal #1, and remain at an adequate level for Learning Goal #3 (although scores improved slightly from 2011-12). Learning Goal #3 was not measured this year (see explanation below).**

**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**

Currently, the numbers of sociology majors and minors, including the new Criminal Justice minor (in collaboration with Political Science), are growing (35 Sociology majors, 21 Sociology minors, and 28 Criminal Justice minors). Majors in Sociology have more than doubled since the 2011-2012 academic year. Many sociology classes are providing service to the University curriculum requirements, including US Studies and Global Studies, as well as Criminal Justice, Gender Studies and Environmental Studies minors.

The following table shows the classes taught in Sociology during the 2013-2014 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.

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Fall 2013			Spring 2014		
Course #	Instructor	Level	Course #	Instructor	Level
SO10001	Laundra	46	SO10001	Laundra	43
SO221	Laundra	20	SO361/IN251	Laundra	38
SO232/IN251	Laundra	32	SO22019/IN251	Laundra	41
SO360/IN350	Laundra	37	SO450	Laundra	10
SO211/IN251	Rodgers	36	SO211/IN251	Rodgers	28
SO310	Fennessey	13	SO330/IN251	Fennessey	31
SO250	Riopelle				

## **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, and how social inequalities, particularly those surrounding race, class and gender, directly impact their personal and social lives. 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 performance 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 race and ethnicity, criminology, deviance, or urban and/or environmental sociology, 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 solutions, 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 paper, which asks students to write specifically TJ( 0 1 494.98 91.704

2. Learning Goal 2 is to be assessed in SO 320 Social Stratification, our required fundamentals course; however, since this class was not offered during this

2014), this learning goal was not assessed. Although other courses in sociology speak to this learning goal, these courses were not determined to be an appropriate measure of learning in the discipline. For example, although SO 100 contains content on race, class and gender issues, this course serves predominantly freshmen and non-

## **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 4.30 (Excellent/Green), Learning Goal #2 was not measured, and Learning Goal #3 was 3.67 (Adequate/Yellow). We also show a seven-year trend for the percentage of artifacts receiving at least a 3 (Adequate). Assessment results show that students remained at the Excellent level for Learning Goal #1, and remained at Adequate for Learning Goal #3, although scores improved somewhat (from 3.2 to 3.6). Learning Goal #2 was not measured (as discussed above), but will be assessed using SO 320 next year.

## **Feedback Loop**

Our new sociologist begins Fall 2014. At this time, the sociology faculty will meet to discuss these trends and our collective approach in maintaining an average score of at least 4.0 on each of the three learning goals, and will also discuss adding an assignment from SO 320 (Social Stratification) as an artifact for assessing Learning Goal #2.

## Appendix 1 Sociology Assessment Rubric

Learning Objectives	Nominal (1 point)	Adequate (3 points)	Excellent (5 points)
<p><b>Goal 1:</b> Ability to analyze personal &amp; social experiences by applying the sociological imagination. (Capstone Assignment/SO 450)</p>	<p>Fails to understand or use the sociological imagination in problem solving or interpreting personal &amp; social experiences. Fails to adhere to the ethical principles &amp; standards of sociology, &amp; shows minimal ability to match personal values to life goals.</p>	<p>General understanding &amp; ability to evaluate personal &amp; social experiences using the sociological imagination. Can, with minimal ethical errors or deviations from professional standards apply their knowledge &amp; skills to serve professional &amp; community needs.</p>	<p>Demonstrates thorough &amp; insightful ability to evaluate personal &amp; social experiences using the sociological imagination. Rigorous &amp; conscientious appreciation of how the ethical principles &amp; standards of sociology impact society as shown in their professional &amp; community activities.</p>
<p><b>Goal 2:</b> Ability to use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities race, class, &amp; gender. (Term Paper for SO320)</p>	<p>Minimal understanding of the effects of race, class &amp; gender on society, inability to develop hypotheses or solve problems using a sociological analysis.</p>	<p>General understanding &amp; ability to evaluate the impact of race, class, &amp; 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, &amp; gender &amp; their societal impact, &amp; can readily develop hypotheses &amp; solve problems using sociological analysis.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3:</b> 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>