

# Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP): Sociology

2016-17 Academic Year

University of Southern Maine

## A. College, Department, Date

*College* CAHS  
*Department* Department of Criminology, Economics, & Sociology  
*Date* May 31, 2018

## B. Contact Person for the Assessment Plan

*Name and title* Cheryl Laz, Chair

## C. Degree Program

*Name of Degree Program* Sociology

Note on context: In September 2015, Sociology was combined with Economics and Criminology into a single department. In the past two years, we worked extensively with Criminology and Economics in an effort to collaborate on curricula and to fully integrate our three programs. Our effort was unsuccessful; as of 6/1/2017, Criminology is once again a separate department. With some new faculty and (we hope) stability and good will, we will be able to pay more attention to learning outcomes and assessment in AY 17/18.

## D. Assessment of Student Learning: Program Assessment

### Step 1: Identify the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

- a. *Do you have your student learning outcomes published on your department's website?* Yes, though written in language appropriate for a broad audience.

"Sociology is a liberal arts major with particular emphasis on developing students' abilities to think critically about complex issues, to analyze social issues and organizations, to design and carry out research, and to write with clarity and economy....

The Department of Sociology offers internship opportunities and encourages other off campus learning experiences including service learning as well as national and international exchanges and international courses. These programs provide an opportunity to bring together academic work and community involvement and provide students with the opportunity to tailor the major to personal interests and/or career goals.

In putting sociology to work, you will not only learn about the broad issues behind the social problems you see as a volunteer or employee. Your sociological training will provide you with the skills to research, report on, and organize solutions to these problems. Thus, you can transform your social awareness into social change....”

In internal documents, we identify specific learning outcomes (attached/Appendix A). These need to be reduced in number; the shorter list is an effort to do this.

i. *If yes, please indicate the url: <http://usm.maine.edu/criminology-economics-sociology/sociology> [Untangling websites and improving functionality and clarity is task for AY 17/18.]*

ii.

b. ***Please identify which of your student learning outcome(s) were assessed this past academic year***

Students graduating with a major in Sociology will have the skills and knowledge below.

Our graduates can

1. Read and think independently and critically about social life and social issues. This includes the ability to identify and evaluate reasoning, descriptive and value assumptions, and alternate perspectives.
2. Communicate ideas clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing.
3. Design and execute an original research project. This includes defining the problem, reviewing the literature, developing an appropriate research design, gathering data, analyzing data and interpreting results.
4. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of various research methods, designs, and samples. This includes the ability to use basic statistical software, and the appreciation of ethical issues involved in research.
5. Produce a useful literature review. This includes the ability to select a topic; use databases and other resources to identify relevant articles, books, and other sources; write meaningful, accurate, and concise abstracts of articles, books, and sources; organize a review thematically or topically; and accurately cite and document sources.
6. Analyze a social problem, process, or organization from a distinctly sociological perspective.

7. Exercise the sociological imagination, including in everyday settings and practical situations.

- c. Do you have a **matrix or curriculum map** showing when your student learning outcomes are assessed and in which courses? Yes
  - i. If yes, do you have this map published on your website? Please indicate url or attach a copy of the curriculum map.

Not on website. Internal/departmental document is attached (Appendix B). Significant changes in staffing and organization necessitate revisiting outcomes and matrix in AY 17/18.

### **Step 2: Assessment Methods Selected and Implemented**

- d. Identify which direct measures (other than course grades), that were used to determine whether students achieved the stated learning outcomes for the degree.
  - Pre- and post- course survey in SOC 210/Critical Thinking about Social Issues.
  - Analysis of Capstone projects in Capstone Seminar.
- e. Briefly describe when you implemented the assessment activity, and if a scoring rubric was used to evaluate the expected level of student achievement. (This information may be shown on your curriculum map).

Assessment #1: Outcomes 1, 2, 6 & 7 were assessed in SOC 210 in Fall 2016. All students in the course completed a Pretest (during Week 1 of the Fall 2016 semester) and Post-test (during the last week of Fall 2016 semester). Instrument is Appendix C.

Assessment #2: Outcomes 2, 3 & 5 were assessed in SOC 380/Capstone Seminar in Spring 2017. Students' final papers and presentations –based on semester-long research project--were reviewed by faculty.

### **Step 3: Using the Assessment results to Improve Student Learning**

- a. Briefly describe your unit's process of reviewing the program assessment results (i.e. annual process by faculty committee, etc). No program-wide review of assessment results has occurred; individual faculty teaching courses will share assessments with department in the fall.
- b. What specific changes have been or will be made to improve student learning, as a result of using the program assessment results?

Assessment in SOC 210 will be used for course improvements and will be important as Sociology and Economics seek to integrate some aspects of curriculum.

A new Capstone course (approved by Core Curriculum Council, awaiting CAHS Curriculum Review approval) will be offered in 2017/18 to better address Core outcomes and to address department outcomes.

c. *Date of most recent program review/self-study?* 2015

**E..Course Assessment Activities:** *Is your program able to report any assessment-related activities at the Course-Level... (i.e. created grading rubrics to use in required courses, examined student progress in entry-level courses, developed a new course, etc)? Please briefly explain any assessment projects.*

All Sociology faculty use rubrics for assessing and evaluating student work (ie rubrics are used for both formative and summative assessment). In several courses (eg SOC 300, SOC 358), rubrics have been used not only to evaluate work but to improve the design of assignments and the design of learning activities.

Assessments in SOC 210 (described above) are also course-level assessments and have been used to shape design of class activities.

New Capstone Course (SOC 410) is intentionally designed to meet Core and major learning outcomes and to facilitate assessment learning outcomes. This will be implemented in AY 17/18 and will be part of next year's report.

**F. Community Engagement Activities in your departmental curriculum:**

a. *Does your department have a student learning outcome that is related to any community engagement activities? If so, please state the outcome.* Not explicit in specifying **community** engagement, but Outcome 7 prioritizes engaged learning more generally. Many courses DO involve community-engaged learning, so that this is an obvious place for revising our program SLOs.

b. *Please indicate if any of the community engagement activities listed below are included in your program's curriculum, by noting which activities are required or optional for students in your major.*

<u>Community Engagement Activity</u>	<u>Required/Optional</u>
Student Research (related to a community-based problem)	Optional
Student-Faculty Community Research Project	No
Internship, or a Field Experience	Optional
Independent Study (community-related project)	Optional

Capstone Course (community-related project)	Optional [will be required in future]
Service-Learning (course-based)	Optional
Study Abroad, or an International Program	Optional
Interdisciplinary Collaborative Project (community related)	Optional
Student Leadership Activities (related to a team project)	No
Students/Faculty Community Leadership (advisory boards, committees, conference presentations)	No
Other Activities (not mentioned above):	

c. Please list any courses (i.e. EDU 400) that have a community engagement activity in your program.

At present, community engagement is incorporated in SOC 301/Qualitative Research Methods, as well as in some other 300-level electives, including Internship, Honors Thesis, and Independent Study, and in the Sociology Capstone.

**G. Additional Comments (Optional):** *Please feel free to give suggestions or feedback on what would help you with the program assessment process.*

I regret that our ASLP doesn't effectively reflect our commitment to assessment and to improving student learning and our program. The deep disruptions (as the result of extreme short-staffing and organizational upheaval) have compromised our ability to do this important work. I am confident that the coming year will provide greater stability and a context to do this work.

## Appendix A

### Version A: Long List of Sociology Learning Outcomes (preliminary)

#### Goals for Sociology Major

##### SKILLS

Students graduating with a major in Sociology can

1. Read critically and think independently about social issues and social policy
2. Communicate ideas clearly and effectively in writing
3. Design and execute an original research project; this includes
  - a. The ability to define the problem
  - b. The ability to review literature (below)
  - c. The ability to develop an appropriate research design
  - d. The ability to gather data
  - e. The ability to analyze data and interpret results
4. Understand and evaluate advantages and limits of particular research designs and samples
5. Understand and use basic statistics and have competency in using statistical software packages
6. Appreciate ethical issues involved in research
7. Produce a useful literature review; this includes the ability to select a topic; use databases and other resources to identify relevant articles, books, and other sources; write meaningful, accurate, and concise abstracts of articles, books, and other sources; organize a review thematically or topically rather than in a linear fashion by source; and accurately cite and document sources
8. Analyze a social problem, process or organization from a distinctly sociological perspective
9. Exercise the sociological imagination, including the ability to apply sociological concepts, in everyday settings and practical situations through, for example, internships, service learning, and other off-campus learning.
10. Effectively collaborate in the production and evaluation of knowledge
11. Appreciate the epistemological groundings of various theories
12. Critically assess and apply theory
13. Read and comprehend primary sociology texts including journal articles
14. Think critically about social life and social issues; this includes the ability to identify the

reasoning in arguments, identify descriptive and value assumptions, identify and evaluate alternate perspectives and opposing views on social issues.

15. Possess higher-level thinking skills (application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)

## KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCIES

Students graduating with a major in Sociology

1. Understand the basic concepts of the discipline and the connections between concepts
2. Understand and appreciate disciplinary differences and similarities. Sociology majors can articulate what is distinctive about a sociological perspective and appreciate insights generated by other disciplines.
3. Understand the role of theory in sociology, including an ability to
  - a. Define theory and describe its relationship to sociological research
  - b. Compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations
  - c. Identify assumptions underlying particular theoretical perspectives
  - d. Describe and apply the major theoretical perspectives of the discipline in at least one subfield of sociology
4. Understand the causes and consequences of inequalities and evaluate strategies to address inequality
5. Understand and appreciate cross cultural variations and global interdependencies
6. Understand how institutions and organizations work
7. Understand how individual and collective perceptions, attitudes, identities, and actions are shaped by culture, social structure, and interaction
8. Understand the causes and consequences of conformity and deviance within a social unit
9. Comprehend and evaluate strengths and limits of different kinds of sociological knowledge; this includes the ability to understand and assess qualitative and quantitative research.
10. Understand and appreciate diversities of religion, ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, and class in the United States
11. Understand the connections between micro- and macro-level phenomena
12. Understand social change at various levels (historical, institutional, organizational)
13. Understand issues related to global transformation

Appendix A -- Version B: Revised List (still in progress)

Students graduating with a major in Sociology will have the skills and knowledge below.

Our graduates can

1. Read and think independently and critically about social life and social issues. This includes the ability to identify and evaluate reasoning, descriptive and value assumptions, and alternate perspectives.
2. Communicate ideas clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing.
3. Design and execute an original research project. This includes defining the problem, reviewing the literature, developing an appropriate research design, gathering data, analyzing data and interpreting results.
4. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of various research methods, designs, and samples. This includes the ability to use basic statistical software, and the appreciation of ethical issues involved in research.
5. Produce a useful literature review. This includes the ability to select a topic; use databases and other resources to identify relevant articles, books, and other sources; write meaningful, accurate, and concise abstracts of articles, books, and sources; organize a review thematically or topically; and accurately cite and document sources.
6. Analyze a social problem, process, or organization from a distinctly sociological perspective.
7. Exercise the sociological imagination, including in everyday settings and practical situations.

Appendix B: Matrix mapping SLOs over courses

**Map of Sociology Major Learning Outcomes across required courses**

I = introduced, R=reinforced, M=mastered

Learning Outcome	SOC 100	SOC 210	SOC 300	SOC 301	SOC 307	Inequality	Other (Electives)
Read critically and think independently about social issues & policy	I	R	M	R	R	M	R/M
Write Effectively	I	R	R/M	R	R	R	R/M
Design & execute orig research		I		I/R/M	I/R/M		
Understand & eval research designs & samples	I	I/R		R/M	R/M		R/M
Understand & use basic statistics & statistical software		I		R	R/M		R/M
Appreciate ethical issues in research	I			R/M	R/M		
Produce a useful literature review		I		I/R	I/R		
Analyze a social problem, process or organization from a distinctly sociological perspective	I	I	R/M	R/M	R/M	R/M	R/M
Exercise the sociological imagination	I	R	R	R	R	R	R/M
Effectively collaborate		I	R	R	R	R	R
Appreciate the epistemological groundings of various theories			I/R	I	I		R/M
Critically assess and apply theory	I		I/R/M	I/R	I/R	I/R	I/R/M
Read and comprehend primary sociology texts inc journal articles	I	R	R/M	R/M	R/M	R/M	R/M
Think critically about social life and social issues;	I	I/R	R/M	R	R	R/M	R/M
Possess higher-level thinking skills		I	R	R	R	R	R
Understand basic concepts & connections between concepts	I	I	R	R	R	R	R/M
Understand & appreciate disciplinary diff & similarities	I	I	R	R	R	R	R/M
Understand the role of theory in sociology	I		R	R	R	R	R

Understand causes & consequences of inequalities and eval strategies to address them	I	I/R	R			R/M	R/M
Understand and appreciate cross cultural variations and global interdependencies	I		I			R	R
Understand how institutions and organizations work	I	I/R	R			R/M	R/M
Understand how indiv & collectv perceptions, attitudes, identities, & actions are shaped by culture, social structure, and interaction	I	I/R	R			R	R/M
Understand the causes & conseq of conformity & deviance	I		R			R	R
evaluate strengths and limits of different kinds of sociological knowledge;	I			R	R		
Understand the connections between micro- and macro	I	R	R/M			R/M	R/M
Understand & appreciate diversities of religion, ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, & class	I	R	R			R/M	R/M
Understand issues related to global transformation	I	I	R			R/M	R/M

Appendix C: Program & Course Assessment Instrument: SOC 210/Fall 2016

SOC 210/ECO 103

Fall 2016

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I can identify main characteristics of the industrialized food system in the US.				
I can define what "organic" food is.				
I can list at least two advantages of industrialized food.				
I can list at least two advantages of organic food.				
I can identify the major players and institutions in the US food system.				
I can explain how government policies shape what we eat.				
I can give examples of how my own eating patterns are shaped by economic & societal factors.				
I can explain why many people are critical of the US industrialized food system.				
I can assess alternatives to the industrialized food system in the US.				
I can construct a clear, well-reasoned argument on a specific topic.				
I can find and use dependable information on a given topic.				
I am willing to be skeptical about things I read, see & hear.				
I can often see many sides to an issue.				