

# Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP): Sociology

2018-19 Academic Year

University of Southern Maine

## A. College, Department, Date

College College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department Sociology  
Date May 31, 2019

## B. Contact Person for the Assessment Plan

Name and title Wendy Chapkis (incoming Chair of Sociology)

## C. Degree Program

Name of Degree Program BA in Sociology

## D. Assessment of Student Learning: Program Assessment

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

- a. Are your student learning outcomes published on your department's website?  
Yes - though very generally.  
<https://usm.maine.edu/sociology/overview>

"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. ... 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. People with undergraduate degrees in sociology work in the justice system as juvenile court workers and correctional counselors; in the community as substance abuse counselors and child development technicians; in the government as affirmative action workers and urban planners; and in many other research and social service positions.

- b. In addition, the department has a specific list of learning outcomes, not yet included on the departmental website though reflected in specific course learning outcomes (**see Appendix A**):

### Learning Outcomes for the Major

Students graduating with a major in Sociology will be able to:

1. Read critically and think independently about social issues and social policy.
2. Communicate ideas clearly and effectively in writing and oral presentation.
3. Design and execute an original research project; including:
  - a. The ability to define the problem;
  - b. The ability to review literature;
  - 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 use basic statistics and statistical software packages.
5. Appreciate ethical issues involved in research.
6. Read and comprehend primary sociology texts, including journal articles, and produce a useful literature review.
7. Appreciate the epistemological groundings of various theories and critically assess and apply theory.
8. Analyze a social problem, process, or organization from a distinctly sociological perspective.
9. Effectively collaborate in the production and evaluation of knowledge.
10. Exercise the “sociological imagination,” by applying sociological concepts in everyday settings and practical situations, including in internships, service learning, and other off-campus learning and community engagement activity.

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

The above learning objectives were assessed not only at the individual course level (see **appendix A** for examples) but also, and most systematically, in the program’s capstone course. Faculty review of student work in this year’s capstone shows (a) student met capstone outcomes and (b) capstone is structured effectively for students to achieve and demonstrate mastery of program SLOs.

- d. Do you have a **matrix or curriculum map** showing when your student learning outcomes are assessed and in which courses?

Not on website; curriculum map attached as **Appendix B**.

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

- a. **Identify which assessment measures (beyond individual student grading) were used to determine whether students achieved the stated learning outcomes for the degree.**

Please see **appendix A** for examples of course level assessment and for capstone assessment.

- b. *Briefly describe when you implemented the assessment activity; if a rubric or other structured approach was used to assess student outcome achievement, please describe and/or attach the rubric.*

Please see **appendix A** for examples of course level assessment and for capstone learning outcomes.

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

- a. *Briefly describe your unit's process of reviewing the program assessment results (for example, annual discussion by faculty committee, etc.).*

Program faculty as a whole reviewed the 2019 capstone work to ascertain whether program learning outcomes were being met. In addition, some faculty attended the undergraduate research conference held in the spring to observe oral presentations of sociology student research. And finally, a survey focused on community engagement outcomes was administered in several courses featuring required community engagement activity (see **Appendix C**).

- b. *Identify the specific changes that have been or will be made to improve student learning based on these program assessment results. (For example, what changes will the program make at the assignment, course, or program level to improve student learning, based on the assessment results?)*

Based on student work in the 2019 Capstone seminar, the Sociology program has determined that Capstone assignments are effective at assessing program-level learning outcomes. In addition, student presentations at Thinking Matters indicates that students are effectively learning how to deliver original research in both written and oral format.

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

**E. Other Assessment Activities:** *Briefly describe any additional assessment-related activities your program is using at the course level (for example, creating common assignments and/or assignment rubrics for use across different sections of required courses, examining student progress in entry-level courses, other assessment projects implemented by individual faculty, etc.).*

See Appendix A for specific examples of assignments by individual faculty to aid in course-level assessment.

In addition, students in SOC 301 (Qualitative Research Methods) presented work at the annual undergraduate research conference, Thinking Matters, to ascertain whether sociology majors are successfully achieving the program learning outcome focused on both written and oral presentation of student research (see Program Learning Outcome #2 above).

And, finally, as part of a Title III Democracy and Diversity initiative, a Community Engagement Survey (measuring community engagement, student learning, community belonging, academic engagement, retention and success) was administered in selected Sociology and SBS classes taught by professors Everson and Vazquez Jacobus in Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 (SOC 100, SOC 210, SOC 315, SBS 430, LAC 370). The results are being analyzed and will inform future community-engaged learning and scholarship (see **appendix C** for a copy of the survey).

**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.*

Yes. See Program Learning Outcome #10 above: "Exercise the 'sociological imagination' by applying sociological concepts in everyday settings and practical situations, including in internships, service learning, and other off-campus learning and community engagement activity."

*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.*

Community engagement activity is a required feature of several sociology course including those taught by Professor David Everson (SOC 100 and SOC 380); Professor Wendy Chapkis (SOC 301); and Professor Michelle Vazquez Jacobus (SOC 201):

Activities for these courses in 2018-19 are specified below:

Student Research (related to a community-based problem):

SOC 380 (Professor Everson): **Required** research project on Portland Public Schools implementation of LD 291 (instruction of Wabanaki history in Maine public schools).

SOC 301 (Professor Chapkis): **Required** oral history research with LGBTQ community members (through the Querying the Past project of the Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine) and **Optional** presentation of this research at *Thinking Matters*.

Student-Faculty Community Research Project

SOC 301 (Professor Chapkis): **Optional** – in the spring of 2019, Professor Chapkis and USM undergraduate Johnna Ossie co-authored and co-presented research on the *Querying the Past: Maine LGBTQ Oral History Project* delivered at the international *Talking Bodies* conference in Chester, England.

Internship, or a Field Experience: **Optional** (the Sociology internship course is a program elective).

Service Learning:

SOC 100 (Professor Everson) **Required** Student Community Engagement (Various Community Partners) and Group/Class Reflection and Write-Up (minimum 6 hours per student).

SOC 210 (Professor Vazquez Jacobus): **Required** Group Community Engagement project and presentation.

*c. Please list any courses that have a community engagement activity in your program.*

*Entry-level courses:* SOC 100 Introduction to Sociology (Professor Everson)

*Mid-level courses:* SOC 201 Critical Thinking about Social Issues (Professor Vazquez Jacobus)

*Upper-level courses:* SOC 301 Qualitative Research Methods/Applied LGBTQ History (Professor Chapkis)

## **Appendix A: course level learning outcomes**

### **Required Courses**

**SOC 100, Introduction to Sociology** (department policies require that these outcomes be included on all syllabi for SOC 100). Following completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify social structures and processes that shape our everyday lives.
2. Understand basic concepts, theories and methods of sociology.
3. Apply sociological concepts, theories and methods to contemporary social issues.
4. Imagine actions to create a more equitable, democratic and sustainable society.
5. Read and study more critically and effectively.

### **SOC 210, Critical Thinking About Social Issues**

All sections are designed to help students achieve the following learning outcomes. An ability to:

1. Ask relevant questions.
2. Evaluate arguments.
3. Evaluate evidence.
4. Identify and search for missing information.
5. Apply critical thinking skills to listening, reading, and writing in a variety of contexts.

For a specific example of how these learning outcomes are assessed in this course, what follows is from Professor Michelle Jacobus Vazquez who teaches sections of SOC 201

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

Recognize when and how to ask the questions which form the core of critical thinking. Assessed through classroom participation, assessment of portfolio of seven written Portfolio assignments.

Participate in discussions which explore the concept of thinking critically. Assessed through regular classroom small group and large group interactive activities.

Write papers developing their own individual ideas about material read or discussed using principles of critical thinking. Assessed through evaluation of final research paper and evaluation of regular Portfolio assignments.

Identify and evaluate reasoning, evidence, and assumptions, as well as evaluate arguments as a whole. Assessed through evaluation of Portfolio assignments.

Formulate a persuasive argument using information from diverse sources. Assessed through evaluation of final research paper on social issue.

Communicate more effectively, both orally and in writing. Assessed through regular evaluation of Portfolio assignments, final research paper, small group community engagement presentations and class participation.

Identify influences on their own thoughts and beliefs and how these contribute to their perspectives as critical thinkers. Assessed in Portfolio assignment on self-perspective and critical thinking, and presentation on self-perspective and assumptions.

Describe substantial perspectives arguing for and against promotion of diversity in public institutions in the U.S. Assessed through evaluation of Portfolio assignment on democracy and diversity, integration into final research paper, and group presentations on community engagement project.

Understand how diversity contributes to democracy in the U.S. Assessed as above.

Apply knowledge of critical thinking skills and analysis to a relevant community project. Assessed through evaluation of group community engagement project final product and presentation.

### **SOC 300, Sociological Theory**

After taking the required course in Sociological Theory, students will be able to:

1. Think theoretically about society.
2. Understand what theory is and how theory is different from opinion, belief, ideology, and perspective.
3. Describe the main traditions of classic and contemporary sociological theories.



4. Locate these traditions in historical, social and political context.
5. Use social theories to better understand themselves, their experiences, and the world.

### **SOC 301, Qualitative Research Methods**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the types of research questions best addressed using qualitative methods.
2. Recognize ethical concerns in conducting qualitative research and strategies to address them (including the institutional review process).
3. Design and carry out a qualitative research project (including conducting a literature review; constructing an interview guide or other tool for qualitative data collection; collecting, coding, and analyzing primary data).
4. Present research both through writing and oral presentation. current in interpretative social science.
5. Engage in constructive peer review of colleagues' research.

### **SOC 307, Quantitative Research Methods**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the types of research questions best addressed using quantitative methods and identify the appropriate quantitative technique for testing a given research hypothesis.
2. Identify independent, dependent, and intervening variables and a variable's level of measurement; appropriate measure of central tendency and dispersion.
3. Use SPSS to analyze data.
4. Present quantitative data in tabular and graphical formats.

5. Access and interpret quantitative data in both scholarly writing and everyday life.

### **SOC 410, Capstone**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Draw on the specialized knowledge of the major to articulate a significant theme, topic, issue or problem.
2. Design and generate a significant oral, written, creative or applied final project;
3. Collaborate or consult with others to research, create or discuss solutions or approaches to the project.
4. Analyze, apply, and integrate multiple sources of information and specialized perspectives to complete the project.
5. Draw on learning in general education and other courses to reflect on and critically interrogate learning within the capstone and the major.

### **300-level Elective Courses**

In all 300-level sociology courses, students engage with and develop higher-level cognitive skills, including analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Students in these courses engage with, and develop, higher-level cognitive skills, including application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Irrespective of thematic focus, students will become familiar with key primary texts in the sociological subfield and produce substantive written work on them.

Here is a specific example of how these learning outcomes are assessed in a sociology elective course, SOC 315 Self and Society taught by Professor Michelle Vazquez Jacobus.

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

Identify the theoretical significance of some of the central questions and concerns regarding the experience of selfhood in postmodern society. Assessed through evaluation of regular (weekly) applied Self and Society written assignments, and presentation of final self-story narrative.

Appreciate the reciprocal relationships between the social construct of self and the primary social institutions through which we define ourselves. Assessed through participation in applied class activities and discussion.

Develop an integrated understanding of the dynamic relationships that contribute to our sense of self and society. Assessed as above.

Enhance understanding of other selves and societies through considered interaction with others different from one's self. Assessed through class participation and conversation and written assignments regarding interviewing other self and immersion in cultural activity.

Gain perspective of the influence of significant social institutions, such as family, school, community, and technology on the definition and interaction of self with society. Assessed through evaluation of developmental written self-assignments.

Articulate a personal perspective of self and society through the staged authoring and performance of a personal narrative designed to relate to be delivered, and relate to, others. Assessed through process observation, evaluations of drafts and final written product as well as final presentation of Self Story narrative.

## Appendix B - Curriculum Map

### Map of Student Learning Outcomes

The matrix below maps the learning outcomes for the major on to courses in the major.

#### 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	Capstone	Other (Electives)
Read critically and think independently about social issues & policy	I	R	M	R	R	R/M	R/M
Communicate ideas clearly and effectively in writing.	I	R	R/M	R/M	R	R/M	R/M
Design & execute orig research project		I		I/R/M	I/R/M	M	
Understand & use basic statistics & statistical software		I			R/M	R	R/M
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," by applying sociological concepts in everyday settings and practical situations,	I	R	R	R	R	R/M	R/M
Effectively collaborate in the production and evaluation of knowledge		I	R	R/M	R/M	R/M	R/M
Appreciate the epistemological groundings of various theories & critically assess and apply theory			I/R	I/R	I	R	R/M
Read and comprehend primary sociology texts inc journal articles	I	R	R/M	R/M	R/M	R	R/M

## APPENDIX C - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

## Informed Consent Form

**Research study title:** Community Engagement: Impact on Student Retention and Success

**Primary investigator:** Michelle Vazquez Jacobus, Sociology, University of Southern Maine, michelle.jacobus@maine.edu, 207-780-4603.

**Purpose of the Research:** You are invited to participate in a survey that will explore the experiences of participating in community engagement experiences as part of undergraduate coursework at the University of Southern Maine. Community engagement is considered a high impact educational practice that extends a student's knowledge and experience into the community. The survey will capture data on how students experience involvement in community engaged activities along a developmental sequence (early, mid and capstone/intensive courses) and in light, medium, and intensive course. The survey has been reviewed and approved by the Human Subject Research Institutional Board of the University of Southern Maine.

**Description of Procedures:** This research involves the completion of a survey.

**Duration of Participation:** 15 minutes to complete the survey.

**Location:** University of Southern Maine

**Statement of Participation:** You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study. You must have participated in a USM course with a community engagement component during the most recent academic year. The topics presented in this survey will include your experiences with community engagement and the impact of the experience on you.

Participation is voluntary and you will not be paid for your participation. You may discontinue participation or withdraw at any time. If you feel uncomfortable during the survey, you have the right to decline to answer any question or end the interview without any penalty.

**Risks and Discomforts:** Although this study is low risk, potential for stress exists. Potential minimal risk or discomforts include a range of emotional feelings when asked questions about your experiences with the community engaged aspects of your coursework.

**Benefits:** The anticipated benefit of participation is the opportunity to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experience of participating in community engagement and applied coursework.

**Statement of Confidentiality:** Participation in this research is confidential. Participants will be asked not to use any names on the survey. The results of the research may be published in a professional journal or presented at professional meetings and any reports of study findings will not include any identifying information.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Michelle Vazquez Jacobus at the University of Southern Maine (207) 780-4603 or michelle.jacobus@maine.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Southern Maine Office of Research Integrity and Outreach usmorio@usm.maine.edu 207-780-4517.

## Community Engagement Questionnaire Spring 2019: Revised Edition

1. Spring 2019 Course (*circle the course in which you are currently taking this survey*)

LAC 370    SBS/LOS 430            SOC 100            SOC 210            SOC 315            Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender (how do you identify?):

3. Race and Ethnicity (how do you identify?):

4. Number (**approximate – a range is fine**) of college credits completed as of 1/15/19: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Major(s) \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is the highest degree you plan to attain?

Bachelors\_\_\_    Masters\_\_\_    Doctorate\_\_\_    Other\_\_\_

7. Check all that apply (**if none apply, leave blank**):

- a. \_\_\_ I am older than 25 years
- b. \_\_\_ I work more than 29 hours per week while I attend school
- c. \_\_\_ I grew up in a country other than the US
- d. \_\_\_ I am a parent
- e. \_\_\_ I have significant care responsibilities for a family member
- f. \_\_\_ My first language is not English
- g. \_\_\_ I am a first-generation college student (a first-generation college student has neither parents nor grandparents who earned a college degree)

8. Please rate your college experience, using the scale: (5= Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=No Opinion, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree; **Please write N/A if not applicable**)

- |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I have friends at USM   |
| b. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel connected to my community  |
| c. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel connected to USM faculty   |
| d. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel supported in my education  |
| e. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel confident in my ability to learn in college                          |
| f. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel like I have learned valuable skills in college                       |
| g. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I take action to advocate for social issues                                 |
| h. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I am able to explore my interests and passions in my college work           |
| i. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | The education I receive at USM will be relevant to my life after graduation |
| j. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I expect to graduate from USM   |
| k. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I expect to enroll in classes at USM next semester                          |
| l. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel that I have value to offer the community                             |
| m. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I understand the needs facing the community in which I live                 |
| n. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I believe I have a responsibility to serve my community                     |

Questions 9-17 use the follow definition in referral to the term "*community-engagement*":  
*Community-engagement* refers to engaged learning experiences that include a range from "light exposure" such as attending a community event for a few hours on one occasion, to more extensive community-based internships or practica that are the focus of a particular course or academic credit. Similar terms that would be considered *community engagement* include "service-learning," "community-based learning" "action research" and "community-based participatory research (CPBR)". To be considered *community engagement*, the experience must involve some applied out-of-classroom experience that is evaluated and included among the graded experiences of the class. "Volunteering" outside of course requirements is not considered *community-engagement* (for the purposes of this survey). Please write N/A if not applicable.

9. How many of your courses (this semester) involved *community-engagement*?  
 0    1    2    3    4    5
10. How many college-level community-engagement courses have you taken *before* this semester?  
 0    1    2    3    4    5    More than 5 \_\_\_    Not sure \_\_\_
11. Did you participate in community-engagement prior to college?  
 Yes \_\_\_    No \_\_\_    Not sure \_\_\_    If yes, to what extent (# of hours): \_\_\_
12. Do you plan to participate in community-engagement in the future?  
 Yes \_\_\_    No \_\_\_    Not sure \_\_\_
13. Was the community-engagement portion of this course optional or required?  
 Optional \_\_\_    Required \_\_\_    Not sure \_\_\_
14. Did you know there was a community-engagement component before you enrolled in this course?    Yes \_\_\_    No \_\_\_    Not sure \_\_\_    N/A \_\_\_
15. During a typical week this past semester, approximately how many hours (average) did you spend completing community-engagement activities for this course? \_\_\_\_\_
16. How would you describe the level of involvement of the community-engagement project in this course? (select the most appropriate answer)  
 a. \_\_\_ Central to the course  
 b. \_\_\_ A major assignment in the course  
 c. \_\_\_ A minor assignment in the course  
 d. \_\_\_ An optional assignment in the course
17. Please indicate your level of agreement for each of the items below, using the scale:  
 (5= Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3 =No Opinion, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree). Write N/A if not applicable.

Compared to my other courses:

- |    |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| a. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I learned more in this course  |
| b. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I found myself more motivated to work in this course                   |
| c. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I found myself devoting more time to this course                       |
| d. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I found myself reflecting more on the concepts I have been learning    |
| e. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I found lectures/discussions intellectually challenging in this course |
| f. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I expect to receive a high grade in this course.                       |



18. Please indicate your level of agreement with each item: (5= Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=No Opinion, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree). **Please write N/A if not applicable.**

Because of THIS Course:

- |    |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| a. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I have come to feel more connected to my studies                             |
| b. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I gained a deeper understanding of the course material                       |
| c. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I learned about the community  |
| d. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel more positive about the course offerings at USM                       |
| e. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I gained a new perspective on the lives of people from different backgrounds |
| f. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I feel a deeper interest in working with people from diverse backgrounds     |
| g. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I increased my awareness of problems facing the community                    |
| h. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I have shifted my career plans   |
| i. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I have learned to apply concepts from my course to real situations           |
| j. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I learned to appreciate different cultures                                   |
| k. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I learned to see social problems in a new way                                |
| l. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I better understand the role of professionals in this field                  |
| m. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I have an increased commitment to address the causes of community problems   |

Please indicate your level of agreement with each item: (5= Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=No Opinion, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree). **Please write N/A if not applicable.**

19. 1 2 3 4 5 In community engaged learning, I was free to develop and use my ideas.
20. 1 2 3 4 5 My community engagement experience challenged my previous opinions.
21. 1 2 3 4 5 The community work I did in this course helped me to better understand the lectures and readings in this course.
22. 1 2 3 4 5 I feel I would have learned more from this course if more time was spent in the classroom instead of doing community work.
23. 1 2 3 4 5 I would highly recommend that other students take this course.
24. 1 2 3 4 5 Overall, I was very satisfied with the quality of the learning experience in the class.
25. Would you like to make any additional comments about this course?

Thank you for your feedback!