

Department of Sociology Assessment of Student Learning – Undergraduate Program  
Report of 2004 – 2005 Activity

Program Goals

The Bachelor of Arts program of the Department of Sociology invites students to describe, explain, and understand the social world around us. As a Department, we have set forth the following goals and objectives for our undergraduate students:

A. Goals Related to Skills

1. To be able to think critically.
  - 1.1) Be able to present alternate view-points and hypotheses on various issues.
  - 1.2) Be able to identify basic premises in particular arguments.
  - 1.3) Be able to recognize underlying assumptions in theoretical orientations or arguments.
  - 1.4) Be able to move easily from remembering through analysis and application to synthesis and evaluation.
  - 1.5) Be able to examine one's own cultural practices, beliefs and values.
2. To be able to have basic computer skills necessary to find, communicate, create and apply sociological knowledge and information.
  - 2.1) Be able to use computerized and on-line databases to find published research.
  - 2.2) Be able to use the internet, email and webpages to communicate with others and to find information.
  - 2.3) Be able to use standard software packages such as SPSS to analyze data.
3. To be able to write and speak proficiently in order to communicate effectively with persons whom they encounter in their work, civil obligation and personal life.
  - 3.1) Be able to write a clear and concise report of the findings from sociological data analysis including appropriate citation format.
  - 3.2) Be able to write a clear and concise sociological analysis and account of a social event, topic, issue or problem.
  - 3.3) To be able to discuss the results of sociological research process in an articulate manner.

B. Goals Related to Understanding Sociological Perspectives

4. To have an appreciation for the discipline of sociology and its role in contributing to our understanding of social reality.
  - 4.1) Be able to describe how sociology differs from and is similar to other social sciences and give examples of these similarities and differences.
  - 4.2) To be aware of the effects of domestic and global forces on social institutions, on one's life and on the lives of other individuals and groups.
  - 4.3) To be able to identify what is meant by social institutions and recognize their impact on social interaction.
  - 4.4) To be able to demonstrate how institutions interact with each other and with individuals.
5. Have an appreciation for what C. Wright Mills called "The Sociological Imagination."
  - 5.1) To be able to know how one's biography relates to the time in history in which one lives and to the social structure in which one finds himself or herself.

- 5.2) To be able to see who has vested interests in a particular social order.
- 5.3) To identify the relationship between personal troubles and public issues.
- 6. Appreciate the usefulness of sociological paradigms.
  - 6.1) Understand the levels at which sociological paradigms operate.
- C. Goals Related to Understanding Sociological Core Concepts and Theories
  - 7. To be able to use the basic core concepts in sociology.
    - 7.1) To be able to define and apply the culture, socialization, stratification, social structure, institutions and differentiations be race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, etc.
  - 8. To understand the roles and uses of theory in sociology.
    - 8.1) To be able to define theory and describe its role in building sociological knowledge.
    - 8.2) To be able to recognize the historical basis for systems of thought or understanding, i.e., to show the connection between classical and contemporary theory.
    - 8.3) To be able to compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations.
    - 8.4) To be able to describe and apply basic theories or theoretical orientations.
    - 8.5) To be able to construct reasoned arguments based on theoretical perspectives and discuss limitations of those perspectives.
- D. Goals Related to the Methodologies Used in Sociology and Ethical Issues Regarding Research
  - 9. To be able to understand quantitative and qualitative research methods in sociology.
    - 9.1) To be able to recognize how one uses the scientific method in social science.
    - 9.2) To know the difference between a dependent and an independent variable.
    - 9.3) To be able to compare and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering data.
    - 9.4) To be able to critically assess a research report.
    - 9.5) To be able to link method and theory.
    - 9.6) To be able to understand and apply basic statistics.
    - 9.7) To be cognizant of ethical issues in sociological research.
- E. Goals Related to Understanding Diversity and Global Issues
  - 10. To have an appreciation for the internal diversity of American society.
    - 10.1) To be able to describe the social significance of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and age.
    - 10.2) To be able to understand cultural diversity within American society.
    - 10.3) To be familiar with the processes by which prejudice and discrimination are created and perpetuated.
  - 11. To have an appreciation for the place of American society in the global world and community.
    - 11.1) To understand the connection between global events and processes and local circumstances.
    - 11.2) To be able to understand and critique the Western pattern and conception of globalization and development.
- F. Goals Related to Good Citizenship
  - 12. To be able to use sociological perspectives to make the world a better place.
    - 12.1) To have an awareness of the context and interrelatedness of all life and physical context.
    - 12.2) To exhibit a spirit of caring, respect and dignity.

12.3) To be aware of one's own capacities to contribute to social betterment.

### Background

The Department of Sociology met on September 17, 2004 to revise the Department's Assessment Plan, with particular attention to the operationalization and measurement of the student outcomes listed above, which were generated in 2001. After review of available documents on assessment from within and outside the department and discussion about potential assessment plans (e.g., a senior capstone course, using the incoming graduate assessment procedure as an outgoing measure for undergraduates), the attending faculty decided to use the Educational Testing Services Sociology Field test (ETS) as an initial means of direct assessment. Given to all graduating seniors, this method would allow for both on-going data collection for curriculum development as well as a basis for making comparisons between our students and the national norm. It was decided that the ETS could also be used to generate a locally produced exam by the department faculty that more closely paralleled departmental goals and objectives for student learning than the ETS. At this stage, a department committee on undergraduate assessment was formed, including Professors Larson, Staples, and Stevens, and was charged with the oversight of administering the ETS exam and review of the department's immediate plans for assessment during the 2004 – 2005 academic year.

In addition to administering the ETS exam, the committee on undergraduate assessment developed and implemented indirect means of assessing the knowledge and experience of graduating seniors in the major. A semi-structured interview frame was developed and used in personal interviews (see attached). Information was collected regarding characteristics that could potentially influence student learning and experiences within the major (e.g., when sociology was formally declared as a major, work status, future plans). Other questions focused on specific experiences within the department (e.g., influence of specific courses, interaction with faculty members, quality of learning experiences). In addition, interviewees were given a self-administered questionnaire focusing on departmental objectives and the department's contribution to student development.

11/03/04

University of North Dakota  
Sociology Department  
Fall 2004 – Spring 2005

Exit interview for Sociology Majors

Opening: Your willingness to assist the department by answering the following questions will help to develop the courses, curriculum, and practicum experiences for majors and minors in Sociology. You will not be associated with the responses given to the questions. Please answer the questions in a complete and reflective fashion.

[Establish rapport] Did you transfer credits to UND?  
\_\_\_\_\_no\_\_\_yes---From \_\_\_\_\_

When did you become sociology major?  
Calendar year\_\_\_\_\_ and academic year?  
\_\_Freshman \_\_sophomore\_\_junior \_\_\_\_\_senior

Had you previously declared another major? \_\_\_yes  
\_\_\_\_\_No (go to five)

What was your major? \_\_\_\_\_  
If you decided to do a "double major," why did you choose Sociology?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (go to six)

Why did you major in Sociology? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was there a specific course influencing your decision to major in Sociology? \_\_\_no\_\_\_yes--?

Was there a particular faculty member who influenced your decision to major in Sociology?  
\_\_\_no\_\_\_yes---?

Were there other reasons influencing your decision?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Did you work during college? \_\_\_No\_\_\_yes [what was your job?]

10. Were you a full-time student\_\_\_\_\_ part-time student\_\_\_\_\_?

11. Are you planning to do post-baccalaureate studies? Or seek a job?

[If answers “seek a job,” then ask] 12. What career would you like to pursue?

[If answers “post-baccalaureate studies,” then ask] Do you have any post-graduate education plans?

What program are you interested in?

Have you applied for admission?

Where?

12. How satisfied are you with your experiences as Sociology major?

13. What would you suggest as improvements for the Sociology major?

14. Overall, how satisfied are you with the education received at the University of North Dakota?

Thank you!

[[Provide respondent with self-assessment list.]]

SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

The following is a self-assessment of your perception of educational and learning experiences at UND. At graduation time, how prepared do you feel in the following areas?

	<i>Not at all</i>				<i>Skilled</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> ability to apply principles and generalizations already learned to new problems and situations . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> ability to use logic and reason to analyze the social world . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> ability to think holistically: to see the world as a whole as well as the parts . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> ability to distinguish between fact and opinion . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> speaking skills . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> writing skills . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> know concepts and theories in sociology . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> understand perspectives and values of sociology. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> utilize techniques and methods used to gain new knowledge in sociology . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> have an informed concern about contemporary social issues . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> have a commitment to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> have an informed appreciation of diversity . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> capacity to make informed ethical choices . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5

Which of these areas has the sociology program helped you with the most? Please use the boxes to the left of each item to check all that apply.

Thank you for your insight. We appreciate your time.