Annual Program Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2017-2018

Department: Sociology & Anthropology

Program(s) Assessed: Sociology/Criminology
Indicate all majors, minors, certificates and/or options that are included in this assessment:

Majors/Minors/Certificate	Options
Sociology Major (B.S. in Sociology)	Both General Sociology option and Criminology option

Annual Assessment Process

1. Data are collected as defined by Assessment Plan
2. Population or unbiased samples of collected assignments are scored by at least two faculty members using scoring rubrics to ensure inter-rater reliability.
3. Areas where the acceptable performance threshold has not been met are highlighted.
4. The scores are presented at a program/unit faculty meeting for assessment.
5. The faculty reviews the assessment results, and responds accordingly.
   a. If an acceptable performance threshold **has not been met**, possible responses:
      o Gather additional data to verify or refute the result.
      o Identify potential curriculum changes to try to address the problem
      o Change the acceptable performance threshold, reassess
      o Choose a different assignment to assess the outcome
   b. If acceptable performance threshold **has been met**, possible responses:
      o Faculty may reconsider thresholds
      o Evaluate the rubric to assure outcomes meet student skill level (example – classes with differing learning outcomes based on student level)
      o Use Bloom's Taxonomy to consider stronger learning outcomes
      o Choose a different assignment to assess the outcome

6. **Demonstrate the impact of the assessment response in next assessment cycle.**
7. Submit Assessment reports annually to report assessment activities and results by program. The report deadline is September 15th.

1. What Was Done

a) What learning outcomes were reviewed? (Please include the description of the learning outcomes from assessment plan)

Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of theory in sociology.

Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication. Our students will demonstrate the ability to present materially orally in an organized and effective manner.

b) Include planning table – inform if there are changes to the assessment plan.
From the Sociology & Criminology Assessment Plan (revised Fall 2015):

ASSESSMENT PLANNING CHART. PROGRAM: Sociology/Criminology					
	Assessment Year and Targeted Courses				
LEARNING OUTCOME	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	*Assessment Targets*
Learning Outcome 1: Sociology as a Discipline. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of sociology and its role in contributing to our understanding of society and changes in society		SOCI 303 (Society and the Individual)			Essay Question
Learning Outcome 2: Sociological Concepts. Our students will demonstrate a knowledge, comprehension, and relevance of core sociological concepts.		SOCI 311 (Criminology)			Final Project & Poster
Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of theory in sociology.			SOCI455/ SOCI 311		Essay Questions
Learning Outcome 4: Sociological Application. Our students will formulate research questions based on critical readings and understandings of sociological research.	SOCI 358 (Crime & Inequality)				Final Project
Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication. Our students will demonstrate the ability to present materially orally in an organized and effective manner.			SOCI333		Discussion Leader
Learning Outcome 6: Written Communication: Our students will demonstrate appropriate	SOCI 499 (Capstone)			SOCI499	Final Project

				SOCIxxx (Upper Division Course)	Essay Question
writing practices and formats and effective written communication and editing skills.					
Learning Outcome 7: Empiricism. Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the roles and uses of evidence in qualitative and quantitative methods.					

NOTE: SOCI 318 and 499 are required of all sociology/criminology majors. Other courses are electives for sociology and criminology option students.

Changes to the assessment plan for 2017-2018: As the Sociology program did not offer SOCI 333 in the academic year 2017-2018, we assessed the final presentation for SOCI 499 when assessing Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication.

The above assessment planning chart is current through Academic Year 2018-2019. We are currently drafting the next assessment planning chart that will cover Academic years 2019-2020 through 2022-2023. The same learning outcomes will be assessed in the next four-year cycle of assessments.

2. What Data Were Collected

a) What was collected to assess learning outcomes listed above? (If multiple programs/minors are included, please indicate if different criteria was used).

Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories. A sample of 10 final papers from SOCI 455 (Classic Sociological Theory), taught in Fall 2017, were collected from the instructor (Dr. Colter Ellis).

Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication. The oral presentations of 7 students' final projects in SOCI 499 (Senior Thesis Capstone), taught in Fall 2017, were observed by members of the assessment committee (Drs David Eitle and Maggie Thorsen).

b) How were data collected?

Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories. Dr. Ellis was instructed to provide papers that represented a range of student performance (e.g. "A" papers, "B" papers, "C" papers, etc.) to the assessment committee.

Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication. Members of the assessment were present for the final presentations for SOCI 499 to independently assess students' oral presentations using a pre-constructed rubric. Data from one day in which 7 student presentations occurred were used in the assessment.

3. Explain how Data Were Analyzed

a) Explain the assessment process. Who participated in the process, the nature of the rubric utilized (or other norming methods), and the threshold outcome desired.

Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories. Both members of the assessment committee independently reviewed and scored students' papers based on the following assessment rubric. After initial assessment, the committee met to discuss overall impressions of students' work, alignment with the learning outcome, and performance at meeting assessment criteria as outlined in the rubric. The outcome of this evaluation process was to determine whether or not students' are meeting the learning outcome, areas for improvement, and recommendations for faculty to improve student learning based on our analysis.

Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of theory in sociology.					
Grading Criteria	Poor (1)	Unsatisfactory (2)	Average (3)	Above Average (4)	Sophisticated (5)
Overall Organization	The essay is confusing with no organization.	The main points of the essay are ambiguous, making the writer's ideas difficult to follow.	Writing has minimal organization and a basic thesis statement, but does not go beyond the basics.	Writing follows a unified and logical organization, but sometimes drifts from the thesis.	Organization is unified and logical, with excellent transitions
Understanding of theory/ concepts	Major mistakes evident regarding theory or in definition of concepts	Main points of theory are on track, but errors in applying or illustrating theory are pronounced.	Concepts and theory are correct, but only textbook definitions with no elaboration.	Theory and key concepts are well defined and organized/linked properly.	Concepts are clearly defined, linked where appropriate, and illustrated with examples
Theoretical Assumptions	The essay fails to address assumptions of theory or does so incorrectly	The essay minimally discusses assumptions, but not completely or adequately	The essay provides clear list of assumptions, but doesn't elaborate	The essay describes assumptions, and elaborates, but doesn't connect with concepts.	The essay describes assumptions, and elaborates, and connects with core concepts.
Grammar and Punctuation	Severe problems with grammar, usage, or mechanics show very poor control of language and may significantly impede understanding.	Numerous errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics show poor control of language and may at times impede understanding.	The essay has a few major errors and multiple minor errors, but almost all sentences are clear and understandable.	The essay has few major errors. There may be multiple minor errors as long as they do not interfere with understanding.	The essay has no major grammatical and punctuation errors and very few minor errors. Any minor errors do not interfere with the understanding of the essay.

Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication. Both members of the assessment committee independently observed and scored students' oral presentations based on the following assessment rubric. After the initial assessment, the committee met to discuss overall impressions of students' presentations, alignment with the learning outcome, and performance at meeting assessment criteria as outlined in the rubric. The outcome of this evaluation process was to determine whether or not students' are meeting the learning outcome, areas for improvement, and recommendations for faculty to improve student learning based on our analysis.

Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication. Our students will demonstrate the ability to present materially orally in an organized and effective manner.

Criteria	Excellent 10 points	Approaching Excellence 9 points	Above Average 8 points	Average 7 points	Below Average 6 points	Poor 5 points
Disciplinary Understanding	Successful and original application of disciplinary concepts to topic. Presenter clearly communicates an understanding of sociology, including theory and research methods	Successful application of disciplinary concepts to topic. Presenter communicates an understanding of sociology, including theory and research methods	Solid application of disciplinary concepts. Overall, presenter communicates an understanding of sociology, including theory and research methods	Adequate application of disciplinary concepts. Adequate communication of an understanding of sociology, including theory and research methods	Proper use of disciplinary terms, but no application of concepts. Struggles to communicate an understanding of sociology, including theory and research methods	No attempt to use disciplinary concepts in analysis. Does not communicate an understanding of sociology
Organization	Presentation organization is unified and logical, with excellent transitions.	Presentation organization is unified and logical, with effective transitions.	Presentation organization is unified and coherent and transitions are used.	Presentation organization is clear enough to follow without difficulty.	Presentation organization may lack clear movement or focus, making the ideas difficult to follow.	Presentation has no organizational structure.

Presentation Skills	Student displays superior oral communication skills; extensive preparation is obvious	Student displays above-average oral communication skills; good preparation is obvious	Student displays effective oral communication skills; sufficient preparation is obvious	Student displays somewhat inconsistent oral communication skills; questions about preparation are salient	Student displays ineffective oral communication skills; has not adequately prepared for presentation	Severe problems with oral communication skills; failed to demonstrate any preparation for presentation

4. What Was Learned

a) Results:

Learning Outcome 3: Sociological Theories. The 9 student essays varied, with 3 scoring in the "A" (Sophisticated/Above Average) range, 3 scoring in the "B" (Above Average) range, and 3 scoring in the "C/D" (Average to Unsatisfactory) range, when averaging committee members' scores on the rubric criteria. Looking at both committee members' independent scores, the 3 "A" papers scored an average of 4.61 out of 5, the 3 "B" papers scored an average of 4.05 out of 5, and the 3 "C/D" papers scored an average of 3.14 out of 5. The "A" papers stood out from the rest on their ability to demonstrate their understanding of theoretical concepts through application. These papers went beyond rote memorization and provision of definitions. They had depth to their analysis and were able to demonstrate their understanding of the power of theory by successfully and creatively applying concepts to specific examples. Students who wrote "A" papers also stood out as more effective writers, therefore enabling the clear communication of ideas and analysis. While "A" papers did not always explicitly acknowledge the underlying assumptions of theory in their response (which was not an explicit part of the prompt, but was part of the assessment tool), these students did hint at more of the foundational components of the theoretical concepts they discussed. The "B" papers demonstrated a fairly good, basic understanding of theoretical concepts but were less sophisticated in their analysis. There was little to no discussion of assumptions. In general their analysis was less sociological. Their discussion of concepts were less in depth, more poorly organized, and had less fluidity. These papers focused more on answering the questions rather than tying together ideas into a holistic response. While "A" papers applied theoretical concepts to build their narratives and arguments, "B" papers lacked this narrative. The understanding and ability to craft an argument or narrative seems to be a challenge for students. "C" papers demonstrated an incomplete or superficial understanding of theoretical concepts. These papers provided little detail about concepts beyond the repetition/regurgitation of the names of concepts in (sometimes) the appropriate places. Most of the discussion of concepts simply involved naming the concept with little analysis or discussion of what that concept means. There were many mistakes made when defining concepts. Papers in this category were poorly written and under developed. Based on our assessment of students' papers, it seems clear that more needs to be taught about how to craft a logical, well developed, sociological and sophisticated argument or narrative, supported by accurate application of theoretical concepts.

Learning Outcome 5: Oral Communication. The 7 student presentations varied, with 3 scoring in the "A" (Excellent/Approaching Excellence) range, one scoring in the "B" (Above Average) range, and 3 scoring in the "C/D" (Average to Below Average) range, when averaging committee members' scores on the rubric criteria. Looking at both committee members' independent scores, the 3 "A" presentations scored an average of 9.45 out of 10, the 1 "B" presentation scored an average of 8.3 out of 10, and the three "C/D" presentations scored an average of 7.11 out of 10. While students in the "A" range did an excellent job applying disciplinary concepts to their topic and clearly communicated their understanding of sociology,

other students did not clearly connect their presentation topic to sociological theory or concepts. Several students failed to clearly communicate what was sociological about their research projects, with limited application of concepts when describing their research topic. It was clear that students' varied quite a bit on the amount of preparation they had done for their presentations. While students in the "A" and "B" range had very clearly defined and organized talking points, and had clearly practiced ahead of time, other students' presentations were poorly organized, were inconsistent or ineffective in communicating their ideas and appeared to have suffered from limited preparation. The professionalism with which these presentations were given was an issue for some students. Based on our assessment of students' presentations, it seems clear that more needs to be taught to students about how to be a good presenter, with specific instructions and guidelines for effective communication.

b) Describe how results were communicated to the department and used to develop plans for improvement.

The committee will schedule a meeting with faculty in the department to discuss the results of this assessment. In this meeting, we will articulate plans for improvement and seek additional feedback from faculty on how to improve student learning of these outcomes.

5. How We Responded

a) Based on assessment, are there any curricular plans for the following year? (Such as plans for measurable improvements, or realignment of learning outcomes).

At the faculty meeting the instructors of record in both classes will be given this assessment report. Faculty will then be able to incorporate any curricular changes discussed at the meeting into their classes. All faculty will be informed that these criteria will be accessed again in 2021-2022.

One suggestion that has been put forth in previous assessments is to develop a course for sociology majors that is an "introduction to the major" as well as an opportunity for professionalization. Such a class would go over such topics as: basics of research methods, building a narrative/argument, presentation skills, etc. There are challenges with adding such a course to the curriculum, including staffing shortages, demands for upper-division courses (this proposed course would likely be 200-level), and introducing a required course into the curriculum. The assessment committee will introduce this idea to the faculty at the meeting to discuss this possibility, as well as other ways to incorporate professionalization and writing skill development into the existing coursework.

b) When will the changes be next assessed?

According to our draft Assessment Planning Chart, these learning outcomes will be assessed again in academic year 2021-2022.

6. Closing the Loop

a) Do any of the outcomes this year represent improvements based on assessment from previous years (show multi-year use of progress).

It is not currently possible to compare the current assessment to previous assessments of these learning outcomes. In the past, different rubrics and assessment targets have been used. Past reports have largely provided qualitative assessments, with limited quantitative data from rubric scoring to compare to our current assessment. Further, there has been variation in how the sample of assessment targets has been collected (e.g. papers). Based on this assessment, we are rethinking our current sampling of data. Specifically, the strategy for collecting student data over the past few years has been to request that the instructor provide a sample of assignments that fall across the range of student outcomes (e.g. 3 "A" papers, 3 "B" papers, 3 "C/D" papers). As this sampling approach is not random, it may not be representative of student performance. For example, in a given class 40% of students may earn an "A" for an assignment, 40% earn a "B", and 20% earn a "C or D", but with our current approach we assess equal numbers of papers from each of these categories (33%). This would lead to an oversampling of underperforming student work, and affect our ability to assess how well students are meeting learning outcomes. Therefore, in the future we are going to get quantitative information from the instructor on the percentage of students who fell into each category and take a random sample of assignments to evaluate. Both pieces of information will be useful to help us assess how well students are meeting assessment criteria. We were able to take a random sample of student presentations for the assessment of oral communication, which will be useful when comparing to our next assessment period (2021-2022). We will use the same rubrics and forms at our next assessment period which will enable us to compare numbers from this round to the next assessment period to gauge student improvement.

Submit report to programassessment@montana.edu