

Program Assessment Report

Academic Year(s) Assessed: 2023-2024

College: Letters & Science

Department: **Sociology** & Anthropology

Department Head: Cody Warner

Submitted by: Veronica Shepp, Vijaya Tamla Rai, Cody Warner

Program(s) Assessed

List all majors (including each option), minors, and certificates that are included in this assessment – add or subtract rows as needed – please use official titles:

Majors	Minors, Options, etc.
Sociology	General Sociology or Criminology Option
	Minor in Sociology

1. Past Assessment Summary.

Response: Findings from the 2022-2023 assessment report were very positive with all ratings between *excellent* and *outstanding*. Specifically, we were commended on our decision to evaluate PLO #2 by diving in more directly to the application of the Sociological Imagination by evaluating artifacts from three different courses across varied course levels. We were further commended on seeking artifacts across course levels to better assess facets of the PLOs as students progress through the program. In addition, our plan to decide early on specific exam questions and/or final projects in the courses to use as artifacts was received well and helped us to prepare for our next assessment. We continued this pattern by identifying our committee, artifacts, and assessment strategy early to ensure effective assessment for the current report.

With regard to specific recommendations, we were advised to investigate other PLOs similarly (looking at the same exam questions across multiple course levels to assess progress). Within this recommendation, we were advised to continue being creative as we think about assessment both for this next report and in the future. In response to this feedback, we have been proactive in discussing both how to accomplish our ongoing assessment requirements while also planning for future assessment reports in terms of applying more creative ways of addressing program assessment. Several faculty have ideas on how to diversify our assessment efforts and we look forward to continuing to be creative and innovative with our program assessment. Lastly, we received the recommendation to share this past assessment strategy with other departments. In response, we discussed within our faculty meetings our specific strategies and provided insight to faculty not on the assessment committee information that can be taken and shared. We continue to brainstorm and consider ways in which we may be able to better connect and provide our colleagues with these strategies for future assessments.

2. Action Research Question.

Response: Can students demonstrate understanding of sociological principles and effectively engage in sociological communication as it relates to social institutions, groups, and processes?

3. Assessment Plan, Schedule, and Data Sources.

- a) Please provide a multi-year assessment schedule that will show when all program learning outcomes will be assessed, and by what criteria (data).

ASSESSMENT PLANNING SCHEDULE CHART					
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME	COURSES MAPPED TO PLOs	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
PLO#1 – Sociological Principles (defined below)	SOCI 455	X	-	X	-
PLO#2 – Sociological Application	SOCI 499/other	-	X	-	X
PLO#3 – Sociological Communication	SOCI 318R	X	-	X	-
PLO#4 – Sociological Evaluation	SOCI 311	-	X	-	X

- b) What are the threshold values for which your program demonstrates student achievement?

Threshold Values		
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME	Threshold Value	Data Source(s)*
PLO#1 – Sociological Principles: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of sociology’s core conceptual, theoretical, and empirical principles.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	Responses to multiple-choice or short-answer exam questions, essays, and/or individual research projects.
PLO#2 – Sociological Application: Our students will demonstrate the ability to apply the “sociological imagination” to understand and analyze social institutions, groups, and processes. The sociological imagination is the awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	See above.
PLO#3 – Sociological Communication: Our students will demonstrate the ability to communicate sociological knowledge effectively.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70%	See above. Also, oral presentations.

	of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	
PLO#4 – Sociological Evaluation: Students will develop critical thinking skills to evaluate the evidence, conclusions, and underlying assumptions of academic and non-academic sources of knowledge.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	See above. Also, oral presentations.

4. What Was Done.

- a) Self-reporting Metric (required answer): Was the completed assessment consistent with the program’s assessment plan? If not, please explain the adjustments that were made.

Yes

No

- b) How were data collected and analyzed and by whom? Please include method of collection and sample size.

Two faculty members volunteered to collect and submit samples of artifacts assessing PLO#1 or PLO#3 from the designated course. They submitted the following.

- Artifacts for PLO#1: Final paper in Classical Sociological Theory was collected and provided as artifacts to assess knowledge of sociological principles. N=10
- Artifacts for PLO#2: Individual research projects from two different sections of Sociological Research Methods were collected and provided as artifacts to assess sociological communication, specifically within the introduction of the paper. N=10; 5 artifacts per section of the course.

- c) Please provide a rubric that demonstrates how your data were evaluated. (Delete example below and replace with program’s assessment-specific rubric.)

PLO#1: Sociological Principles: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of sociology’s core conceptual, theoretical, and empirical principles.

Indicators	<i>Unacceptable (1)</i>	<i>Marginal (2)</i>	<i>Acceptable (3)</i>	<i>Advanced (4)</i>
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Conceptual Principles	Students may state a concept's basic principles but may not do so in a way that is entirely correct or complete, they cannot summarize or explain the concept in their own words.	Student can summarize a concept's principles with few mistakes but struggle to correctly apply it in a sociological analysis or compare it to other concepts.	Student demonstrates understanding by applying a concept's principles in a sociological analysis or comparing it to other concepts.	Student demonstrates understanding by synthesizing, critiquing, or applying the concept's principles in a new or unique analysis.
Theoretical Principles	Student may state the theory's basic principles but may not do so in a way that is correct or complete, they cannot summarize or accurately explain it in their own words.	Student can summarize a theoretical principle with few mistakes but struggle to apply it in a sociological analysis or compare it to other theoretical principles.	Student demonstrates understanding by applying a theoretical principle in a sociological analysis or comparing it to other theoretical principles.	Student demonstrates understanding by synthesizing, critiquing, or applying the theoretical principle to create a new or unique analysis.
Empirical Principles	Student may state the basics of empirical principle but may not do so in a way that is correct or complete, they cannot summarize or accurately explain it in their own words.	Student understands and can summarize an empirical principle but struggles to apply it in a sociological analysis, or compare it to other empirical principles or analyses.	Student demonstrates understanding by applying an empirical principle in a sociological analysis or comparing it to other empirical principles or analyses.	Student demonstrates understanding by synthesizing, critiquing, or applying the empirical principle to create a new or unique analysis.
Threshold Values: 70% of students will meet or exceed level 3 competency				

PLO #3: Sociological Communication: Our students will demonstrate the ability to communicate sociological knowledge effectively.

Indicators	<i>Unacceptable (1)</i>	<i>Marginal (2)</i>	<i>Acceptable (3)</i>	<i>Advanced (4)</i>
Overall Organization	The main points and supporting evidence are unorganized, unclear, or otherwise confusing.	The main points and supporting evidence are presented, but the content does not follow a unified or logical organization.	The content follows a unified and logical organization but sometimes drifts from the thesis or makes points that lack adequate justification.	Organization is unified and logical, with excellent transitions and clear, substantiated conclusions.
Structure and Delivery	Major mistakes are evident, and the communication of the content is ineffective.	Main points are well articulated, but mistakes remain and communication of the content is inconsistent.	All points are well articulated, there are few mistakes, and the content is effectively communicated.	All points are well articulated, there are few mistakes, and the content is communicated

				clearly, concisely, and/or persuasively.
Sociological Principles	Major mistakes are evident regarding the definitions or applications of sociological principles (e.g., methods, theories, or concepts).	Use of sociological principles is appropriate, but errors in definitions or applications are pronounced.	Use of sociological principles is well defined and appropriately applied in the analysis.	Sociological principles are clearly defined, appropriately applied, and result in a novel or especially creative analysis.
Sociological Imagination	Student does not use the sociological imagination.	Student is generally able to use the sociological imagination but does not do so consistently.	Student consistently uses the sociological imagination.	Student consistently uses the sociological imagination, resulting in a novel comparison or assessment.
Threshold Values: 70% of students will meet or exceed level 3 competency				

5. What Was Learned.

- a) Based on the analysis of the data, and compared to the threshold values established, what was learned from the assessment?

For PLO#1:

- a. Impressively, 100% of the students scored at or above our threshold of 3 or above, with 40% of students scoring a 4.

For PLO#2:

- b. 80% of the students scored at or above our threshold of 3 or above, with 20% of students scoring a 4.

- b) What areas of strength in the program were identified from this assessment process?

Students in Classical Sociological Theory are clearly able to demonstrate proficiency in their understanding of sociological principles. Given that this course tends to be taken somewhat early in the student's progress in the program, it is encouraging to see that students are overwhelmingly successful in this PLO.

Students in Sociological Research Methods have demonstrated that they are able to effectively demonstrate sociological communication.

- c) What areas were identified that either need improvement or could be improved in a different way from this assessment process?

Reflecting on this assessment's process in comparison to our past assessment report, it may be useful to assess the sociological communication in a more specific and creative manner, given that students may demonstrate their communication proficiency in varied yet valid ways. For example, it could be useful to assess sociological communication via varied artifacts including the independent research paper, an oral presentation, and an in-class discussion on sociological concepts.

6. How We Responded.

- a) Describe how "What Was Learned" was communicated to the department, or program faculty. How did faculty discussions re-imagine new ways program assessment might contribute to program growth/improvement/innovation beyond the bare minimum of achieving program learning objectives through assessment activities conducted at the course level?

Handouts of the assessment results were distributed at faculty meetings and the faculty discussed the findings. The faculty discussions re-imagined how we could make methodological improvements to the type of data we can collect and analyze. Faculty discussed several options, including developing survey instruments specifically designed around PLOs, designing student artifacts more clearly linked to PLOs for the purpose of assessment, and continuing the practice of a "deep dive" on a particular PLO at each assessment cycle.

- b) How are the results of this assessment informing changes to enhance student learning in the program?

The results of this assessment have informed the number of meetings the committee plans to hold over the next year to continue discussing the results and to develop future assessment directions. In particular, for this assessment cycle, we attempted to be more prospective and less retrospective in our approach to assessment. We made a plan in advance of what PLO we would examine and what courses we would gather artifacts from. We feel this approach can enhance student learning and mastery of PLOs because our instructors will be in the mindset that PLOs should be at the background of what our specific course learning outcomes set out to achieve.

- c) If information outside of this assessment is informing programmatic change, please describe that.

N/A

- d) What support and resources (e.g. workshops, training, etc.) might you need to make these adjustments?

The committee will now plan the assessment process earlier than has been conducted in the past. In addition, the upcoming transition to Canvas may make it challenging to gather student artifacts in upcoming assessment cycles. This points to the importance of taking a proactive approach in determining our assessment approach for the next cycle.

7. Closing the Loop(s). Reflect on the program learning outcomes, how they were assessed in the previous cycle (refer to #1 of the report), and what was learned in this cycle. What action will be taken to improve student learning objectives going forward?

- a) Self-Reporting Metric (required answer): Based on the findings and/or faculty input, will there any curricular or assessment changes (such as plans for measurable improvements, or realignment of learning outcomes)?

Yes

No

- b) In reviewing the last report that assessed the PLO(s) in this assessment cycle, what changes proposed were implemented and will be measured in future assessment reports?

We plan to continue to engage in creative and innovative methods to assess PLOs. Specifically, we are interested in broadening our understanding of how students are able to demonstrate proficiency by continuing to diversify our artifacts and planning ahead of time to meet our PLO assessment goals.

- c) Have you seen a change in student learning based on other program adjustments made in the past? Please describe the adjustments made and subsequent changes in student learning.

Yes, faculty have been encouraged to connect course content with PLOs in a meaningful way to ensure comprehension across all PLOs.

Submit report to programassessment@montana.edu

Update Department program assessment report website.

Update PLO language in CIM if needed ([Map PLOs to Course LOs](#))