

**SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR
THE CRIMINOLOGY MAJOR
May 2007**

Program Goals, Outcomes, and Assessment Mechanisms

Goal 1: To impart to students the theoretical perspectives of criminology.

Outcome:

Students will be familiar with major schools of criminological theory, including, but not limited to: classical, structural, social process, and critical perspectives on crime.

Assessment Mechanisms:

We will collect a sample of completed materials from SOC 351 (5 of each exam and/or assignment per class). The instructor will do the choosing – materials should be chosen “randomly” and need not be the complete year’s product of an individual student or set of students.

A rubric will be used to evaluate whether students have achieved the learning outcomes for this goal. The sample of materials for a particular year will be evaluated and the evaluation used to identify strengths and/or weaknesses in achievement.

Goal 2: To impart to students the sociologist’s ways of knowing.

Outcomes:

- 1) Students will learn how to use and apply the basic tools of descriptive statistics (frequency distributions in tabular and graphical form, central tendency and dispersion measures).
- 2) Students will be introduced to the fundamentals of sampling, probability, and inferential statistics.
- 3) Students will learn to differentiate between independent and dependent variables and to develop testable hypotheses.
- 4) Students will develop an understanding of the logic of sociological research, including qualitative and quantitative approaches to research design, data collection, and data analysis.

Assessment Mechanisms:

Instructors in 354 will be asked to identify specific items on their exams that correspond to the first three learning outcomes developed for this goal. Exams will be collected and used to assess the students’ collective performance on the various outcome measures to identify strengths and/or weaknesses in achievement.

Questions on exams in SOC 353 that test key concepts related to research design, data collection, and data analysis will be identified each semester and the percentage of students who get the answers correct will be recorded on a yearly basis at the end of spring semester to provide longitudinal data. These concepts include independent variable, dependent variable, hypothesis, unit of analysis, sampling, conceptualization, operationalization, survey instrument, observation and interviewing, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, univariate analysis, and bivariate analysis.

Five final papers will be selected randomly each time SOC 353 is taught, typically a total of 15 papers per year. These papers will be assessed independently by two members of the undergraduate committee using one of two assessment rubrics at the end of spring semester for quality of research design, adequacy of data, and adequacy of data analysis as exemplary, acceptable, or unacceptable.

Goal 3: To impart to students a working understanding of a focused sample of the accumulated research knowledge base in criminology.

Outcomes:

Outcomes will be specific to each course. They should be stated in advance of the course being offered.

Assessment Mechanisms:

Each year we will identify two 300-level substantive classes for assessment. These will rotate from year to year. Instructors of those courses will be told ahead of time that their class has been so selected. They will be asked to develop a set of objectives for that class and to identify items on exams and/or essays that could be used to assess student achievement of those outcomes.

If the outcomes can be assessed using objective questions on exams, exams will be collected and used to assess the students' collective performance on the various outcome measures to identify strengths and/or weaknesses in achievement. If only essay exams and/or essays are available for review, a sample of 5 of each assignment will be collected by the instructor. A rubric will be created (by the instructor(s)) and used to identify strengths and/or weaknesses in students' achievement of the various objectives of the course.

Indirect Assessment Mechanisms

Indirect assessment will be carried out through the use of exit interviews conducted each Spring with a sample of Criminology majors (chosen deliberately to represent the racial and gender diversity of the department as well as the range of ability levels of students in Criminology). The questions which will be used to structure the interviews are attached.

Goal 1 Rubric

Goal 1: To Impart to Students the Theoretical Perspectives of Criminology

Students completing SOC 351 (Criminological Theory) will be expected to achieve the following outcome:

- Students will be familiar with major schools of criminological theory, including, but not limited to: classical, structural, social process, and critical perspectives on crime.

Exemplary	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Demonstrates ability to define and recognize key terms and concepts. Demonstrates comprehension of major theoretical ideas contained in readings. Demonstrates ability to compare and contrast the central ideas of major theorists listed above.	Demonstrates ability to define and recognize key terms and concepts.	Fails to comprehend the basic concepts and terms of key thinkers' ideas.

Key Terms/Concepts/Theoretical Ideas for Required Theories

Classical: Students will understand the following key elements of Classical theory:

- a. deterrence
- b. rational choice
- c. utilitarianism
- d. Cesare Beccaria
- e. Jeremy Bentham
- f. routine activities

Structural: Students will understand the following key elements of Structural theories:

- a. strain
- b. social disorganization
- c. anomie
- d. subcultures

Social Process: Students will understand the following key elements of Social Process theories:

- a. differential association
- b. social learning
- c. social control
- d. social bond
- e. techniques of neutralization

Critical: Students will understand the following elements of critical theories:

- a. conflict
- b. Marxist
- c. Feminist
- d. labeling

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT
SOC 353 Assessment Rubric – Version A

Rubric for qualitative research project

	Exemplary	Acceptable	Unacceptable
RESEARCH DESIGN	clearly defines the research question; provides rich social context and fully discusses the sociological significance of the topic; chooses method(s) highly appropriate to the research question; develops highly appropriate plan for data collection	clearly defines the research question; provides some social context and some discussion of the sociological significance of the topic; chooses method(s) appropriate to the research question; develops appropriate plan for data collection	fails to define the research question; provides little or no discussion of the topic; chooses method(s) inappropriately; fails to develop appropriate plan for data collection
GATHERS APPROPRIATE/ADEQUATE DATA	conducts adequate number of high-quality observations and interviews; focuses later observations and interviews on highly appropriate themes and concepts; takes very rich, detailed, accurate field and interview notes	conducts adequate number of good quality observations and interviews; focuses later observations and interviews on appropriate themes and concepts; takes rich, detailed, accurate field and interview notes	conducts observations and interviews inappropriately; fails to focus later observations and interviews on appropriate concepts; takes brief, sketchy field and interview notes
DATA ANALYSIS	codes data extremely well (quantity and quality), in successive stages; develops a good number of concepts highly appropriate to the research question; develops concepts by analysis and synthesis; creates good typologies or other analytic schema; develops highly plausible answers to the research question; develops testable hypothesis and/or new research questions	codes data well (quantity and quality), in successive stages; develops adequate number of concepts appropriate to the research question; develops concepts by analysis and synthesis; may create good typologies or other analytic schema; develops plausible answers to the research question; develops testable hypothesis and/or new research questions	codes data poorly (quantity and/or quality); develops few or no concepts appropriate to the research question; does not create analytic schema; fails to develop plausible answers to the research question; fails to develop testable hypothesis and/or new research questions

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT
SOC 353 Assessment Rubric – Version B

Objective:	Exemplary	Acceptable	Unacceptable
1. RESEARCH DESIGN	clearly defines the research question; provides rich social context and fully discusses the sociological significance of the topic; clearly states testable hypotheses, which are adequately developed through logical reasoning and relevant literature review	clearly defines the research question; provides some social context and some discussion of sociological significance of the topic; clearly states testable hypotheses, which are not adequately developed;	fails to define the research question; does not know how to develop testable hypotheses;
2. APPROPRIATE/ADEQUATE DATA	sources/data allow complete assessment of the hypotheses; specifically states how variables are defined; reports the original attributes of each variable, and states clearly how variables are recoded, if any	sources/data allow complete assessment of the hypotheses; states how variables are defined; reports the attributes of each variable; but the overall description is incomplete	data source is not suitable to address hypotheses; variables are not clearly defined;
3. DATA ANALYSIS	able to correctly generate univariate and bivariate tables; able to interpret the results correctly; able to link empirical results with developed hypotheses; draws accurate conclusions; discusses the social significance of the findings and limitations of the study	able to correctly generate univariate and bivariate tables; able to interpret the results correctly; able to draw generally accurate conclusions; fails to adequately discuss the social significance of the findings	unable to correctly generate univariate and bivariate tables or to interpret the results correctly; conclusions are not based on empirical analysis

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Proposed questions for exit interviews with undergraduate students:

1. Looking back to when you first started thinking seriously about going to college, for example during high school, did you have an intended major or area of study? Probe if yes: what was it?
2. Why did you decide to become a Criminology major?
3. What were the most surprising things you learned as a Criminology major?
4. What did you find most helpful about the program?
5. What did you find least helpful about the program?
6. What did you like best about the Criminology major?
7. What did you like least about the Criminology major?
8. What changes would you suggest for the program? Are there things missing that could be added?
9. What do you think are the benefits of having majored in Criminology?
10. What do you plan to do with your Criminology degree?