

Annual Assessment Report 2016

This form is intended to facilitate reporting program outcomes assessment to accrediting agencies, Board of Trustees, Strategic Planning Committee, and other internal or external audiences.

The department mission statement, PLO's, curricular map and multi-year action plan should to be posted on the departmental website.

Department: Sociology and Anthropology

Date: Sept 15, 2016

Department Chair: Felicia Song

I. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

Program Learning Outcome	Competence In Core Knowledge
Who is in Charge	Entire Dept
<u>Direct Assessment Methods</u>	<p>SOC 001 Final Papers from Sarah Jirek’s Spring 2016 section were assessed using a scoring rubric on competence on core knowledge developed this year. The paper assignment asked students to define various dimensions of social identity and apply them to their own lives. Each paper was scored on a scale from Excellent (score=4) to Poor (score=1) in two areas: knowledge and application. Specifically, student capacity to (1) define and (2) apply core knowledge about social identities (i.e., gender, sexuality, race, class, ability) were assessed. From a section of 25 students, Dr. Jirek purposively sampled 5 “low,” 5 “middle,” and 5 “high”-achieving students so that the sample would represent the full range of students in the class. The resulting 15 papers were divided evenly among the three faculty so that each paper was reviewed by two separate individuals and each person reviewed a comparable range of low-to-high papers.</p> <p><i>Rationale for Assessment Method:</i> After considering alternative models of assessment (comparing assignment/exam responses across two Intro classes; assessing a pre- and post-assignment within one class; comparing assignment/exam responses from lower-level and upper-level classes), we decided that the comparison models simply involved too many confounding variables that would make the desired comparisons meaningless. We acknowledged that, even though it would be ideal to have comparative data that could evaluate student progress in their core knowledge, an adequate assessment would require more advanced planning. We decided that there was great benefit in using this assessment to help set a “beginner” benchmark and serve the purpose of motivating a desired discussion about the goals of the Introduction of Sociology course.</p>

<u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u>	N/A
Major Findings	<p>After comparing all of the average grades in knowledge and application, we observed that Intro students have generally succeeded in gaining clarity about the social hierarchy of who is oppressed/privileged and therefore, understand that societies are socially stratified. However, they are less able to demonstrate a solid understanding of how the social structures function to work on their lives. For many, it is the first time they are encountering the realities of social inequality and their individual social location, so the resulting scores were regarded as being quite good and reflecting an important first step in students’ recognition, acknowledgement, and understanding of social inequality.</p> <p>Averaging all of the papers’ scores, the average for competence in Knowledge was 2.563 (where 4=excellent and 1=poor) and Application was 2.597. Given that the sampled papers included a range from high to low, these total averages are not very meaningful. However, it is more helpful to see that of the “High-achieving” students, the average score for Knowledge was 3.5 and Application was 3.53. Of the “Low-achieving” students, the average score for Knowledge was 1.7 and Application was 1.6. The “middle-achieving” students had an average of 2.44 for Knowledge and 2.66 for Application. This secondary analysis shows that the “high-achieving” students are exhibiting a well-developed to masterful understanding of both knowledge and application of concepts, while the “low-achieving” students are demonstrating a very weak or under-developed understanding of both knowledge and application. Interestingly, the “middle-achieving” students show a slightly greater capacity to apply concepts than articulate and explain concepts. (See appendix for details.)</p> <p>For some, this assignment and course may function as motivating their “eureka moment.” In that light, these papers show good learning. We can see benefit to making at least one of the primary goals of this course to be to invite/facilitate an environment where that can happen. Learning / recognizing some basic sociological facts (e.g., that social inequality is real, that the U.S. is not actually a level playing field, etc.) is an important first-level step in learning (which all, or nearly all, students reached). The next step, of being able to see how it plays out in their lives (and, likely, acknowledging the role that privilege has played in their lives) is the next step – a harder step – and one that a good number of students did satisfactorily.</p> <p>One final note about the data: because two reviewers evaluated each paper, we did compare the scores to evaluate how close the scores were between reviewers. Of the 30 pairs of scores, only 5 pairs exceeded 1 point in difference. These pairs were identified and discussed during our debriefing meeting.</p>

Closing the Loop Activities

- 1) Change the existing PLO to separate the two components: knowledge + application. The PLO title and its description seem to cover different objectives: 1) *learning core sociological / anthropological / social work knowledge*, and 2) *applying that knowledge*. Although most students who were able to accurately define the concepts were also comparably able to apply the concepts, the evaluation process made it clear that these are two different tasks that warrants separation into two distinct PLOs: Competence in Core Knowledge; Application of Core Knowledge.
- 2) In the planning stages for this assessment, one recommendation for future assessments was to uniformly integrate a question into the beginning and end of students' coursework, in order to better assess how much they learned throughout their years in the program: "If you had the opportunity to explain sociology to a stranger, what three key concepts/terms would you pick and how would you talk about them?" Further discussion about the use of this question (or a question like this) and when/how it would be assigned (as a paper/exam question, at the end of Intro or Senior Seminar or anytime in between) still needs to be had.
- 3) If the goal for SOC001 is for students to comprehend the existence of a social hierarchy, the department needs to identify what the next step is for 2nd tier (and subsequent) courses in the scaffolding, so that we can determine levels of progress.
- 4) Continued conversations about SOC001 and SOC dept/major identity: the role of sociology in the college, what should non-majors know (including pre-med MCAT students, Understanding Society GE students); the role that first-tier Intro classes play in recruitment of majors.

Discussion

This assessment process helped the department to have the conversation we wanted to have about our goals for the Introduction to Sociology course. As this was the first year when all faculty were teaching the Introduction course, it presented a perfect opportunity to establish what we hope we can achieve in a course that serves the college as it fulfills the Understanding Society GE, while also functioning to define the discipline's identity and inviting future majors into our department. It was agreed that one of our goals for SOC001 may be to help students gain the capacity to see their own lives as being shaped by external and social forces.

It was also clear that we want our students to understand what the Social Construction of society means: that it does *not* mean that norms of social hierarchies are conjured out of thin air, conspired and planned by minority/majority groups, or that norms are deterministic in their effects. Rather than having a deterministic view of social identities (i.e., if I was Black, I would certainly experience disadvantage), students begin to grasp how their identities are set within social contexts of power that have valances which reward/punish particular features of their identities.

We discussed how we could establish future benchmarks: We could separate out the scores for the knowledge of social identities and the knowledge of how power works (see Rubric in Appendix for details), and evaluate if there are differences between the two sets of scores that need improvement. In all, we agreed regarding the significance of uniformly establishing a certain degree of understanding of how social identities and social structures *work* in the Introduction to Sociology course. Since the assignment was at the Intro level, we are now better informed to discuss what the next levels of comprehension and application should be for students.

One area of vigorous discussion involved variance in viewing an introduction course as needing to focus on students learning sociological facts, how social structures work, or what it means to have a sociological imagination (i.e., a way of recognizing the structures in the world). For example: Do we want students to be able to identify and explain a list of social identities (i.e., breadth)? Are we also expecting them to be able to really articulate how these categories come about and how “the structure works” (i.e., depth)? We anticipate continued meaningful discussion among faculty as we move forward. We also had a lively discussion about whether the discipline of sociology’s content and assumptions are inherently “political” and therefore can be prematurely dismissed by some students while it grants others voice and vocabulary to express what they’ve observed or experienced. Realizing the different ways in which we, the faculty, approach the discipline also helped us recognize the various dimensions that we can better present to our students. We also are more aware of how these varied dimensions might be brought into thinking strategically about our department identity, major, and curriculum.

Finally, we discussed how, in order to further enhance the utility and meaningfulness of our annual assessments, we would like to work on more advanced planning and steady discussion throughout the academic year. With the six-year report coming up, we will certainly be motivated to begin these adjustments.

II. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome	Research and Methods Competence
Who is in Charge	Entire dept
Major Findings	Last year, the evaluation of senior research papers raised many questions about the adequacy of the existing SOC106/107 research sequence, and the senior capstone course SOC/AN195.
Closing the Loop Activities	As per the recommendations from last year’s assessment, action was taken to develop new curricular structures that would strengthen the coursework that develops student understanding of scholarly conventions in research methodology. This year, the research sequence of SOC106/107 was decoupled and altered into two new self-standing courses: SOC108 Quantitative

	<p>Research Methods and SOC109 Qualitative Research Methods. These courses have been approved (with SOC108 certified with Quantitative & Analytic Reasoning GE) and will be offered for the first time in AY2016-2017. These courses are recommended for sophomore year, or, at the latest, junior year.</p> <p>Also, the former Senior Capstone Experience in SOC/AN195 has been altered from a 4-credit experience to a 6-credit experience: 2-credit SOC/AN195 Senior Seminar which focuses on faith-integration and professionalization; and 4-credit SOC/AN197 Senior Research Capstone, which focuses exclusively on the development and completion of an independent research project. This expansion gives sufficient course space for students to refine and demonstrate mastery of research methods. This new 6-credit Senior capstone experience will be offered in AY2016-2017.</p> <p>While these changes were taking place, the senior class of 2016's requirement in SOC/AN195 included public participation of their research in the Westmont Research Symposium. Ten of the eleven students succeeded in presenting their work at this event.</p>
Discussion	We are excited by the changes we have made with regard to our research methods and capstone courses and look forward to seeing how those changes benefit our students beginning in AY2016-2017.

III. Other assessment or key questions-related projects (optional)

Project	Curricular Map
Who is in Charge	Entire department
Major Findings	Currently, the department's courses lack adequate scaffolding of lower- and upper-division courses, since only the two Introductory courses and Social Problems are considered lower-division, and the rest of the curriculum is considered upper-division.
Action	After reviewing how other Westmont departments scaffold their course offerings, a preliminary draft of lower and upper-division courses was discussed. This included identifying when each class should ideally be taken in a student's major experience. These decisions were based upon the degree of abstract and critical thinking required in the course content, and the level of maturity needed to engage with the course topic itself.
Discussion	

Project	SOC 192 Extra-curricular Activities
Who is in Charge	Felicia
Major Findings	Following up on last year's student survey and continued concerns about the burdensome impact of SOC 192, it was decided that SOC192 needed to be phased out because the time and energies required for both students and faculty supervision were not being met with sufficient gains in encouraging students to engage their worlds in a sociologically/anthropologically informed way.
Action	SOC192 has been removed as a requirement and students with remaining hours will have them credited towards their new 2-credit SOC195 Senior Seminar requirements of faith-integration and professionalization. A new professionalization workshop series began this past Spring featuring a faculty panel on the graduate school experience and a workshop on leveraging a sociology degree for future employment and career opportunities.
Discussion	

Project	Revision of Major Requirements
Who is in Charge	Entire department
Major Findings	Currently, it is common for students to struggle to meet the very specific requirements of the three tracks AND/OR their interests straddle more than one track, thereby putting into question the mutually exclusive tendencies of the "track"-oriented nature of the major. As a result, course substitutions are frequently requested and granted.
Action	Over the course of this year, the department has been deliberating over the need to restructure the major requirements to "open" up the structure of the curriculum to free up student access to more electives and have the major be characterized primarily by core courses and a menu of electives. The Human Services emphasis/concentration will remain for professional graduate school purposes; discussion will continue about how to structure the more stringent requirements of this emphasis. We will also continue to have ongoing discussion about adapting and restructuring the cross-cultural track and the existing Anthropology Major template. This conversation will benefit from the contributions of our new anthropologist once she has arrived and settles into the department.
Discussion	

IV. Appendices

- A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data: **SOC001 Final Assignment Prompt**
- B. Rubrics used to evaluate the data: **SOC 001 Scoring Rubric for Competence in Core Knowledge**
- C. Relevant assessment-related documents/samples (optional) **Fifteen SOC001 papers**