

# Annual Assessment Report 2023

Department: Sociology and Anthropology

Academic Year: 2022-2023

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Department Chair: Sarah L. Jirek

## I. Response to the previous year PRC's recommendations

<p><b>Item:</b> The PRC suggests that with future assessments of student writing samples, faculty norm and discuss interpretations before scoring all papers.</p>	<p><b>Response:</b> Before our PLO assessment this year, we reviewed the previously established rubric and discussed its various categories and overall efficacy. We decided to remove the “ethical considerations” category and add a “data analysis” category in order to better reflect what we expect in our Senior Research Capstone projects. Also, instead of purposively sampling from the 18 paper submissions to reflect the work of 3 under-achieving, 4 mid-level achieving, and 3 high-achieving students (i.e., our strategy in our 2015 Research Methods assessment), we decided that it was more important to make sure that there was an equal distribution of each type of research method employed in the projects (i.e., content analysis, surveys, and interviews) in order to make more informed comparisons.</p>
<p><b>Item:</b> We recommend that future data charts be reviewed for greater readability.</p>	<p><b>Response:</b> Thank you for the feedback. We will certainly double-check our data charts in this and future assessments to ensure their ease of readability!</p>
<p><b>Item:</b> We look forward to learning about your October 2022 departmental discussion and next steps for how you will integrate the teaching of oral communication into your curriculum.</p>	<p><b>Response:</b> As a follow-up to our 2021 Oral Communication Assessment findings, we engaged in a robust departmental discussion regarding: a) where we are currently teaching the various components of oral communication skills in our curriculum; b) the various “building blocks” of oral communication that we can teach and incorporate into a variety of courses (e.g., participating in class discussions, leading a class discussion, crafting empirically-based oral arguments, in-class individual or group presentations); and c) how to add these “building blocks” into additional courses to help students develop oral communication skills. One of our goals is to ensure that every Sociology / Anthropology major has the opportunity to give (and receive feedback on) an in-class presentation prior to the more advanced</p>

	presentation required in Senior Research Capstone (SOC 197). We concluded that 1-2 additional SOC/AN courses need to include a class presentation component in order to accomplish this goal. We furthermore agreed that our two-course methods sequence (SOC 108 and SOC 109) is not the best place for this, due to the already substantial demands on students in these courses.
<b>Notes:</b>	

**II A. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment**

*If your department participated in the ILO assessment you may use this section to report on your student learning in relation to the assessed ILO. The assessment data can be requested from the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness.*

<b>Program Learning Outcome</b>	Research and Methods Competence: “Students will apply qualitative and quantitative methods according to the disciplinary standards of sociology, anthropology, or social work.”
<b>Who is in Charge /Involved?</b>	The entire department participated.
<b><u>Direct Assessment Methods</u></b>	<p>Our Senior Research Capstone (SOC/AN 197) course requires that each SOC/AN major completes an original research project (either individually or with a partner). Papers were assessed regarding their research and methods competence using a slightly-revised version of a scoring rubric our department developed six years ago during the previous Research Methods PLO assessment (AY 2014-2015). As mentioned previously, prior to our PLO assessment this year, we reviewed the previously established rubric and discussed its various categories and overall efficacy. We decided to remove the “ethical considerations” category and add a “data analysis” category in order to better reflect what we expect in our Senior Research Capstone projects.</p> <p>Methods: The SOC/AN 197 (Senior Research Capstone) seniors’ final research papers were assessed via the revised rubric. A copy of the rubric is included in the Appendices. We assessed five elements of research and methods competence: method choice, data collection instrument, sampling technique, data collection process, and data analysis. Each element was scored on a 5-point scale: excellent (score = 4), good (score = 3), acceptable (score = 2), poor (score = 1), and missing (score = 0). We decided that it was important that our sample included roughly the same number of papers employing each of the three</p>

	<p>research methods used by our students (i.e., content analysis, surveys, and interviews). To this end, the department chair used a random number generator to list the 16 term projects in a randomized order. She then used that list to select the first three projects that used content analysis, interviews, and surveys, and then also included the next project on the list, for a total of 10 sampled research papers. Each of the four department members was assigned five papers each (including at least one project from each type of method), such that all 10 papers in the sample were read and scored by two evaluators.</p> <p>All data were inputted into an Excel spreadsheet and summary statistics of means and standard deviations were calculated for the four categories in the rubric. Both reviewers' scores for each element of each paper is noted. The total points per paper were tallied, and the difference between the two evaluators' scores is noted. During a departmental assessment meeting in May 2023, we discussed the three instances with the most divergent scores (i.e., Paper #4's method choice, Paper #7's data analysis, and Paper #8's sampling technique), as well as the paper (i.e., Paper #9) with the greatest total difference in evaluators' scores. The Scoring Summary table is included in the Appendices.</p>
<p><u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u></p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Major Findings</b></p>	<p>The total possible score per paper was 20 (i.e., 5 elements x 4 points). Presentation scores ranged from 7.5 to 20, with a mean of 15.13 (SD = 3.33). In other words, the average "grade" was 75.7% (i.e., 15.13/20). However, Paper #6 was an outlier with much lower than average scores across the rubric. Without Paper #6, the mean was 15.94, which results in an average "grade" of 79.7%. Category / element means ranged from 2.88 to 3.2, with the highest scores in data collection instrument (M = 3.2, SD = 0.8) and data analysis (M = 3.1, SD = 0.74), and the lowest scores in sampling technique (M = 2.88, SD = 0.97) and data collection processes (M = 2.93, SD = 0.8).</p>
<p><b>Closing the Loop Activities</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The department needs to engage in additional discussion regarding if we should revise the Research Methods Competence rubric. Specifically, (a) Should we clarify the criteria in the subheadings of each category to better match what students are asked to do in the paper prompt (e.g., how much do students need to articulate their rationale regarding method choice, sampling technique, etc?) and (b) Should we add a literature review category / element to the rubric? Even though a literature review does not directly address data, it is part of the wider research endeavor and is a required part of an original research project.</li> <li>2) Sarah served as the IRB Chair this past year and observed that many Psychology majors had their IRB proposals for their senior research capstone projects submitted (or even approved) by the end of the Fall semester. This timing provides students with more time to collect and analyze data and creates a more reasonable pace for the Spring</li> </ol>

semester. Should we potentially do something similar? As a first step, perhaps we should talk with the Psychology faculty teaching their Capstone course to learn from them?

- 3) It would be good to have a departmental conversation about how to better reinforce research methods in upper-division courses. Perhaps we could build in more intentional discussion of methods? One possibility is that we could create short assignments that ask students to identify the various rationales/method choices of a reading they are assigned. We want to continue to brainstorm on this topic.
- 4) The department also needs to engage in additional discussion regarding what we can do to better prepare students to conduct content analysis and a literature review—two areas that tend to get undertaught in our existing research methods courses due to a lack of time.

### **Collaboration and Communication**

In May 2023, we met as a department for approximately two hours to discuss a variety of topics related to this assessment. Overall, the department was fairly satisfied with the assessment results—particularly when we compared the results with those from 2015—although we can certainly see areas for improvement. It was noted that the highest scoring categories were data collection instrument and data analysis, and we observed that this appropriately reflects the SOC 197 instructors' and department's priorities (in terms of the various elements / categories). Among the strongest papers, we were impressed by the degree of sophistication demonstrated in data analysis—whether it be working with quantitative or qualitative data. We were also pleased regarding our students' abilities to conduct research on topics that are not only of interest to them, but are also of profound social and pragmatic institutional significance. In fact, a few of our graduating seniors took steps to share their research with key institutional stakeholders, such as the Campus Pastor's Office and the Center for Academic Success.

Given this year's decision to sample student papers across all three research methods (i.e., content analysis, surveys, and interviews), we were satisfied with most students' ability to properly implement their research method. We raised questions among ourselves regarding our tendencies to underteach how to conduct content analysis and complete a literature review. Please see Closing the Loop Activities for more details.

We also discussed discrepancies in the scoring process. First, it was noted that our scoring rubric may not have been fully aligned with the assignment prompt students received. For example, in the assignment prompt, not much was said about emphasizing their rationale for method choice or sampling technique. As a result, students may not have dedicated much energy to articulating those rationales. Additionally, we have observed that students often select a research method out of personal preference or for pragmatic reasons pertaining to their life circumstances, rather than choose their method based upon the nature of the research question (which is the

proper approach). Second, some students located their discussion of methodological limitations in other parts of the paper (i.e., not in the methods or data analysis sections), and this occasionally led to scoring discrepancies among evaluators.

During our 2015 assessment of this PLO, students scored high on the data collection instrument as well. Similarly, in both 2015 and 2023, the lowest scores occurred with regard to the sampling technique. Subsequent departmental discussion yielded observations about a gap between what some students may conceptually understand about sampling and what they actually implement in their own data collection process. Sometimes, students do not adequately implement the sampling method that they describe in their papers. A modification to the rubric was suggested to address this: we may retain the existing 3<sup>rd</sup> element (which establishes the sampling rationale) and add an additional component to this element (i.e., “did the student *adequately implement* the sampling method that was best suited for the research question?”).

Other discussion points included continued questions about the optimal timing of our research methods courses (SOC 108 and SOC 109) for students. It was noted that the frustrating lack of qualitative data analysis software available in campus computer labs creates a pragmatic incentive for students to wait to take Qualitative Research Methods (SOC 109) until the Fall before Senior Research Capstone in order to keep using the year-long student license for NVivo. We believe that it is better for students to become familiar with research methods earlier in the major (e.g., during sophomore or junior year) in order to adequately understand the discipline, but qualitative software would need to be available in campus computer labs to make this financially feasible for all of our majors. We also discussed if there are ways to increase the amount of time that our seniors have to conduct their final research projects (see Closing the Loop Activities). We then had a conversation about how research methods could be better reinforced in our upper-division courses. One challenge with this is that many of our upper-division courses are popular with non-majors; nonetheless, we discussed some practical ideas to address this (see Closing the Loop Activities).

Finally, one of the most gratifying aspects of our discussion regarding this PLO assessment was the realization that we had substantially improved in the total mean score when compared to the 2015 assessment of research method competence. In 2015, the total mean was 13.08; this year, the total mean was 15.13. We also were pleased to realize that the substantial curricular changes that we have made since 2015 likely contributed to this substantial improvement in student learning. Specifically:

- In 2015, students were still taking the SOC 106/107 sequence (formerly, Intro to Research Methods / Data Analysis). For several years now, students have been taking the SOC 108/109 sequence (Quantitative Research Methods / Qualitative Research Methods). We believe that this shift has clearly increased students’ ability to conduct original research projects.
- In 2015, students were still conducting their research capstone projects within the SOC 195 Senior Seminar— a 4-credit course that we have taken apart and re-established as two separate courses: our current SOC 195 Senior Seminar (which focuses on faith / learning and post-graduate life) and SOC 197 Senior Research Capstone (solely focused on research). This reconfiguration is far

more realistic with regard to student expectations, and it has also contributed to students' ability to conduct higher-quality research projects in their Senior Research Capstone course.

In summary, this assessment was very useful in giving our department the opportunity to examine and discuss our successes, areas for improvement, and strategies to address various research methods competence-related questions.

or/and

### II B. Key Questions

<b>Key Question</b>	N/A—We focused our time and energy on our assessment of the Research Methods Competence PLO this year and on our tenure-track Anthropology search.
<b>Who is in Charge/Involved?</b>	
<b><u>Direct Assessment Methods</u></b>	
<b><u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u></b>	
<b>Major Findings</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>Collaboration and Communication</b>	

### III. Follow-ups

<b>Program Learning Outcome or Key Question</b>	None at this time.
<b>Who was involved in implementation?</b>	

What was decided or addressed?	
How were the recommendations implemented?	
<b>Collaboration and Communication</b>	

**IV. Other assessment or Key Questions related projects**

<b>Project</b>	Previously, the PRC had requested a progress report on the department’s efforts to check and update the language in all GE courses’ syllabi for compliance with certification requirements (as a follow-up to our last 6-year review).
<b>Who is in Charge /Involved?</b>	Each department member evaluated their own GE course syllabi.
<b>Major Findings</b>	Our GE course syllabi were in compliance with certification requirements, although a couple of syllabi needed to have a sentence or two added regarding the student learning outcome associated with the particular GE.
<b>Action</b>	Faculty reviewed their syllabi and made any necessary additions / revisions.
<b>Collaboration and Communication</b>	
<b>Project</b>	Curriculum revision
<b>Who is in Charge /Involved?</b>	The entire department worked on this.
<b>Major Findings</b>	
<b>Action</b>	Our comprehensive Sociology major curriculum revisions were approved in Spring 2022, and they are reflected in the updated academic catalogue for AY 2022-2023. We also made the appropriate updates to our department’s website.
<b>Collaboration and Communication</b>	

We are excited about the completion of our multi-year curriculum revision—which includes new major requirements, a new internship requirement, and a new course in the Human Services track. We continue to think about how to sustain the Sociology Cross-Cultural track and pursue adequate staffing for this track, particularly in light of our unsuccessful Medical Anthropology tenure-track search during AY 2022-23.

**V. Adjustments to the Multi-year Assessment Plan (optional)**

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timing
Confirming Assessment Timetable	We are not requesting an adjustment, but simply wish to confirm that this is the timetable that we are working with. We hope that we are in sync with the expectations of the PRC.	<b>2023-2024: Seven Year Review</b> 2024-2025: External Reviewer & Action Plan 2025-2026: Core Knowledge Competence 2026-2027: Core Knowledge Application 2027-2028: Oral & Written Communication 2028-2029: Integration of Faith & Learning 2029-2030: Research & Methods Competence <b>2030-2031: Seven Year Review</b>

**VI. Appendices**

- A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data: **SOC/AN 197 Research Capstone Paper Prompt**
- B. Rubrics used to evaluate the data: **Scoring Rubric for Competence in Research Methods PLO**
- C. Relevant assessment-related documents (optional): **Table of Scores and Summary Statistics**

## APPENDIX A

### SOC/AN 197: SENIOR RESEARCH CAPSTONE FINAL PAPER PROMPT

The final paper is expected to conform to the formats and rules set forth in the *American Sociological Review* or *American Anthropologist*. It should be approximately 18-22 pages (22-26 pages team project) – *not* counting tables/charts, references, or appendices – and contain the following sections:

#### ***Abstract***

A paragraph that summarizes the significance of your research, introduces your audience briefly to the data and method, and presents the major findings.

#### ***Introduction (1-2 pages)***

This section situates your research project briefly and generally in a broader context and maps out the structure of the paper. Most importantly, you must clearly explain your research questions, state your argument, and describe how you intend to support that argument. In addition, you can pique your reader's interest by describing the significance of your topic.

#### ***Literature Review (4-5 pages, 7-8 pages team project)***

The purpose of your review is to justify the significance of the question, familiarize yourself with the field, and ultimately to enter into the scholarly conversation. Drawing on a **minimum of 20 sources (30 sources team project)** from the scholarly literature, you need to explain what other peer-reviewed sources have found and how your argument fits into the literature. What have scholars argued about your topic? How does your research build on, correct, or modify this literature? What makes your research significant? Please note that a literature review is NOT an annotated bibliography. Instead, the literature review should stand as a self-contained mini-essay about the questions scholars have asked, their findings, and/or the questions that have not been addressed.

#### ***Data and Methods (2-3 pages)***

This section describes the sample and explains how you conducted your research. You should describe the contours of who is in your sample what population they are intended to represent. Explain your choice of research methods (interview research, survey research, content analysis, etc.). Why did you select the methods? What, specifically, did the research process entail? Sample/sampling techniques? Data collection methods? Any ethical issues you needed to consider in your research? Are there any limitations to your methods that the reader should be aware of when evaluating your findings and discussions?

#### ***Findings (4-6 pages, 6-7 pages team project)***

In this portion of the paper, you present, interpret and analyze your qualitative and/or quantitative data and summarize your results. Use tables or charts only as needed, and avoid simply printing our results from SPSS. Depending on your research method, this section might contain your statistical analysis (i.e., tables, charts, etc.) or selected quotes or anecdotes from your field experience.

#### ***Discussion (3-5 pages)***

This section should answer the questions posed at the beginning of your paper. You might also discuss whether your hypothesis was supported or not, and what you learned about your topic as a result of your empirical work. How do your findings relate to the findings previously presented in the paper? Which theoretical approach, or combination of approaches, best explains the findings you present here, and why? You should also discuss the implication of your research. What do your findings suggest about our understanding of

this social phenomenon? Does your research have any policy implications? What research questions remain?

***Conclusion (1-2 pages, 2-3 pages team project)***

You should end by restating your major findings and connecting them to the discussions you presented in your introduction and literature review.

***References (American Sociological Review or American Anthropology Style)***

***Appendices (e.g., survey questionnaire, interview questions, or observational guidelines, statement of shared authorship for team projects)***

## PROJECT OVERVIEWS

### Interview Project

- 15-20 interviews (20-25 interviews, team projects)
- Qualitative analysis: coding transcripts for themes
- Fun if you are people-person, but time-intensive data-collection process
- Need to apply for IRB review or exemption
- Need to transcribe at least 40% of your interviews
- Analysis using coding—looks easy, but often hard to do well

### Survey Project

- 75-100 responses
- Quantitative method: run statistics and do analysis
- Time-intensive making instrument—needs to be precise, ordered well
- Need to apply for IRB review or exemption
- Easy to collect and analyze data online
- Can run extra analyses on SPSS

### Content Analysis Project

- 100 news articles or images (130 team projects)
- 30 shows (40 shows team project, some watched together, some independent)
- 20 websites (30 for team project)
- Quantitative method: frequencies of codes; qualitative method: coding for themes
- Need to be very precise and systematic about sampling for high-quality results
- Easy to control data collection and analysis: it's your own time
- No need for IRB review
- Need high-quality coding scheme for analysis—looks easy, but hard to do well

## Appendix B

### SOC/AN 197: Scoring Rubric for Competence in Research Methods May 2023

Title of Paper: _____ Evaluating Professor: _____	4 - Excellent 3- Good 2- Acceptable 1 - Poor 0-Missing N/A	COMMENTS
<b>Method Choice:</b> Student makes a good choice of method given research question. Student does a good job articulating the rationale for this choice of method. Student adequately articulates limitations of method choice.		
<b>Data Collection Instrument:</b> Student's data collection instrument can reasonably answer the research question. Instrument quality is strong (e.g., questions make sense, coding scheme is clear).		
<b>Sampling Technique:</b> Student's sampling method makes sense given the research question. Student articulates rationale for choice of sample.		
<b>Data collection:</b> Student adequately describes/summarizes steps taken to collect data.		
<b>Data Analysis:</b> Student provides robust presentation, interpretation, and analysis of data that was collected.		
<b>Overall Research Design Score:</b>		

