SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY.

# Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

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| Program: Sociology | Department: Sociology and Anthropology |
| Degree or Certificate Level: BA | College/School: Arts and Sciences |
| Date (Month/Year): June/2021 | Primary Assessment Contact: Joel Jennings |
| In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2020-2021 | |
| In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2016 | |

## 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

Goal #2: Sociology majors will understand the role of theory in social analysis.

Learning Outcomes:

a) describe the role of theory in building sociological knowledge
b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations; or, identify assumptions in analyses and arguments
c) apply theories to examples or situations

## 2. Assessment Methods: Student Artifacts

Which student artifacts were used to determine if students achieved this outcome? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

We analyzed a randomly selected sample of six Soc 3150: Theory of Social Science papers. The papers were written as a partial requirement for the completion of the foundational course requirement for sociology theory. These papers were the culmination of a cumulative writing assignment during the spring 2021 semester for Soc 3150. This course was taught online due in part to Covid-19 protocols.

Madrid artifacts were not included. This course was not offered off campus.

We were once again able to undertake focus groups with graduating seniors this year to explore their experience and facility with sociology theory. This mode of indirect data gathering was conducted by Dr. Richard Colignon and Dr. Joel Jennings in a Zoom focus group following the completion of the semester. It is worth noting that the students' whose artifacts are assessed in this report *were generally not* the students who participated in the focus groups.

## 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the student artifacts, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

Direct Methods:

1) During June 2021, a committee (Dr. Scott Harris and Dr. Liz Chiarello) evaluated a randomly selected sample (using a random number generator) of Soc 3150: Theory of Social Science papers (6 of 8) using a rubric that focused on the three learning objectives. (see Appendices 1 and 2). One point of note is that the eight selected papers were from a sample of students that fully completed a cumulative semester project. Excluding students who did not complete the project may represent a sample bias.

Indirect Methods:

1) We also gathered data from graduating seniors using focus groups that explored their experiences with theory in the Sociology major. The focus group questions specifically interrogated the student's understanding of and comfort with the role of theory in social analysis (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4).

## 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcomes? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

The outcomes of the direct measures indicated that students were successfully accomplishing the learning objectives set forth by the department. On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the most desirable score, students scored consistently well.

a) (5+5+5+5+5+5+4+4+4+4+4+4)=54/12=4.5
b) (5+5+5+5+5+5+5+5+4+5+4+5)=58/12=4.83
c) (5+5+5+5+5+5+5+5+4+5+4+5)=58/12=4.83

The quantitative results as reported from the Goal #2 rubrics indicate a significant degree of success in achieving the departmental aims. Students were particularly successful completing learning objectives 'b' and 'c', while there was some variation in learning objective 'a'. Overall, the qualitative and quantitative feedback from the reviewers indicated that students were achieving the aim of understanding the role of theory in social analysis.

The indirect findings from the focus groups also indicated that students were successfully able to understand the role of theory in social analysis. We had 11 students complete the focus group process, and students generally indicated that their coursework had prepared them to engage analytically with social theory. Specific classes, including Dr. Harris's theory course (used for collection of artifacts), Dr. Monti's qualitative methods, and Dr. O'Neill's theory course were specifically mentioned. Students noted that these courses, along with the Sociological Capstone, required applying theory to 'real world' contexts. Overall, students indicated that they had the opportunity to engage with and develop an understanding of the role of theory in social analysis at multiple points in their undergraduate experience.

## 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

Overall, the consistency of the quantitative feedback, coupled with the insights offered by students in their discussions during the indirect qualitative methods, suggest that the department is achieving its aims in terms of encouraging students to develop a strong understanding of the role of theory in social analysis. I would suggest that this highlights two insights. First, at the level of meta-analysis, we had a much higher degree of inter-rater reliability on the quantitative scores this year. This suggests that our metrics are indeed measuring what we are seeking to measure. Second, the high quantitative scores and positive indirect feedback suggests that students are encountering theory at multiple points in their coursework, and are becoming more comfortable with theory than they were the first time we completed the cycle. This would suggest that we have made progress as a department in terms of Goal #2. For comparison purposes, the quantitative results in 2017 were 3.75/3.86/3.88. This suggests a substantial improvement in the quantitative scores. Likewise, the qualitative feedback indicates a much higher level of comfort this year than in the 2017 cycle. All of this suggests that substantial improvements have been made in the delivery of sociological theory over the past four years.

## 6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

**A.** When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

Sociology has now moved into the second year of our second full assessment cycle. Every fall semester the sociology faculty use a division meeting to review the previous year's findings and consider any structural adjustments that need to be made to the program based on our findings. This year this data will be used to examine the alignment between Goal #2 and associated learning objectives and the larger aims of the sociology program as it relates to teaching theory.

**B.** How specifically have you decided to use findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies | • Course content<br>• Teaching techniques<br>• Improvements in technology<br>• Prerequisites | • Course sequence<br>• New courses<br>• Deletion of courses<br>• Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings |
| Changes to the Assessment Plan | • Student learning outcomes<br>• Student artifacts collected<br>• Evaluation process | • Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)<br>• Data collection methods<br>• Frequency of data collection |

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of the findings.

We use our fall division meeting to assess the quality of our assessment protocol and to evaluate the alignment of the protocol with our aims for teaching theory. Based on our findings, as well as feedback from CAS, we then appoint a subcommittee to adjust the Goal and learning objectives as needed. If there is a need to adjust the content of the Soc 3150: Theory of Social Science course, we will address that as a division in the fall and integrate that information into future course content.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

N/A

## 7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

**A.** What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

Based on feedback received on Goal #1 last year, the Sociology faculty assigned a subcommittee to rework the Assessment Goal #1 in fall of 2020. We will implement these changes in the next cycle of assessment.

**B.** How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

These changes proposed by the committee were reviewed and approved by the Undergraduate Director and will be implemented in the next full cycle of evaluation.

**C.** What were the findings of the assessment?

Not applicable at this time.

**D.** How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

We will review the efficacy of our assessment protocol following each year of assessment. Necessary changes will be implemented by a sub-committee and reviewed by the Undergraduate Director and division faculty. These changes will be assessed during the next evaluation cycle for goodness of fit and efficacy.

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.**

*Rubric for Assessing Sociology Goal #2*

*Paper # _____ Last Name_____*

Goal #2: Sociology majors will understand the role of theory in social analysis.

a) Does the student describe the role of theory in building sociological knowledge

| *Poor* | | *Adequate* | | *Excellent* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |

*Comments:*

*b) Does the student* compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations; or, identify assumptions in analyses and arguments

| *Poor* | | *Adequate* | | *Excellent* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |

*Comments:*

*c)* Does the student apply theories to examples or situations

| *Poor* | | *Adequate* | | *Excellent* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comments:

Sociology Ratings for Goal 2 (2021)

| First Grader | | | | | | | overall means mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| OBJ 1 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 30/6=5 |
| OBJ 2 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 30/6=5 |
| OBJ 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 30/6=5 |

Second Grader

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OBJ 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 24/6==4 |
| OBJ 2 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 28/6=4.67 |
| OBJ 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 28/6=4.67 |

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|---|---|
| OBJ 1 | **4.5** |
| OBJ 2 | **4.83** |
| OBJ 3 | **4.83** |

# Rubric for Exit Interviews (2021)

## Structured Exit Interview with Graduating Sociology Seniors

Focus group questions.

1. What was the most interesting question on the questionnaire?

2. What was/were your favorite courses in the major?

3. What elective courses would you suggest we create?

4. Weakness in the curriculum—What required courses would you suggest we create?

5. Do you have a sense of the breadth of knowledge of this discipline?

6. Were courses with hands-on-experience helpful?

7. Do you think you received helpful guidance from you mentor?

Goal #2: Sociology majors will understand the role of theory in social analysis.

Learning Outcomes:

8. describe the role of theory in building sociological knowledge. What is a good answer?

9. compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations or, identify assumptions in analyses and arguments. Marx, Weber, Durkheim

10. apply theories to examples or situations Do the students identify major concepts Here we may prompt them with key/major concepts or ask them to list what they think are the major concepts.

11. Other Issues:

a. Facilities? Lab, lab access…?

b. Research Experience? Did you get the appropriate experience? Where did you get that research experience?

c. Security issues?

12. What additional questions should we be asking?

Notes on responses:

Focus Group Results
Sociology 5/11/2021

1. Favorite courses:

10am

- (NAME) – Public Health connection. Health inequalities, mental health (KM), GIS (appreciated R & ArcGIS).
- (NAME) – Public Health as well (H&M concentration). Soc of Medicine (KM) and Global Mental Health (Cooper)
- (NAME) – Intro to Sociology (JJ) GIS (Prener) now on career path (ICU concentration) to look into urban planning
- (NAME) – Med School – Med Sociology very applicable and offers different perspective on health problems
- (NAME) – LCD – Prener Intro, Deviance (Pestello) good direction into Law
- (NAME) – Speech Pathology – H&M fits well with future career

2:00pm

- (NAME) – KM Mental Health, ONeal – Deviance
- (NAME) - Health Inequalities, Race/Ethnic w/ Hubman,
- (NAME), KM – Methods,
- (NAME) - Law and Society, Chiarello

2. Elective Courses you suggest we create:

- More programming opportunities (R, SAS, etc)
- Request for more speakers in the field "Real world applications"
- Address issues of "what am I going to do" related to previous. Incorporate into 1120 etc.
- Challenge of not being able to get all of the courses in the ICU concentration
- Not having The Wire available

2:00pm

- BS in Sociology
- Sociology of the US/Mexico Border, Immigration-based class
- Philosophy of Law

3. Weakness in curriculum

- None
- Flexibility beneficial (e.g. GIS, research methods, bio stats)
- Find a way to do more applied Sociology (e.g. of health like Public Health)
- More public health focus in sociology

2:00pm

- BS needed for health students

- Research methods concentration

4. Breadth of Knowledge
- Generally soft but yes

2:00pm
- Not sure if able to parse out blurry interdisciplinary lines

5. Hands on Courses
- Dr. Cooper – a lot of independent projects, symposium
- GIS minor – hands on work (Intro – Prener, 2 demographics – Sandoval)
- KM – Capstone (value in applying theory) (also hands on research w/ faculty)
- -- Website or email about research opportunities with Faculty

2:00pm
- BO – Qualitative Methods, Ethnography course
- JJ – Soc 1120 – Suitcase experience
- Chiarello – Law and Society (taking pictures to represent the law)

6. Mentors
- KM was there to help, but adopted Chiarello. Jennings too.
- Prener and Sandoval recommended for two jobs. Prior to Jr year didn't realize resources were available. Jennings set on path to GIS.
- Pestello – letters for law school
- Prener and KM. Letters
- Tomazic – very positive experience

2:00pm
- JJ- creating space to apply courses to what you want to do at the end of your degree
- Prener – Honors
- Monti – Qualitative methods
- KM – Very helpful
- KM – supportive, helpful with evolving goals
- Harris – informal mentor
- Pestello – helpful for a transfer student
- BO – informal adviser

7. Facilities
- Morrissey has U-shaped classrooms – good for discussion
- GIS lab, very positive experience, access is a good thing

Security issues:
- (NAME) always felt safe- commuter on campus at night
- Overall positive responses

2:00pm

- Access – no issues
- Restrooms – about the best

Security Issues

- Never felt unsafe
- Personally alright but friends had scary experiences at Coronado
- "As a woman on campus I have to worry" & students of color don't always feel safe
- Chiarello – took period to discuss safety
- Crossing Grand inspires dread because of catcalls etc.

8. Learning Outcomes

A. Theory building

- Dr. Harris's class helps to build theory. Use of 8 metaphors was quite useful.

2:00pm

- (NAME) - Qualitative methods applied social capital theory with qualitative data

B. Compare and contrast theoretical perspectives

- Dr. O'Neill's comparative assignment for midterm was quite valuable

2:00pm

- Sociological Theory and capstone. Applied in real world in capstone. Paper writing skills carry from theory to capstone.
- Theory course was more memorization but used in Monti's methods course.

C. Apply theories – major concepts

- (NAME) – Social Determinants of health in capstone
- Also O'Niell's class – News story interpretation through lens of theory quite valuable

2:00pm

- Soc department classes can be tailored to applied topics
- Capstone required applied theory on Covid-19
- KM's class provided theory for H&M, broader theory less useful

9. What questions should we be asking?

- Friday weekly emails – work, research opportunities, different events. More info needed about the department.

2:00pm

- Opportunity to meet other sociology majors
- Met Sociology friends senior year
- Mentoring matters mixer a possibility?